INCLUSION STRATEGY

2023 - 2028

owen sound
where you *want* to live

ABOUT OWEN SOUND

The City of Owen Sound values diversity and inclusion in all that we do, think, and pursue. Diversity is more than race, ability, sexual orientation, language, gender, or another descriptive category. Diversity means understanding and utilizing different views, ideas, life experiences, skills, and knowledge.

The City's Inclusion Strategy will help us in our continued efforts to build a diverse and inclusive workforce, enabling us to provide programs and services to our residents by incorporating the use of diversity and inclusion lenses.

The Inclusion Strategy also acknowledges that embracing diversity and inclusion helps strengthen the economy, and will help us attract and retain talent that will enhance our community and strengthen our public service.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge with respect, the history, spirituality and culture of the Anishinaabe peoples on whose traditional territories we gather and whose ancestors signed Treaties with our ancestors. We recognize also, the Metis and Inuit whose ancestors shared this land and these waters. May we all, as Treaty people, live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with all its diverse peoples.

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'Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance'

Quote by Verna Myers

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is a long-term change process that must be deeply connected to the whole organization.

After this strategy is written, the goal is to keep the conversation going. After all, this is human behaviour. We all participate in being inclusive– often choosing to sit beside someone who looks like us, or striking up a conversation with someone who feels familiar. Systemic racism and bias are real. We begin by acknowledging that, this isn't about one strategy document, or about checking off a diversity box. It is about feeling it. We all need to listen, to feel and to hear the perspectives and experiences of one another.

The goal for all of us is to seek out, create, and demand change. When people look back on this moment, we want to say that we all had a hand in the change, and in making the organization more inclusive.

Life matters. We matter. Each of us in all our imperfection. We matter together, as we connect, learn, explore, and pull each other close. We're different. We're the same. We know this in our hearts. We recognize and understand each other, even through our differences.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Diversity
The range of our different identities, backgrounds, and perspectives. Each person has layers of identity that make their perspective unique.

Dimensions of Diversity
Sometimes when we think about diversity, we just think about one aspect, such as age, race, or gender. However, we each have many layers of diversity which may include aspects like ability, mental health, or profession. Our own layers of diversity form a filter through which we view and experience the world, and through which others view and interact with us.

Equity
Being equitable means acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities - historic and current - that advantage some and disadvantage others. Equity i different than equality in that equality implies treating everyone as if their experiences are exactly the same. Equa treatment within the City results in equit only if everyone starts with equal acces to opportunities.

Inclusion
When we create an inclusive environment we all feel like we belong and are valued for our unique perspectives and skill. Differences are considered opportunities for individual and organizational growth. With inclusion, everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, and can fully contribute to our City's success.

Gardenswartz & Rowe, Diverse Teams at Work (2nd Edition, SHRM, 2003)

WHY DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION MATTERS

We are far beyond trying to achieve or justify diversity by quoting census statistics.

The Owen Sound community is proudly diverse, and we are working at the City of Owen Sound to be reflective of this diversity.

We also know that simply acknowledging and accepting diversity is not enough. We need to act every day to build a more inclusive and equitable work environment and city community.

Why?
First, we know that some individuals and groups are more underrepresented than others.

Second, several rights movements have altered our conversations, including Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, Indigenous Residential School Survivors, and the fight for transgender rights.

Third an inclusive workplace, where we embrace and value different thoughts, ideas, experiences, and identities – and the ways in which those difference bring unique ways of working to our organization – benefits everyone.

RESEARCH

The research tell us that an inclusive, diverse and equitable organization will:

- Attract and retain skilled and talented employees
- Achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and morale - leading to higher staff engagement and retention
- Achieve higher levels of performance - leading to increased productivity and better business outcomes
- Demonstrate greater creativity, innovation, and adaptability
- Identify and deliver the types of programs and services that our truly diverse City and all of its residents need and deserve.

An organization can be diverse, without being inclusive. When an organization is inclusive, the diversity is implicit.

Quote by Unknown

SUCCESSES TO CELEBRATE

Support for diversity, equity, and inclusion is not new to the City of Owen Sound. Previous initiatives have recognized, and begun to celebrate diversity and inclusion within the City. Examples include education in anti-racism, human rights, workplace rights, and respect in the workplace. Below are highlights of the City's work in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion:

Accessibility	The City affirms its commitment to meet the requirements of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA), Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The City of Owen Sound's Accessibility Advisory Committee advises City Council and staff members (on matters that fall within their mandate) on ways to identify, prevent, and remove barriers that may limit opportunities for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in society. The Committee is formed in compliance with the AODA and ODA and includes people with disabilities and City Council representatives.
Anti-Racism	In May 2021, City Council directed for all staff and members of Council to complete Call It Out training through the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The focus of the course is on practical examples and it encourages dialogue around exclusion, discrimination and harassment based on race. The course also offers a historical overview of racism and racial discrimination, explains what “race”, “racism”, and “racial discrimination” mean, and provides approaches to preventing and addressing racial discrimination.
Indigenous Cultural Mindfulness	In Fall 2021, City staff started to participate in Indigenous Cultural Mindfulness training sessions. To date Senior Leaders, Council, and staff across various departments including Planning, Fire & Emergency Services, By-Law Enforcement, and Cemetery and Parks have participated. This training is the first step toward learning about Indigenous people, and their past. The training takes participants through Indigenous culture and history, education about the impacts of residential schools, and helping participants to understand and embrace Indigenous culture.

INCLUSION STRATEGY PROCESS

In 2021, City Council approved a Strategic Plan Refresh (2021 – 2023) that prioritizes and recognizes the investment in the City's diversity, equity, and inclusion. City Council highlighted being a Safe City, and a key result and action within that corporate was priority is the development of a Corporate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

During 2022, the Human Resources team and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champions led a number of consultation sessions internally and externally across the City to discuss the strategy and provided opportunities for staff and external stakeholders to give and offer input on what they were looking for in a Corporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy.

In addition to this, the Human Resources team reviewed and reflected on the results from the inaugural Employee Engagement Survey completed in 2021 with Metrics@Work. The Human Resources team also reviewed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Calls to Action, and the local Giiwe - Standing Strong Together framework.

Finally, the team engaged with the Owen Sound community utilizing the OurCity platform to complete two Community Engagement surveys. The initial survey was used to solicit general feedback on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the City, and a follow-up survey was conducted to prioritize the feedback from the initial survey and solicit feedback from the community on possible names for the strategy.

Our approach to the work of diversity and inclusion contained within this strategy, has been shaped by many collaborators within the organization and community, a number of whom provided suggestions for change, and a further understanding of what employees and community members want to see actioned in the City's first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy.

Throughout all of the consultation and engagement activities, ***INCLUSION***, was the theme that emerged.

CITY'S VISION, MISSION & VALUES

Vision
The Vision is an aspiration statement that defines where Owen Sound is going.

Our City is a great place to live, work, and play, and we offer a small-town feel with big-city amenities. The vision statement reflects this and serves as an inspiration for our community.

The City of Owen Sound: Where You *Want* to Live

Mission
The mission statement's ultimate purpose is to strengthen our community and to make our City an attractive and prosperous place to live.

This is accomplished through sound leadership including a clear vision and a forward looking direction at the municipal government level. Sound leadership is multi-faceted and ultimately means acting in the residents' best interests as we work towards shared goals.

Strengthening our community through sound leadership

Values
Values are operating principles that guide decision making while developing and implementing the Inclusion Strategy.

These values serve as a foundation and connect the vision, mission, and objectives of the City.

Caring
Creativity
Integrity
Sustainability

SHARED GOALS

The City of Owen Sound has developed a five-year action plan, the Inclusion Strategy, to work towards our goal of inclusion, equity and diversity.

The action plan is presented through four Pillars of Inclusion.

Each Pillar is supported by objectives, and the implementation of key results and actions. The actions span over the five-years of the strategy.

We all have a role to play in implementing the actions. Some actions are to be implemented by all City employees. Other actions will be led by Inclusion Champions, departments, or subject matter experts.

Regardless of where an action is initiated, led or supported, there is work happening throughout the City of Owen Sound; and it takes all of us to create an inclusive work environment.

PILLARS OF INCLUSION

Education and Training

Inclusive Communication

Workforce and Committees

Policies Support Diversity

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Objective - Develop a continuous learning path for diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism content for all employees.

Actions		Timeframe
1	Ensure all staff have access to training on the Ontario Human Rights Code, and Call It Out Anti-Racism.	Ongoing
2	Promote awareness of staff resources for inclusion; including the Employee Assistance Program.	Ongoing (Min 2 times per year)
3	Provide Mental Health Awareness training for all staff.	2-3 years
4	Build a diversity, equity, and inclusion related-training opportunity library for all staff, ensuring each employee completes a minimum 30 minutes annually.	1-2 years / Ongoing
5	Ensure Indigenous training, including Cultural Mindfulness, opportunities are available for all staff, in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #57	1-2 years / Ongoing

'It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity, there is beauty, and there is strength.'
Quote by Maya Angelou

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

Objective - Raise awareness and communicate both internally and externally effectively about diversity, equity and inclusion.

Actions		Timeframe
1	Increase the presence of Inclusion on The Sound intranet	1-2 years
2	Create and publish an Inclusive Calendar of Days of Significance, to recognize and encourage participation in diverse observances and awareness days across the City that are reflective of the community.	Ongoing
3	Ensure City communications follow accessibility standards, utilize inclusive language and images	Ongoing
4	Create a standard for responding to emotionally charged Events	3 years
5	Explore partnerships for inclusion with external organizations including Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, 50-30 Challenge, and Indigenous Tourism Ontario	2 years

'What we need to do is learn to respect and embrace our differences until our differences don't make a difference in how we are treated.'
Quote by Yolanda King

POLICIES SUPPORT DIVERSITY, AND ADDRESS DISCRIMINATION

Objective - To support innovation, and have a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace free of harassment, discrimination and systemic barriers.

Actions		Timeframe
1	Create and publish standards for Policies and Communications with resources for an equity lens, gender-neutral, and inclusive language.	1-2 years
2	Create and update policies and guidance documents for inclusion and equity, including Land Acknowledgement Policy, Tobacco Offering Guidance document, Use of Pronouns Guidance document, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Policy.	3-5 years
3	Define and articulate the City's values for an inclusive., equitable and culture.	2-3 years
4	Create a recognition initiative for staff supporting, leading, and incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work.	2-3 years

n and fairness in the e...it is not simply thing to do; it's the ng to do.' e by Alexis Herman

INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE AND COMMITTEES

Objective - Attract and recruit a talented and diverse workforce, and committee membership, that is reflective of the labour market and community.

Actions		Timeframe
1	Ensure the Recruitment and Hiring Policy is updated with an equity lens.	1 year
2	Ensure job postings have accurate qualifications, utilize inclusive, equitable, and gender-neutral language.	Ongoing
3	Ensure all stages of the recruitment process, including the interview, are equitable, inclusive, transparent, and defensible.	Ongoing
4	Build on the success of engaging the community, to build relationships with diverse community groups, including Indigenous community groups.	Ongoing
5	Incorporate demographic questions into Employee Engagement Survey, to gain an understanding of the diverse workforce.	2 years

'When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become a wiser, more inclusive, and better organization.'
Quote by Pat Wadors

COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

While there is no single or direct path to inclusion, this does not make us any less accountable to achieving our goal of ***Inclusion*.**

The Human Resources team, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champions will measure and report on the Inclusion Strategy progress to the Senior Leadership Team, and all staff throughout the life of this plan. By reporting it will increase transparency and support the results that we can only achieve by including one another, and working together.

We all have immediate opportunities and responsibilities to create a more inclusive workplace, and inclusion is something that we can all be supporting all the time.

There are times when it might be hard work, and that is because we need to continue to practice inclusiveness, be open to feedback and support one another to do better together.

HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION TODAY

- Talk to someone who is different than you
- Visit Diversity & Inclusion on The Sound to check out the resources available
- Get involved in the community
- Reflect on how inclusive and welcoming you are to others on your team
- Become a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champion with the City

GLOSSARY

An understanding of terms relevant to inclusion contributes to the foundation of any inclusive workplace. We understand that language shifts and morphs over time. These terms are considered appropriate at the time of writing this document.

Anti-Racism - The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life.

Discrimination - An action, practice, system or policy that has an adverse impact on an individual or group for reasons related to a protected ground. The Ontario Human Rights Code provides the protected grounds.

Diversity - The range of our different identities, backgrounds, and perspectives. Each person has layers of identity that make their perspective unique.

Duty to Accommodate - The shared responsibility of the City, unions, and employees to reduce and/or eliminate barriers, as outlined in the protected grounds, that employees experience in fulfilling the requirements of their positions.

Equity - Fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for everyone, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Equity is different then equality, which focuses on treating everyone the same, Equity recognizes that people have different needs and experience different barriers.

Equity-seeking Groups - Groups of people who identify barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to disadvantage, and discrimination.

Harassment (*also known as bullying)* - Conduct, including comments, actions and/or gestures, that a reasonable person would find unwelcome

Implicit Bias (*also known as unconscious bias)* **-** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases can be positive or negative, are involuntary, and usually outside a person's awareness.

Inclusion - Creating an environment in which all individuals feel like they belong and are valued for their unique perspectives and skills. Differences are considered opportunities for individual and organizational growth. Everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the City's success.

Inclusive Language - Language that is free from words, phrases, or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped, or discriminatory views of particular people.

Reconciliation - Establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It involves awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm, and action to change behaviour.

Respectful Workplace - A workplace free of harassment and discrimination, and where all employees are treated fairly, diversity is acknowledged and valued, communication is open and civil, expectations around behaviour are clearly communicated, resources and training to resolve disputes are provided, conflict is addressed early, and there is a culture of inclusion, empowerment, and cooperation.

Systemic Barriers - Obstacles or barriers that intentionally or unintentionally exclude individuals, groups, and/or communities, and are often out of the control of any individual person. This can occur when policies, projects, programs, and services are created without benefit of a range of perspectives during their development.

Underrepresented Groups - Groups of people that are not present in the workforce at the same percentages that they are present in the larger community.

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CITY OF OWEN SOUND

INCLUSION STRATEGY

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