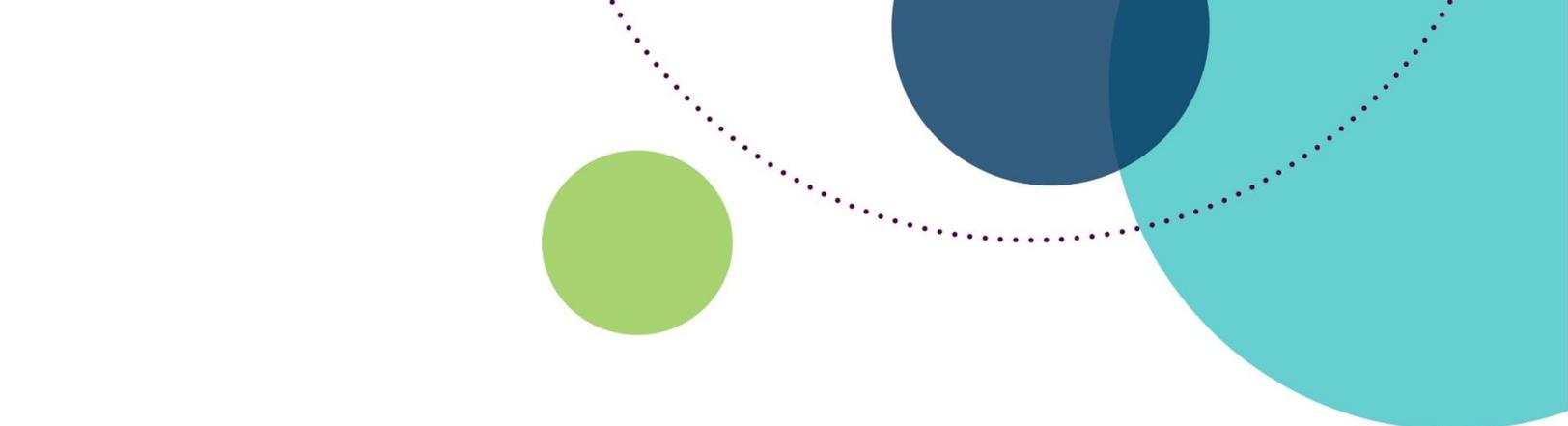


# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Report and Action Framework

March 2023



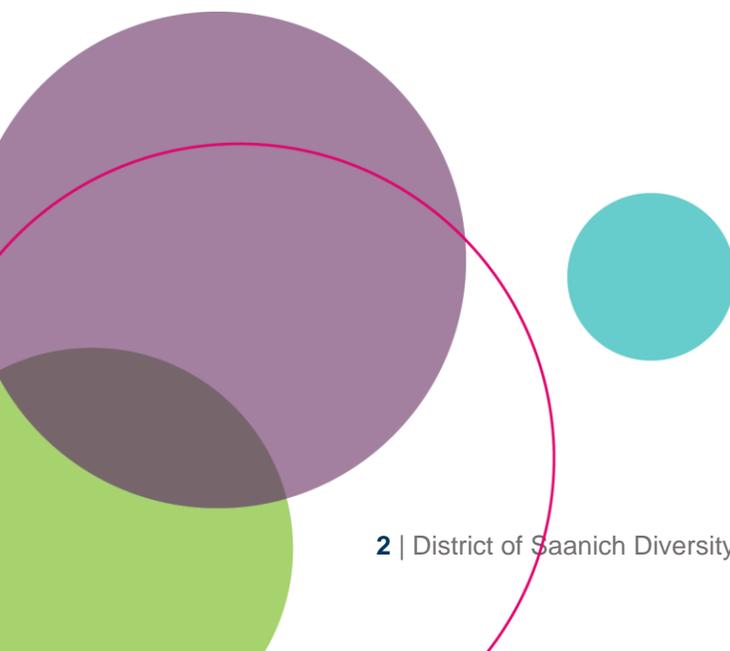
Saanich



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## Content Warning

This framework covers sensitive topics, including but not limited to systemic racism, discrimination, sexism, transphobia, and inequity. The information and material presented in this Strategic Framework may trigger unpleasant feelings, thoughts, and responses. The District of Saanich is committed to upholding the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion and maintaining a safe environment where everyone feels welcome. For direct support, please contact 250-475-5427.

## Disclaimer

This Strategic Report and Action Framework was prepared by Quintessential Research Group Inc. (QRG) for the sole purpose of describing the results of engagement with District of Saanich community members, Saanich staff, community leaders and organizations, and Indigenous communities on developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Framework and Council Policy on Anti-Racism for the District of Saanich. Background on QRG is provided in Appendix A. Background on the Council Policy on Anti-Racism is presented in Appendix B. Funding for this project was provided by the District of Saanich. The material contained in this framework reflects the best professional judgment of the researchers and practitioners, based on the information gathered and available at the time of its completion, and as appropriate for the scope of work. Any use that a third party makes of this framework, or any reliance or any decision based on it, is at the discretion and responsibility of such third parties. The information contained herein should not be construed as to define, limit, or otherwise constrain First Nations peoples' self-determination, rights, and interests.

## Acknowledgments

The District of Saanich lies within the territories of the lək'wəŋən peoples, represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, represented by the Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum, and Malahat Nations. First Peoples have been here since time immemorial, and their history in this area is long and rich.

The District of Saanich is proud that our name is derived from the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. Saanich Council is committed to taking a leadership role in the process of healing wounds of the past and becoming a more just, fair, and caring society.

We acknowledge that this engagement on DEI involved many First Nations' territories across the District of Saanich, and we are grateful to work and live on these lands. We sincerely appreciate all the District of Saanich residents, community organizations, First Nations, and Saanich leadership and staff who participated in generating and sharing the knowledge for this framework. We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude to the diverse array of people and organizations for their involvement in the project, but especially to all the people who shared their experiences of the harmful impacts of ongoing colonial practices, systemic racism, discrimination, and stereotyping. We acknowledge that it can be challenging to share personal stories and thank those who courageously shared their stories. We are proud of this work but also recognize that it is an initial step and there is still much more DEI work required in the implementation stages of moving this framework forward.





## Message from the Mayor of Saanich

***“Saanich is stronger when we honour, celebrate, and make space for our differences. As people, we are stronger when we recognize the value in our unique experiences and skillsets. As a community, we are stronger when we commit to creating a culture of inclusion and connectedness, a culture that shares our stories and the journey to get there.”***

– Mayor Dean Murdock



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have always been important and have always mattered. Continuing anti-Black racism and discrimination against diverse groups means that change is required and not an option. Racial and social injustice represent the most significant impetus for governments and organizations to take leadership in addressing DEI as a priority. The COVID-19 global pandemic amplified inequalities and magnified awareness of issues of systemic, institutional, and structural racism faced by Indigenous, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), and other marginalized groups. It has highlighted the need for the District of Saanich to increase our understanding of how these issues can manifest themselves in the District's policies, programs, and services. For this reason, the District is taking action to implement what strategies and practical steps can be taken to ensure that we are offering a culture of inclusion and connectedness.

Saanich strives to be an inclusive community and also a workplace for the District staff where diversity thrives and our residents and employees feel supported. Specifically, it means building equitable opportunity structures, policies, programs, projects, language, regulations, procedures, processes, social institutions, social ideas, values, beliefs, expectations, and practices into all levels of Saanich District that influence everyday lives of people who work at the District offices and the mosaic of people who the District serves. Achieving continued progress towards DEI will result in a healthier and diverse community, an inclusive workplace within Saanich, more innovation, and culturally aware and culturally diverse employees.

## Background

The DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework will be used to establish a firm foundation of commitment by the District's leadership team that aligns with Saanich Council's "Strategic Plan 2019-2023" and the District's "Market Analysis Study" for the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. The DEI Strategic Report also includes recommendations that address the needs of Saanich's BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities. The DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is a useful tool to establish a framework that will facilitate the District of Saanich to cultivate an engaging workplace where unique experiences are valued and communities and residents are provided with inclusive and accessible programs, events, and services. As part of the plan to advance DEI, the District has established an Accessibility and DEI Committee. The role of this Committee in overseeing progress, identifying challenges, and highlighting opportunities will be critical to the success of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework.

The purpose of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is to describe the results of engagement with District of Saanich community members, Saanich staff, community leaders and organizations, and Indigenous communities on developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework and Council Policy on Anti-Racism for the District of Saanich. To support the District of Saanich to realize its vision, QRG has co-developed this Strategic Report and Action Framework and also prepared a draft Council Policy on Anti-Racism for the District (see Appendix B). The intention of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is to set the direction for the creation of new community programs and improve hiring and retention of a diverse employee base.

## What Is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

Diversity is about "creating an environment that embraces diversity (differences and similarities) and where everyone is made to feel welcome, invited to participate, valued, and respected for their contributions" (Anzovino and Boutilier, 2015, p. 6).

Equity and inclusion mean creating an equitable and inclusive community and addressing discrimination in all forms through shared responsibility. Inclusion is working together to create and sustain a welcoming place and community. Equity is about differences and similarities in organizations and communities to eliminate the privileges of dominant groups and removing discrimination in all forms through shared or collective responsibility and accountability for minority groups.

## Strategic Report and Action Framework Development

The development of this Strategic Report and Action Framework involved the review of Saanich documents and information and external community engagement. The intent of this process is to gather information on current DEI work within Saanich, including programs, services, and activities, discussing DEI with District staff, and engaging with community organizations. The key components of the strategy development process were as follows:

1. Reviewing the District's current programs, activities, services, partnerships, facility usages, employment framework, and council policies related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and racism.
2. Conducting internal research with various departments, including but not limited to the Planning Department, Saanich Police, Saanich Fire, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, and Human Resources Department.
3. Engaging with diverse community members (e.g., Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, and racialized groups) to develop equitable, inclusive, and accessible programs, events, and services. Engagement is critical in order to hear diverse voices for the District to better understand the needs of the community. It is also important to guide the District in decision-making related to the design of a creative and innovative strategic plan that could be used to cultivate equitable diversity and empowered inclusion.



## What We Did – Methodological Approach

In order to gather knowledge, perspectives, and information to inform the development of this Strategic Report and Action Framework, we implemented a comprehensive engagement and dialogue process with District staff, including the leadership team, community organizations, and Indigenous Nations, organizations, and communities.

The specific engagement activities related to data collection included but were not limited to:

- Focus group discussions with community organizations.
- Community and staff survey from March 2022 to October 2022.
- Participation in several Saanich community events from May 2022 to October 2022.
- Key Advisor interviews with internal District Staff and external community organizations.
- Discussions with Indigenous Nations, organizations, and communities.

## DEI Survey

Beginning in March 2022, QRG worked with the District of Saanich to develop a survey for the community and Saanich staff to provide insights and feedback regarding Saanich's commitment to improving its programs and practices as they relate to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). After several pilots and tests, the online survey was launched on June 16, 2022, and remained accessible until December 7, 2022. The *SurveyMonkey* software hosted the survey on its platform, it was voluntary, and responses were encouraged but not required for each question. The survey did not collect any personal or identifying information from participants, and as such, all responses were anonymous and confidential.

The survey consisted of 25 questions for each group. The first question asked respondents if they were a Saanich resident, and the second question asked if they were a District of Saanich employee. 449 people answered the first question and 447 answered the second question, of which 161 identified themselves as Saanich employees and 286 did not.

## What We Heard

The engagement with staff, diverse community organizations, and Indigenous communities provided valuable insights about the current status of DEI work within the District and what can be done to advance DEI within the organization and with the wider community.

### Community Voices

Through our conversations we heard that while good work is being done, there is still much more that is needed as the District of Saanich moves forward in making its activities more diverse, equitable and inclusive. Below we highlight some of the wise words that were shared during our engagement work.



“Our dealings, our communications largely depend on champions from their municipality and how much they carry their ways with the Nations. It helps to have a First Nation face on the other side of the table to be able to talk. Inclusion and equity and all those other good words are vital in today’s world. It’s not only about First Nations people, but also about all people really, you know, in the medicine wheel. And that’s what I constantly talk about. I always say, ‘One World, One People,’ but that’s a really hard and kind of idealistic way of looking at the world, with the things that are going on.”

– Yux’wey’lupton — or Clarence “Butch” Dick, Lekwungen Elder Songhees Nation Elder

“It started mostly with some of the developments that were happening that had cultural monitoring issues, which is generally how our relationships start these days – historic policy that is not very sensitive around cultural sites. But they were also actually a really willing and ready partner to be starting up discussions. Equity, in terms of building relationships within a local government and other organizations, looks like, to me, more of a contribution and some shared responsibility and training to begin with to be able to bring Indigenous business to the same place as other businesses that are applying for some of the economic opportunities that are out there.”

– Joni Olsen, Policy/Negotiations Manager for the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council, Tsartlip First Nation



*It is very important in terms of the organizations that Saanich represents (police, how to deal with hate crimes), and there is a need to have a system in place where women in the community know where to go, know where to report the crime, have resources to support them.*  
– Community participant

*One thing that I notice a lot is that when it comes to issues of racism, Islamophobia, Islamic history month, I haven't seen that in Saanich. The City of Victoria will have information sessions and activities, and how to deal with that demographic. In Saanich, I haven't seen any of that around.*  
– Community participant

Creating and maintaining a culture of inclusion can best be achieved by recognizing that racism, discrimination, and transphobia are an everyday lived experience for many Saanich community members. Addressing racism has become a priority for Saanich, and a policy on anti-racism has been created and is part of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework. This policy will serve as an important starting place to ensure our organizational culture and day-to-day business operations keep us on track, and to serve as an accountability mechanism to our commitments.

While detailed findings from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Survey with respect to community members will be outlined later in this report, some overall take-aways are highlighted below:

- The vast majority of respondents found Saanich a welcoming place and did not experience issues with respect to accessing Saanich programs and services, such as finding programs that were welcoming and inclusive, experiencing or observing a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures, and hearing or experiencing homophobic or transphobic remarks.
- However, about one-third of respondents indicated that they had experienced difficulty finding programs that are inclusive and welcoming and had experienced or had seen a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures while accessing programs and services.
- With respect to culturally diverse programs and events, the vast majority (80%) ranked “creating a sense of belonging and community connection” and “ensuring cultural safety” as very important factors.
- In terms of how the District of Saanich can make its programs, services, and events more culturally and gender diverse, respondents suggested training staff in DEI, ensuring that signage reflects diverse and inclusive language, constructing washrooms for gender-diverse people, consulting and engaging with diverse communities on a regular basis, organizing multicultural events, highlighting Indigenous learnings and teachings, and adapting programs and services to reflect neurodiversity.
- Regarding which principles or practices they thought most important for future Saanich programs and services, respondents ranked in order from the highest to lowest: 1) respect, 2) access to programs and services, 3) non-discriminatory culture and practices, and 4) transparency and diversity. Note that all were ranked as “very important”.

- When asked if they thought that the colour of a person’s skin may impact access to facilities and employment in Saanich, 55% of those who identified as a race other than white thought this might be the case. This is significantly more than those who identified as white/Caucasian.
- When asked how welcoming Saanich is for themselves and their family, the vast majority responded positively (41% stated “welcoming”, 24% said “very welcoming” and 15% said “always welcoming”). That said, when disaggregated by racial and gender identity, dominant groups report Saanich as more welcoming than those who identify as non-white or who do not identify as woman/girl or man/boy.
- Respondents were asked how welcoming Saanich is for diverse groups, with only 6% thinking that it is “always welcoming” (compared to 15% for themselves), 23% that it is “very welcoming”, and 27% that it is “sometimes welcoming”.
- Respondents were also asked how often, over the past 12 months, they experienced discrimination at a Saanich event because of their racial or ethnic identity, gender or gender expression, age, religion, language, Indigenous identity, or other. Most respondents stated they had never experienced discrimination for these reasons, or the reason is not applicable to them. Of the small number who reported experiencing discrimination (keeping in mind almost three-quarters of respondents self-identified as white), the data suggests that racial or ethnic identity, age, and gender or gender expression are the most frequent kinds of discrimination.

## District of Saanich Staff Voices

The following section outlines the main themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews and focus group discussions with Saanich staff, including members of the DEI steering committee. From the analysis, we identified four main themes that staff feel should be addressed in the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework to make the District of Saanich activities, programs, and services more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. These themes are:

- **Theme 1: Make Saanich an Inclusive Workplace Through Organizational Change**  
Through our conversations with staff, we heard that when workplaces focus on inclusion, they create higher levels of employee engagement, and people feel motivated and inspired to create innovative change at the organizational level.
- **Theme 2: Benchmarking and Key Performance Indicators (KPI)**  
Another clear message from Saanich staff was the need for the district to create measurable actions towards achieving greater diversity, equity, and inclusion for Saanich.
- **Theme 3: Make Saanich a Diverse Workforce**  
Individuals interviewed did identify instances where the district was completing great work on the topic of DEI. Paired with the District of Saanich’s decision to undertake this work in DEI, there is an identified desire for continuing to build on the work that has been done.
- **Theme 4: Saanich as a Barrier-free and Equal Opportunity Employer**  
Saanich continues to become more diverse and has historically been a diverse community. Therefore, any work in this area should be able to pivot with the reality of the diversity that exists in the community. One participant explained: *“Diversity and inclusion help us be more flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of our workforce.”*

# Strategic Priorities and Toolkits

The following section provides an overview of the key strategic priorities and action toolkits based on the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework engagement process. The strategies and proposed actions are derived from the “What We Heard” sections, which include the perspectives shared by community members, community organizations, First Nations, the Mayor of Saanich, and District of Saanich staff.

Community Focused Toolkit	
<b>Strategic Priority #1:</b> Building a culture of DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share information with community organizations, First Nations, and Indigenous organizations about District employment opportunities.</li><li>• Continue to engage in dialogue with diverse communities about the DEI Strategic Framework.</li><li>• Organize regular community forums, in collaboration with community organizations, to provide an opportunity for community members to discuss and be heard on issues of DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, including the effectiveness of local policies and programs.</li><li>• Build awareness within communities on racism and discrimination and the impacts on people and their families.</li></ul>

**Strategic Priority #2:**

Supporting leadership for organizational change.

- Provide support services for persons impacted by, or victims of, racism and discrimination, including safe spaces and access to services and counselling.
- Involve citizens by providing space where voices can be heard in DEI and anti-racism initiatives and decision-making.
- Engage in discussion with other governments about DEI policies, practices, and funding.
- Work with community organizations to plan new or revised services.
- Support or establish, in collaboration with community organizations, a monitoring and response system or network to identify and respond to acts of racism, hate crimes, and other incidents, including bringing such incidents to the attention of the appropriate authorities.
- Develop and distribute awareness materials and campaigns to inform residents and community members about their rights and obligations, including available resources and mechanisms for the prevention of and redress against racism and discrimination.
- Establish complaint mechanisms within the District's authority (ombudsperson, anti-discrimination unit, etc.) to deal with allegations of systemic and individual acts of racism and discrimination.
- Seek partnerships with community organizations and local First Nations on the collection of data and information.

**Strategic Priority #3:**

Building relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities based on understanding and respect.

- Support initiatives that build and bridge capacity within Indigenous Nations and communities.
- Educate and sensitize Council and District staff on mutual respect, citizenship, and the obligation to protect and promote human rights, including *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*.
- Build understanding and respectful relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities and identify ways to incorporate and amplify Indigenous voices through dialogue.
- Engage with the leadership of local Indigenous Nations at the Council level with respect to building sustainable and meaningful District to Indigenous Government relationships.
- Develop and implement Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and/or protocols with local First Nations around shared commitments, including DEI.
- Engage in dialogue with Indigenous Nations and communities about interests and priorities.
- Support Indigenous-led projects and events through funding and in-kind contributions.

**Strategic Priority #4:**

Creating and sustaining a welcoming environment.

- Hold an annual forum with community organizations on DEI actions and progress.
- Develop and make available a newcomer information package.
- Communicate events more extensively and focus information on the interests and perspectives of diverse groups.
- Continue to engage with community organizations on addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in programs and services.
- Hold meetings with community organizations and distribute annual DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination survey to understand what barriers to participation exist and what might be done to mitigate the barriers.
- Complete a facility review and identify changes to support DEI and a welcoming environment, such as gender-diverse washrooms and appropriate signage.
- Assess economic factors that impact the participation of residents in District activities and seek organizational direction about subsidized programming.

**Strategic Priority #5:**

Measuring and monitoring outcomes and continuing improvement.

- Engage with community organizations and local First Nations to receive input and feedback on progress in implementing the Strategic Report and Action Framework actions and potential gaps.
- Implement online and in-person surveys to gather information from community members on DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination, and also to measure the Framework outcomes on an annual basis.
- Collect and evaluate data and information on racism and discrimination in specific areas within the District's mandate such as housing, recreation, K-12 schools, and culture.

## District Internal Focused Toolkit

### **Strategic Priority #1:**

Building a culture of DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

- Provide options to support where English may not be people's first language.
- Review descriptions for all jobs to incorporate accessible and inclusive language and Indigenous-lived experience.
- Establish a policy and system for staff to self-identify as BIPOC, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2S+ within privacy requirements.
- Review screening and interview policies and practices to remove language and cultural, racial, or other barriers to recruitment.
- Encourage staff to participate in training and to use resource materials on DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination (cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency).
- Build a DEI resource and reference library for staff online.
- Discuss implementation of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework during annual employee reviews and planning.

**Strategic Priority #2:**

Supporting leadership for organizational change.

- Increase vigilance in identifying and addressing systemic and individual racism and discrimination.
- Audit various aspects of the District's operations, including corporate planning, policy and program development, and procedures and practices with respect to employment, service delivery and contracting, as well as organizational culture to identify barriers to DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination.
- Establish a clear diversity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination vision statement, and implement changes to policies and procedures (including a complaints/accountability mechanism).
- Develop language for procurement opportunities and contracting to support and reflect DEI.
- Facilitate the appropriate collection and use of data on incidents of hate activities, racism, and discrimination in the community, and share results in a manner that advances human rights.
- Establish protocols to liaise with organizations such as human rights commissions, legal clinics, and community advocacy or counselling services that can help facilitate prevention, interventions, and remedies for staff who experience racism and discrimination.

<p><b>Strategic Priority #3:</b> Building relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities based on understanding and respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage staff to participate in Indigenous cultural awareness training and to use related resource materials.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Priority #4:</b> Creating and sustaining a welcoming environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop information on the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework, communicate with staff, and hold Q and A sessions on the Framework.</li> <li>• Review and revise external District communications material to reflect diversity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination language, including brochures, information sheets, newsletters, etc.</li> <li>• Listen to the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse communities and consider these experiences in District decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Priority #5:</b> Measuring and monitoring outcomes and continuing improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement mechanisms for monitoring and measuring the Strategic Report and Action Framework outcomes.</li> <li>• Ensure accountability for its actions and create specific metrics for measuring progress toward addressing anti-racism.</li> <li>• Create an anti-racism team within the District to implement services, measurement, recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, and education.</li> </ul>



## Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have always been important and have always mattered. Continuing anti-Black racism and discrimination against diverse groups means that change is required and not an option. Racial and social injustice represent the most significant impetus for governments and organizations to take leadership in addressing DEI as a priority. The COVID-19 global pandemic amplified inequalities and magnified awareness of issues of systemic, institutional, and structural racism faced by Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC), and other marginalized groups. It has highlighted the need for the District of Saanich to increase our understanding of how these issues can manifest themselves in the District's policies, programs, and services. For this reason, the District is taking action to implement what strategies and practical steps can be taken to ensure that we are offering a culture of inclusion and connectedness.

Saanich strives to be an inclusive community and also a workplace for the District staff where diversity thrives and our residents and employees feel supported. Specifically, it means building equitable opportunity structures, policies, programs, projects, language, regulations, procedures, processes, social institutions, ideas, values, beliefs, expectations, and practices into all levels of Saanich District that influence everyday lives of people who work at the District offices and the mosaic of people who the District serves. Achieving continued progress towards DEI will result in a healthier and diverse community, an inclusive workplace within Saanich, more innovation, and cultural awareness and culturally diverse employees.

# What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

There are various definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The following definitions provide a framework for this Strategic Report and Action Framework and to help guide its implementation.

**Diversity** represents a mosaic of differences and similarities in lived experiences, backgrounds, views, and perspectives, including but not limited to language, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical and cognitive abilities, national origin, religious and political beliefs, education, marital status, language, veteran status, worldviews, and other characteristics and ideologies. Put differently, diversity is about “creating an environment that embraces diversity (differences and similarities) and where everyone is made to feel welcome, invited to participate, valued, and respected for their contributions” (Anzovino and Boutilier, 2015, p. 6).

**Equity and Inclusion** means creating an equitable and inclusive community and addressing discrimination in all forms through shared responsibility. Inclusion is working together to create and sustain a welcoming place and community. Equity is about differences and similarities in organizations and communities to eliminate the privileges of dominant groups and remove discrimination in all forms through shared or collective responsibility and accountability for minority groups. In other words, equity is “a principle based on fairness, justice, access, opportunity, and advancement for everyone, while recognizing historically underserved and unrepresented populations, identifying conditions needed to provide effective opportunities for all groups, and eliminating barriers to their full participation” (Anzovino and Boutilier, 2015, p. 4).

# The District of Saanich: Cultivating a Culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Heightened awareness of issues of systemic, institutional, and structural racism faced by Indigenous, Black and People of Colour (IBPOC), and other marginalized groups has highlighted the need for the District of Saanich to increase our understanding of how these issues can manifest themselves in the District's policies, programs, and services. For this reason, the District is taking action to implement what strategies and practical steps can be taken to ensure that we are offering a culture of inclusion and connectedness.

Saanich strives to be an inclusive community and a workplace for District staff where diversity thrives and our residents and employees feel supported. Specifically, this means building equitable opportunity structures, policies, programs, projects, language, regulations, procedures, processes, social institutions, ideas, values, beliefs, expectations, and practices into all levels of Saanich District that influence everyday lives of people who work at the District offices and the mosaic of people who the District serves.

The District is guided by the principle that embracing diversity enriches the lives of all people and enhances the cultural fabric of Saanich as a whole and is committed to improving its programs and practices as they relate to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The District has embarked on a community engagement process to inform the development of a DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework as well as a Council Policy on anti-racism for the District that will set the direction for the creation of new community programs, improve hiring and retention of a diverse employee base, and recommend a Policy on Racism to the District Council. Through the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework, the District intends to cultivate a productive and engaging workspace and inclusive community for our residents where unique experiences are valued, and communities and residents are provided with inclusive and accessible programs, events, and services.

The DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is based on several key principles.

- Seeking a diversity of people and perspectives
- Valuing our differences and similarities
- Ensuring equitable opportunities for all

The core values for the District of Saanich are:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Respect
- Honesty
- Consideration
- Service excellence
- Loyalty
- Diligence
- Responsibility
- Acceptance

Inclusion is working together to create and sustain a welcoming place and community where all people feel a sense of connection and belonging.



## Part 1

# Background

## The Cultural Diversity of Saanich

The District of Saanich is a culturally diverse community. According to the 2021 census, it has a total population of 117,735 residents, which makes it the most populous municipality in the Capital Regional District and Vancouver Island, and the eighth-most populous in the province. In fact, the population size of the District has been growing in the past several years and an increase in 3% since the 2012 Census of Population. As the District grows in population size so too does the cultural diversity of Saanich and age of the community. In fact, according to the 2021 census, the District is home to one of the fastest growing seniors population in Canada. The District has a median household income of \$77,282 and a median age of 44 years compared to the national average of 41 years.

The diversity of Saanich is seen in the many people that make up the community socio-demographic composition. The District of Saanich lies within the territories of the lək'wəŋən peoples, represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, represented by the Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum, and Malahat Nations. The District is also comprised of diverse ethnic community members (23,885 people), with the largest group being Chinese people (approx. 40.5%), followed by South Asian people (approx. 24%), and Filipino people (approx. 10.2%). There is limited data availability and accessibility on gender diversity in Canada and British Columbia generally, and more specifically for the District of Saanich. Filling gaps in gender diversity is important to portray a portrait of the basic socio-demographic of the LGBTQ2S community to support the District of Saanich into the future to build more equity and inclusive gender diverse programs. What we know from our survey results (of the people that participated) is that 68% of participants identified as woman/girl; 21% as man/boy; 8% as non-binary; 4% as transgender; and 3% preferred not to say.



The District of Saanich has several key partners in the community and is active in many LGBTQ2S+ events, especially in June for Pride Month. The District partners with the Victoria Pride Society and Inter-Cultural Association to provide resources to LGBTQ2S+ people who are looking for ways to build safe connections. As a growing culturally diverse community there is also heightened awareness of issues of systemic, institutional, and structural racism and discrimination faced by Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (BIPOC), and LGBTQ2S+ individuals. This awareness has highlighted the District of Saanich's need to increase its understanding of how these issues can manifest themselves in the District's policies, programs, and services. There is also awareness of what strategies and practical steps can be taken to begin to address these issues and concerns across the District. The District of Saanich is an organization that is culturally unique, and the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework has included executive leadership's approach and mindset along with District staff and diverse community voices. These voices are important to encourage meaningful dialogue that can lead to awareness and positive changes moving forward.

## The Need for a DEI Action Framework

The DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework will be used to establish a firm foundation of commitment by the District's leadership team that aligns with Saanich Council's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and the District's Market Analysis Study for the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. The DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework also includes recommendations that address the needs of Saanich's BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities. The DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is a useful tool to establish a framework that will facilitate the District of Saanich's cultivation of an engaging workplace where unique experiences are valued, and communities and residents are provided with inclusive and accessible programs, events, and services. The purpose of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is to describe the results of engagement with District of Saanich community members, Saanich staff, community leaders and organizations, and Indigenous communities on developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework and Council Policy on Anti-Racism for the District of Saanich. To support the District of Saanich to realize its vision, QRG has co-developed this report and Action Framework and also prepared a draft Council Policy on Anti-Racism for the District. The intention of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework is to set the direction for the creation of new community programs and to improve hiring and retention of a diverse employee base.

## Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

The District is committed to improving its policies, programs, projects, and practices as they relate to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Specifically, the goals are to:

- Develop a DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework and Council Policy on Anti-Racism.
- Create an equitable structure of opportunities for the District that will set the direction for the development of new community programs and improved policy and practices to support a diverse and inclusive workforce.

- Cultivate a productive and engaging workspace where unique experiences and contributions are valued, and where communities and residents are provided with inclusive and accessible programs, events, and services.
- Establish a firm foundation of commitment by the District’s Council and leadership team.

This Strategic Report and Action Framework is intended to be a “living document,” which means that the Framework will be refined and updated on a regular basis. The Framework adopts an approach in which strategies and actions will be monitored and progress assessed in achieving identified outcomes. Through this Strategic Report and Action Framework, the District of Saanich can take action, assess our progress, and revise our strategies based on what we heard through public engagement.

Through an environmental scan of DEI strategic initiatives and various related reference material, we have consulted various source documents and jurisdictions to identify lessons learned and best practices. These guiding frameworks and reference documents informed this DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework to support the District of Saanich moving forward. These include:

- Government of Canada (2022). Canada’s first federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, represented by the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth
- City of Calgary (2021). Diversity and inclusion in the workplace framework
- City of Vancouver (2021). Getting our house in order: The City of Vancouver’s Equity Framework
- City of Victoria (2021). Dream in Colour: Victoria Welcoming City Strategy - A journey from where we are to where we need to be
- City of Abbotsford (2020). Diversity & Inclusion strategy
- Ontario Human Rights Commission (2021). [Common commitments and sample actions against racism and discrimination](#), Ontario Human Rights Commission
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. *Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination*. Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2005
- Government of Canada. Bill C-15 - *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), Pub. L. No. C–15 (2020).
- Government of British Columbia (2022). DRIPA Action Plan – 2022-2027
- Government of British Columbia (2021). Diversity & Inclusion Strategy for the BC Public Service



## Part 2

# DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework Development Process

The development process of this Strategic Report and Action Framework is rooted in an efficient approach that utilizes and builds on BC's existing Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, Gender Based Analysis Plus Framework and Canada's first federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan to guide and support respectful, in-depth, and collaborative discussions with First Nations communities, diverse community organizations, and District residents on matters related to systemic, institutional, and structural racism and transphobia.

The key components of the process for developing the Strategic Report and Action Framework were:

1. Reviewing the District's current programs, activities, services, partnerships, facility usages, employment framework, and council policies related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and racism.
2. Conducting internal research with various departments, including but not limited to Planning Department, Saanich Police, Saanich Fire, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, and the Human Resources Department.
3. Engaging with diverse community members (e.g., Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, and racialized groups) to develop equitable, inclusive, and accessible programs, events, and services. Engagement is critical in order to hear diverse voices for the District to better understand the needs of the community. It is also important to guide the District in decision-making related to the design of a creative and innovative strategic plan that could be used to cultivate equitable diversity and empowered inclusion.

The engagement activities related to data collection included, but were not limited to:

- a) Focus group discussions with community organizations.
- b) Community and staff survey from March 2022 to October 2022.
- c) Participation in several Saanich community events from May 2022 to October 2022.
- d) Key Advisor interviews with internal District Staff and external community organizations.
- e) Discussions with Indigenous Nations, organizations, and communities.

## Part 3

# What We Know

The face of the District of Saanich is changing. The total population of Saanich was 117,735 at the 2021 census<sup>1</sup>, making it the most populous municipality in the Capital Regional District and Vancouver Island, and the eighth-most populous in the province.

The diversity of Saanich is seen in the many unique cultural groups and gender-diverse people that make up the community socio-demographic composition. There are diverse groups of First Nations that live within the territories of the ləkʷəŋən peoples, represented by the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the ƵSÁNEĆ peoples, home to the Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum, and Malahat Nations.

The median household income is \$77,282, and median age is 44 years. The District is filled with a rich cultural diversity and is comprised of diverse ethnic community members (23,885 people), of which:

- The largest number is Chinese (40.5%),
- The second largest number is South Asian (24.0%), and
- The third largest number is Filipino (10.2%).

The development of this DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework was based on extensive engagement and dialogue with the District staff and community members from the dominant socio-demographic groups, but also those who identify as Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Urban and Métis), LGBTQ2S+, ethnocultural, racialized, and other marginalized peoples. The Strategic Report and Action Framework will also be based on ongoing processes to review and update the goals and actions and to implement the recommendations provided into the coming years.

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics Canada 2021 Census. Last Updated: April 2022 <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Saanich&DGUIDlist=2021A00055917021&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

# Our Approach to Working with the Community (Methodology)

## DEI Process and Timeline

We attended community events to augment the number of surveys completed and to ensure the diversity of respondents. The events attended to gather information and insights are listed below.

<b>March to June 2022</b>	Research and preparation, including survey development
<b>May to September 2022</b>	Internal focus groups and interviews
<b>June and July 2022</b>	Attending Saanich public events and administering surveys
<b>June 16, 2022</b>	Pride in the Park (Beckwith Park)
<b>June 18, 2022</b>	World Refugee Day event (Cadboro-Gyro Park)
<b>June 25, 2022</b>	IYAQT Music Festival (Braefoot Park)
<b>July 9, 2022</b>	Uptown Multicultural Festival
<b>August 7, 2022</b>	Cadboro Bay Festival (Gyro Park)
<b>September 2022</b>	Focus groups with community organizations
<b>September to November 2022</b>	Development of final DEI Strategy and Policy
<b>November 2022</b>	Present DEI Strategy and Policy to Mayor and Council

## Engagement with District of Saanich Staff

The primary methods for internal engagement with Saanich staff were personal interviews and focus group sessions with Saanich leadership, staff, and the DEI Steering Committee members. Between May 2022 and October 2022, the District of Saanich conducted its first ever Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Survey (the DEI Survey) of Saanich employees, which was open to all full- and part-time staff members. Engagement was promoted through the District's internal communication channels, and the DEI Survey covered a range of important questions pertaining to identity, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Appendix F provides the list of staff interview questions.

## Engagement with Organizations and Indigenous Communities

Engagement generated insights into diversity, equity and inclusion from Saanich residents, community organizations and Indigenous communities that comprise the rich cultural make-up of the District. The primary methods for public engagement were conducted through personal interviews, focus group sessions and the DEI on-line Survey as well as conducting the DEI Survey in person with the aid of a QRG researcher while attending public events from May 2022 to October 2022 in the District of Saanich. This community engagement process has deepened an understanding of the barriers and challenges as well as the opportunities to expand the goals and objectives of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework.

The engagement approach is based on QRG's experience working on similar DEI initiatives and reinforced by our collective commitment to, and experience with, participatory processes and techniques that foster meaningful engagement with Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC). QRG provided multiple and varied ways for Saanich staff, leadership, community residents, leaders of racialized and gender-diverse organizations, and Indigenous peoples and organizations to share insights and perspectives on the challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and also, best practices. Our external engagement activities have been vital to this important work. They have increased knowledge of complex issues and will serve to strengthen DEI initiatives into the coming years. Appendices D and E provide the lists of questions for the interviews with Indigenous communities and community organizations.

Engagement activities with Indigenous peoples and communities focused on storytelling as a way for people to share their experiences about their community protocols, interests, and perspectives in the context of making more diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces for Indigenous peoples within the District of Saanich activities, programs, and services. The following table lists the engagement methods and participation from March 2022 to October 2022.

Timeline	Method of Engagement	Participant Involvement
May 2022 to July 2022	District of Saanich DEI Steering Committee and Leadership Team Focus Groups	1 Leadership Team focus group 1 Steering Committee focus group
June 2022 to October 2022	DEI Community Survey	286 community members/117,735 = .002 or 1/20th of a percent
June 2022 to October 2022	DEI District of Saanich Survey	161 respondents/1650 employees = 9%
June 2022 to September 2022	DEI District of Saanich Interviews	8 interviews
July 2022 to September 2022	Community Events	Attended 5 events
September 2022	DEI Organization Focus Groups	Two focus group sessions held involving 22 participants (September 9th and 23rd)
June 2022 to August 2022	First Nation Interviews and DEI Community Survey	3 First Nation interviews (6 First Nations and 2 Indigenous organizations contacted)

**Focus Groups**

Focus group discussions increase our understanding of complex issues and can add strength to what is already known through previous research. We conducted two focus group sessions with representatives of community organizations to learn more about issues pertaining to DEI. The list of organizations was developed based on the knowledge and connections of QRG, input from the District of Saanich staff, and also direct research.

**Personal Interviews**

Interviews are intensive and in-depth discussions; they are intended to be used in more complex and difficult analyses. Interviews allow for the collection of comprehensive information in a semi-structured format for flexibility and comfort for the interviewee. QRG conducted key informant interviews to gather information from individuals who are directly involved in and/or impacted by issues pertaining to DEI.

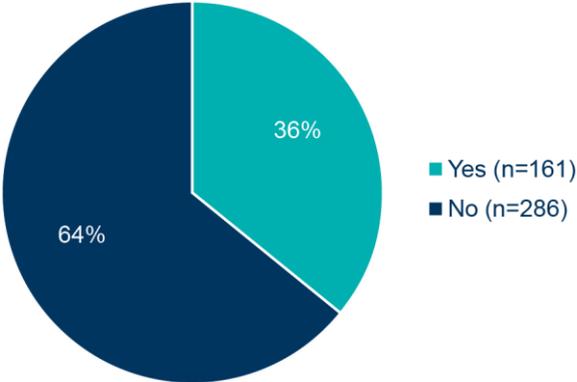
# District of Saanich Survey

The District of Saanich is committed to improving its programs and practices as they relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are guided by the principle that embracing diversity enriches the lives of all people and enhances the cultural fabric of our District.

To realize that vision, the District is working with QRG, a local diversity and inclusion consulting group comprised of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) practitioners and experts. QRG is experienced with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and is assisting with the development of a DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework that will set direction for the creation of new community programs, improve hiring and retention of a diverse employee base, and recommend a Policy on Racism to Saanich Council.

Beginning in March 2022, QRG worked with the District of Saanich to develop a survey for community and Saanich staff to provide insights and feedback regarding Saanich's commitment to improving its programs and practices as they relate to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). After several pilots and tests, the online survey was launched on June 16, 2022, and remained accessible until December 7, 2022. The survey software *SurveyMonkey* hosted the survey on its platform, it was voluntary, and responses were encouraged but not required for each question. The survey did not collect any personal or identifying information from participants, and as such, all responses were anonymous and confidential. This section provides a summary of the findings. Additional analysis is provided in Appendix C.

## Are you a District of Saanich Employee?



The survey consisted of 25 questions for each group. The first question asked respondents if they were a Saanich resident, and the second question asked if they were a District of Saanich employee. 449 people answered the first question and 447 answered the second, of which 161 identified themselves as Saanich employees and 286 did not. These responses split the respondents into two categories: 1) Community members and 2) District of Saanich employees.

This section presents the survey findings disaggregated by these two groups of respondents. In this way, the report highlights the different experiences and perceptions of DEI from the perspective of community members who engage with Saanich programs and services, but also from the perspective of employees who have a different relationship to DEI efforts within the District.

### Involvement

The District of Saanich wanted to hear from residents. We worked on a variety of ways to listen to what you have to say about what is most important to you with diversity and inclusion in our community.

To provide their feedback, residents were able to scan the barcode or click on this [Survey link](#). Survey participants were then entered into a draw for complimentary passes to a local recreation centre.





## Part 4

# What We Heard: Community Voices

This section provides information on the engagement and dialogue process with Indigenous communities and community organizations through focus group sessions. For all of these discussions, questions were developed to gather specific information. The purpose of the questions was to gather information on:

- Relationships between Nations and organizations and the District.
- Levels of understanding about DEI.
- Accessibility to programs and services.
- Ways of supporting the goals and aspirations of Indigenous Nations.
- Reconciliation work within the District.
- How programs and services provided by the District can be more gender, culturally, and racially diverse.
- Approaches by organizations to engaging diverse constituents in developing programs and services.
- Key elements that should be included in a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Report and Action Framework for Saanich (principles, actions).
- Measures for tracking and assessing progress in achieving DEI objectives.

## Pathway to Truth and Reconciliation

On November 27, 2017, Saanich Council received a staff report outlining the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and passed a motion to commence formal government-to-government relationships with the District of Saanich's neighbouring First Nation governments: Songhees, Esquimalt, W̱JOLEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), S̱ÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum), and MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat). Staff were given authority to implement projects and initiatives that improve government-to-government relationships within the existing budget.

### **W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council and District of Saanich sign ÁTOL,NEUEL MOU**

On December 3, 2021, the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council (WLC) and the District of Saanich formalized their commitment to reconciliation and are pursuing opportunities for collaboration with the signing of an ÁTOL,NEUEL ("Respecting One Another") Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Building on the rich dialogue that arose through the Cordova Bay local area planning process, the MOU outlines key areas of interest and priority for the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council and Saanich within the following themes:

- Recognition of W̱SÁNEĆ rights, history, and culture.
- Governance and implementation of the MOU.
- Environmental concerns.
- Protection of ancestral sites.
- Public art and education projects.
- Economic development opportunities, including housing.
- Parks management.

In addition, priorities identified by the WLC include Saanich Recognition of Douglas Treaty Rights and Oral History of the Douglas Treaties and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Saanich Council and staff will work toward these outcomes through dialogue and education.

## Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue (VURD) Gathering

Saanich Community Services staff participated in this event by attending the two-day conference and by sitting on the steering committee. It is through events like these that we are able to stay engaged with the urban reconciliation conversation. The VURD Steering Committee is a collaboration of urban Indigenous organizations, including the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) and Métis Nation of Greater Victoria, three levels of non-Indigenous government (federal, provincial, and municipal), and urban Indigenous community members.

The 2020 Gathering was the third gathering hosted by VURD and brought forward the findings of the previous two events to seek community feedback and support for VURD's next steps. The Gathering brought together over 150 people from the Métis Nation, all levels of non-Indigenous governments, the urban Indigenous community, local First Nations, community-based social service agencies and non-profits including health, the justice and education sectors, financial institutions, and arts organizations.

## First Nations interdepartmental working group

Council's motion of November 27, 2017, included direction to create a staff First Nations interdepartmental working group. The working group was asked to report back to Council on their assessment of the June 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "Calls to Action" report with potential initiatives for the District of Saanich to explore.

The [staff report](#) dated September 21, 2018, included the following initial actions:

- Cultural safety and humility training for Council and staff.
- Building formal government-to-government relationships.
- Presenting a more "welcoming face" by creating a First Nations Relations web page and installing welcome signage at all Saanich recreation facilities in the SENĆOTEN and Ləkʷəŋən languages.

Council endorsed these recommendations on October 1, 2018.

## Community Voices

As the District of Saanich continues to build strong and vibrant relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Nations in the community, and to honour the commitments the District has to reconciliation, we seek guidance from Indigenous communities in how to create and implement the goals and outcomes of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework. Through our conversations, we heard that while good work is being done, there is still much more that is needed as the District of Saanich moves forward in making its activities more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We heard that reconciliation could include many components and that it will take time but that it should start with building meaningful relationships with the community, the Nations Office, and the Councils. Reconciliation also starts with non-Indigenous people, including District of Saanich staff, educating themselves on the history of First Nations and the traditional lands where we all live. We respectfully acknowledge the W̱SÁNEĆ and ləkʷəŋən peoples, on whose unceded territories the District of Saanich is located, and the Songhees, Esquimalt, Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tsawout, Tseycum, and Malahat Nations, whose relationships with these lands and waters shape their political thought, governance, and self-determining

authority> Combine, this should inform how we all relate to this place and the DEI policies that we put into practice. The interview questions for discussions with Indigenous Nations and communities are provided in Appendix D.

Below we highlight some of the wise words that were shared during our engagement work.



“Our dealings, our communications largely depend on champions from their municipality and how much they carry their ways with the Nations. It helps to have a First Nation face on the other side of the table to be able to talk. Inclusion and equity and all those other good words are vital in today’s world. It’s not only about First Nations people, it’s about all people really, you know, in the medicine wheel. And that’s what I constantly talk about. I always say, ‘One World, One People,’ but that’s a really hard and kind of idealistic way of looking at the world, with the things that are going on.”

– Yux’wey’lupton — or Clarence “Butch” Dick, Lekwungen Elder Songhees Nation Elder

“It started mostly with some of the developments that were happening that had cultural monitoring issues, which is generally how our relationships start these days – historic policy that is not very sensitive around cultural sites. But they were also actually a really willing and ready partner to be starting up discussions. Equity, in terms of building relationships within a local government and other organizations, looks like, to me, more of a contribution and some shared responsibility and training to begin with to be able to bring Indigenous business to the same place as other businesses that are applying for some of the economic opportunities that are out there.”

– Joni Olsen, Policy/Negotiations Manager for the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council, Tsartlip First Nation





*One thing that I notice a lot is that when it comes to issues of racism, Islamophobia, Islamic history month, I haven't seen that in Saanich. The City of Victoria will have information sessions and activities, and how to deal with that demographic. In Saanich I haven't seen any of that around.*

– Community participant

community members, as revealed by the findings below. Addressing racism has become a priority for Saanich, and a policy on anti-racism has been created and is part of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework. This policy will serve as an important starting place to ensure our organizational culture and day-to-day business operations keep us on track, and it serves as an accountability mechanism to our commitments. With this DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework and policy on anti-racism, the District of Saanich can move forward in making its activities, policies, processes, and practices more diverse, equitable, and inclusive for all of our community members.

The District of Saanich is committed to building an equitable and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and supports and respects the ethnically and culturally diverse make-up of our community. Through our conversations with members of community organizations, we heard that while good work is being done, there is still much more that is needed to create and maintain a culture of inclusion. This can be best achieved by recognizing that racism, discrimination, and transphobia are an everyday lived experience for many Saanich



*It is very important in terms of the organizations that Saanich represents (police, how to deal with hate crimes), and there is a need to have a system in place where women in the community know where to go, know where to report the crime, have resources to support them.*

– Community participant

# Community Focus Groups Findings

The list of organizations who attended the two focus group sessions are as follows:

September 9th	September 23rd
Ukrainian-Canadian Cultural Society of Vancouver Island	Iyé Creative
Muslim Youth of Victoria	Victoria Sexual Assault Centre
Multiple (including Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership)	Victoria Pride Society
Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society	Power to Be
British Columbia Museums Society	Here Magazine
Ambit Gender Society	Muslim Youth of Victoria
Resilience BC Hub	Victoria Dian Punjabana Group
Eidsvold Lodge Norway House	Victoria Hindu Parishad
Victoria Dian Punjabana Group	
VNFC Elder and Senior Program	
Iyé Creative	

These organizations were chosen because they represent those who identify as Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Urban and Métis), LGBTQ2S+, ethnocultural, racialized, and other marginalized peoples in Saanich. Below are two voices shared during the focus group discussions.

Though by no means extensive, these comments suggest that some believe there are gaps the District of Saanich may need to address to achieve its DEI objectives and goals, such as engaging in anti-racism campaigns, celebrating diversity, building more welcoming communities for newcomers, providing more information on how to report hate crimes and gender violence, creating more community gardens, and investing more in children’s education to mitigate systemic racism. As one community member noted, the District of Saanich may benefit from looking at DEI examples in the Greater Victoria Area and beyond for inspiration, best practices and a basis of comparison.



“As the former mayor of Saanich, I believe that a program for diversity, equity and inclusion is the best way to set up Saanich for future success. We will be successful when we use all the resources of the amazing cultures, diversity and all of the assets of the Saanich economy and life.”

## Saanich Resident’s Voices: An Overview

The overall survey findings reveal that the vast majority of community respondents believe that Saanich is a welcoming place, with most noting that at local events over the past 12 months, they had not experienced any discrimination due to their minority status. That said, given that almost three-quarters of respondents self-identified as white, the disaggregated data paints a more nuanced picture stating that minority groups (e.g., racialized and LGBTQ2+) felt somewhat less welcome than the dominant group.

The findings also show that the majority of community respondents did not experience issues with respect to accessing Saanich programs and services, such as finding programs that were welcoming and inclusive, experiencing or observing a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures, and hearing or experiencing homophobic or transphobic remarks. However, about one-third of respondents indicated they had had issues finding programs that were inclusive and welcoming and had experienced or had seen a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures while accessing programs and services. Overall, the results suggest that community respondents rarely experienced the above situations, but community members have experienced all of them to varying degrees.

It is interesting that just over one-third of respondents answered “I don’t know” in terms of whether they had difficulty accessing inclusive washrooms or change rooms, suggesting possible confusion or relevancy around the question itself or uncertainty if they had witnessed such situations or were unable to identify them even if they had experienced them. More research is needed in this area.

When asked if they thought that the colour of a person’s skin may impact access to facilities and employment in Saanich, 55% of those who identified as a race other than white thought this might be the case access. This is significantly more than those who identified as white/Caucasian – again, revealing less positive results with disaggregated data.

The survey further revealed that community respondents ranked the following factors as very important, with the first two ranked as especially important:

- Creating a sense of belonging and community connection
- Ensuring cultural safety, reflecting cultural awareness of diverse groups
- Promoting ethnocultural diversity and recognizing diverse languages

When asked to list principles and practices of importance not included in the survey, suggestions ranged from ensuring accessible facilities as well as gender neutral bathrooms and change rooms, having adaptive equipment, addressing barriers to participation from diverse groups, ensuring greater diversity in leadership and staff, and more subsidized programming.

In terms of which principles or practices they thought were the most important for future Saanich programs and services on a scale from 1 to 5, community respondents ranked in order of the highest: 1) respect, 2) access to programs and services, 3) non-discriminatory culture and practices, and 4) transparency. These results are represented as a weighted average but reflect that the majority of respondents selected moderately important or extremely important as their response. Of note, diversity was the principle or practice ranked lowest by respondents. More research may be needed to better understand why the respondents weighted some principles and practices higher than others.

In terms of additional suggestions for how Saanich can make their programs, services, and events more culturally and gender diverse, survey respondents offered the following principles and practices:

- Training staff in DEI
- Ensuring that signage reflects diverse and inclusive language
- Constructing washrooms for gender diverse people
- Consulting and engaging with diverse communities on a regular basis
- Organizing multicultural events
- Highlighting Indigenous learnings and teachings
- Adapting programs and services to reflect neurodiversity, and
- Communicating and outreaching more effectively with minority groups.

In total, five themes emerged from these recommendations: staff capacity, facilities, communication, consultation and outreach, and programming for diversity, neurodiversity, and diverse abilities. These recommendations suggest that the respondents have considerable buy-in around the importance of DEI and a vested interest in making their communities more DEI friendly as well as varied ideas around how to actualize such principles and practices.

In summary, these survey findings suggest that the District of Saanich is doing many things right with respect to ensuring DEI principles and practices and that community respondents think DEI is important, want it to be more visible, and believe more concrete steps can be taken to address the above-noted gaps to make their communities even more equitable and inclusive.

## Saanich Residents' Voices: Survey Findings

This section presents identity and demographic information about the survey respondents and then presents respondents' views on their experiences and perceptions of DEI related to Saanich programs and services.

Although 286 respondents answered that they were not Saanich employees, only 230 completed the first question for community respondents, and 211 answered the last question. As mentioned earlier in the report, the District has a population of over 117,735 people.<sup>2</sup> The response rate on the survey represents a very small sample of the District, but their voices and insights are valuable nonetheless. In terms of the demographics of this group of respondents (survey allowed respondents to select all that apply, so the percentages total to greater than 100%):

- 68% of participants identified as woman/girl; 21% as man/boy; 8% as non-binary; 4% as transgender; and 3% preferred not to say.
- 73% of participants identified their race as white, 8% as Asian, 7% as Indigenous, 6% as a Person of Colour, and 4% as multiracial.
- 95% speak English most often at home, but 13% also speak another language.

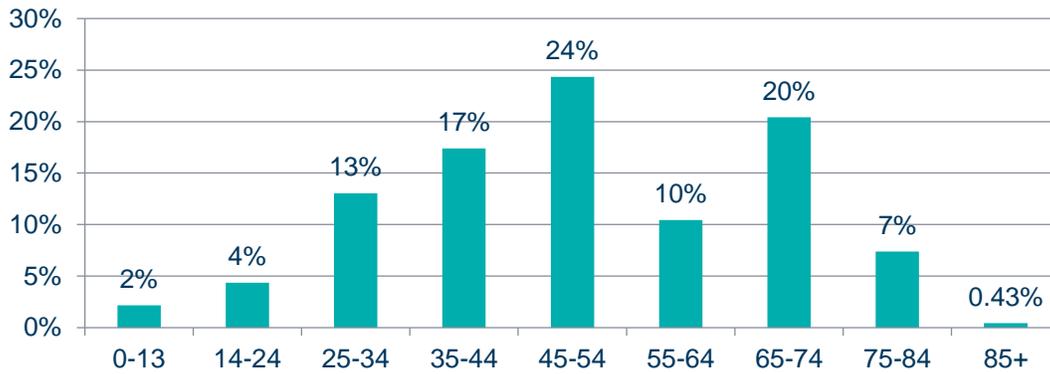
*As a newcomer moving into Saanich, if you need something, where do you go? The type of information that you need as a newcomer isn't readily available. I think the District could have some sort of tool in a central location to assist. – Community participant*

The sample has a higher population of women than the general Saanich population, but the proportion of participants from racialized groups is representative of the general population (~25%)<sup>2</sup> as is the use of English as the primary language spoken at home. The age distribution reflects more 45-64- and 65-74-year-old respondents than other 10-year categories. Sixty-two percent of respondents identified as a resident of

Saanich (over 5 years), 15% as a newcomer to Saanich (under 5 years), and 19% as other, usually specified as living in another municipality in the Capital Regional District. Immigrants made up 12% of the respondents, 9% of immigrants had lived in Saanich more than 5 years, and 3% of immigrants had lived in Saanich for 1 to 5 years. One respondent identified as a refugee. As such, the community respondents are mainly white English-speaking and have lived in Saanich for over five years, but there is representation from racialized groups, non-binary, and transgender groups, and a wide range of ages.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Saanich&DGUIDlist=2021A00055917021&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

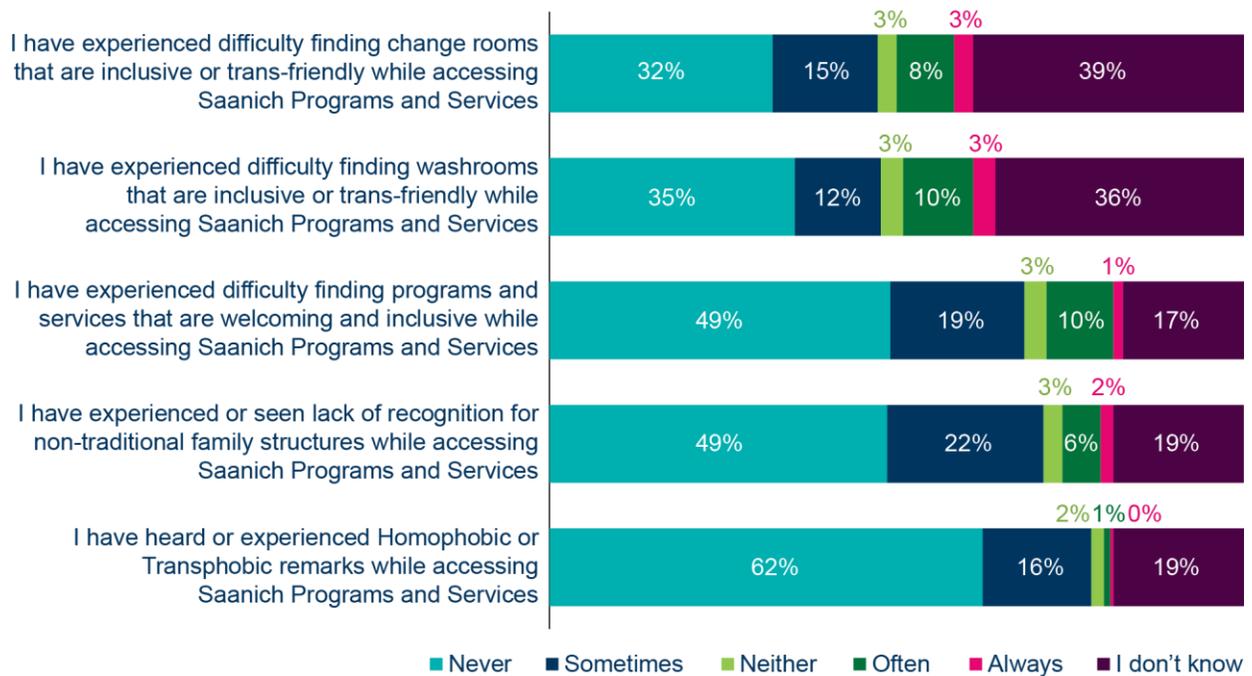
**Figure 1: Age range – select one**



The following set of questions explore respondents’ experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and ideas about DEI issues related to Saanich programs and services. The respondents provide insights on their experience and feedback on different DEI principles and practices. They also respond to open-ended questions allowing them to provide their own ideas for how the District of Saanich can become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive place.

The survey asked respondents about their experience with certain situations while accessing Saanich programs and services. Respondents rated, on a scale from 1 to 5, how frequently they encounter five situations that represent difficulty accessing inclusive washrooms or change rooms or programs or experiencing or observing a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures or homophobic or transphobic remarks. As depicted in Figure 2 below, while there is significant variance across the frequencies for each situation, “never” ranks as the highest selected response for each, except for difficulty accessing change rooms, to which 38% responded, “I don’t know”. About one third of respondents indicated that they have experienced difficulty finding programs that are inclusive and welcoming and have experienced or have seen a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures while accessing programs and services. Taken together, the results show that community respondents are rarely experiencing these situations, but community members have experienced all of them. Furthermore, the high response rate for “I don’t know” could suggest a lack of understanding of the question or situation (and thus be neutral), or it could indicate that community respondents are not certain if they have seen these situations or are unable to identify them even if they had experienced them.

**Figure 2: On a scale from 1 to 5, how often have you experienced any of the following situations while accessing Saanich Programs and Services?**



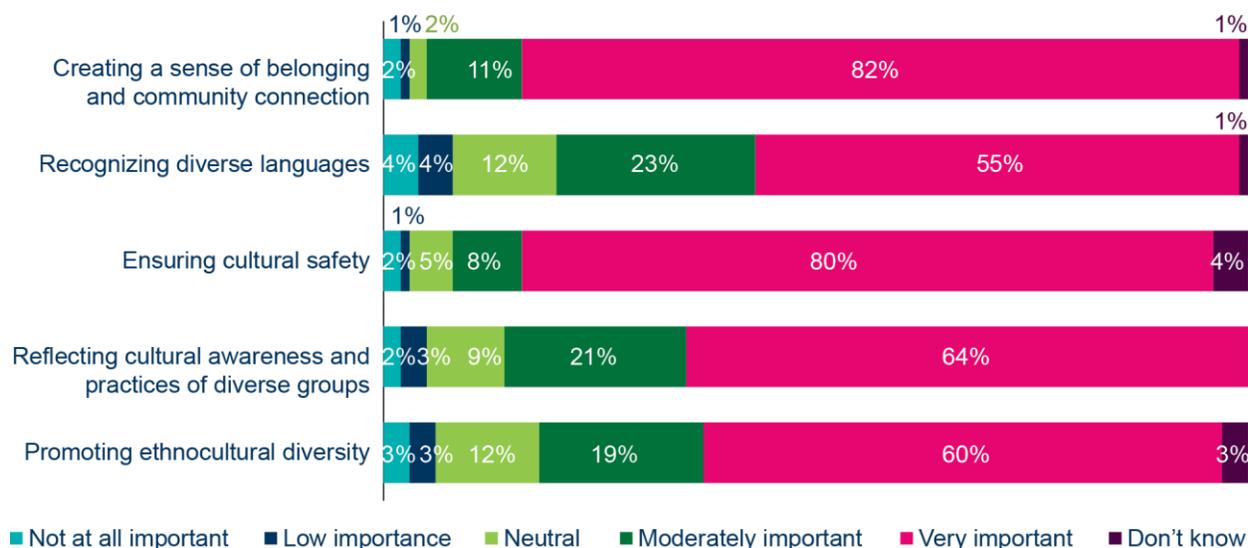
**Community gardens**

*Community gardens – for many communities, growing food is about survival. Would like to see more community farms that are led by our communities. Don't know how that works within the City of Saanich's framework. – Community participant*

The question in Figure 3 queries the purpose of Saanich providing culturally diverse programs and events by asking respondents to rank different factors from “not at all important” to “extremely important.” As readers can easily see, respondents ranked “very important” for all factors, but 80% of respondents selected “creating a sense of belonging and community connection” and “ensuring cultural safety” as very important, whereas only 53% of respondents selected “very important” for recognizing diverse languages and 27% selected “moderately important”.

This question provided an “other factors” option where respondents could input their own ideas, and two of these respondents raised an issue about a lack of understanding regarding cultural safety.

**Figure 3: On a scale from 1 to 5, how important are the following factors for Saanich in providing culturally diverse programs and events?**



The subsequent question prompted respondents to provide any recommendations on how Saanich can make their programs, services, and events more culturally and gender diverse. 218 respondents provided 112 unique substantive responses to this question, which were categorized into six themes.

### Staff capacity

The capacity of staff was identified as a key issue in advancing cultural and gender diversity. Capacity was defined by several key components: planning and the creation of advisory committees, recruiting more diverse staff, and achieving diversity in leadership. The training of staff in DEI was also mentioned as important in building capacity.

### Facilities

The availability of appropriate facilities for delivering programs, services, and events was identified as another theme. The key aspects of facilities included signage, accessibility, and washrooms and change rooms constructed in such a way as to provide privacy for gender-diverse people.

## Communication

Several aspects of communication were identified as important in supporting diversity in the work of the District. They can be categorized as inclusive language and imagery, communicating with diverse groups and gender diverse individuals, raising awareness with respect to DEI, and signage that reflects diverse and inclusive language.

## Consultation and outreach

Consulting and engaging with diverse communities and organizations was identified as a key component of effective DEI work. The purpose of these processes included receiving feedback from individuals with lived experience, creating partnerships with smaller, diverse organizations, and creating focus groups to seek input on current District programs, services, and events. Consultation and outreach need to be ongoing, iterative, and flexible.

## Programming for diversity

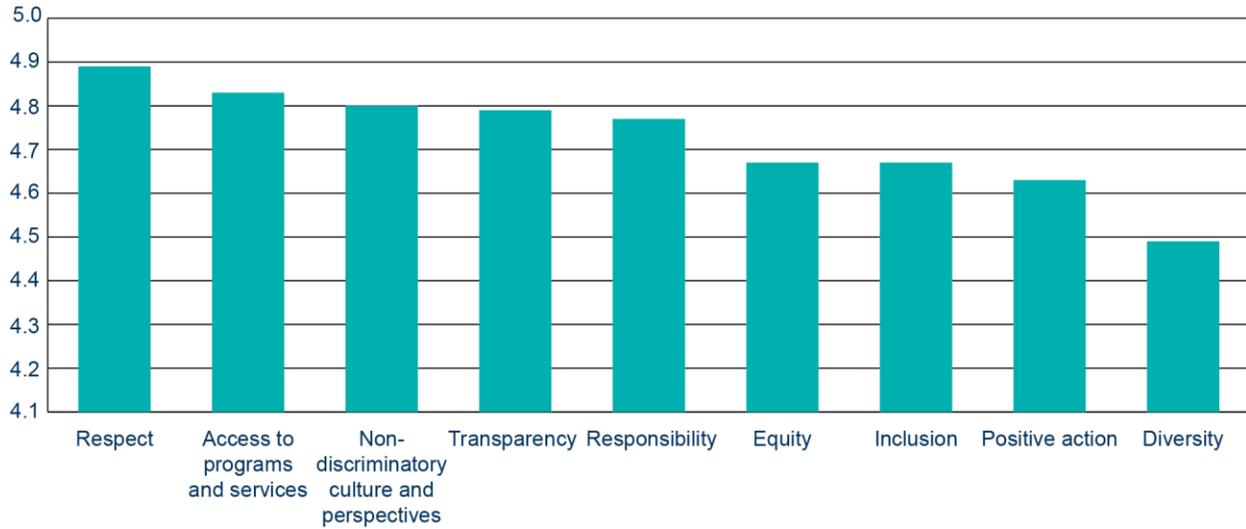
Respondents shared several criteria for developing and implementing diverse programs and services. These include multicultural events, Indigenous learning and teaching, varied timing and locations, and socio-economic barriers to accessing daytime programming.

## Neurodiversity and diverse abilities

Recognizing and adapting programs, services, and events to reflect different ways people think, learn, socialize, engage, move, and participate was viewed as an important component of advancing DEI. Neurodiversity needs to be incorporated into the District's programs, services, and events. Respondents noted that this is broader than strictly culture and gender.

The survey asked respondents which principles or practices they thought were the most important for future Saanich Programs and Services on a scale from 1 to 5. As shown in Figure 4 below, respondents ranked, in order of the highest: respect, access to programs and services, non-discriminatory culture and practices, and transparency. These results are represented as a weighted average but reflect that the majority of respondents selected moderately important (4) or extremely important (5) as their response. Of note, diversity was the principle or practice ranked lowest by respondents.

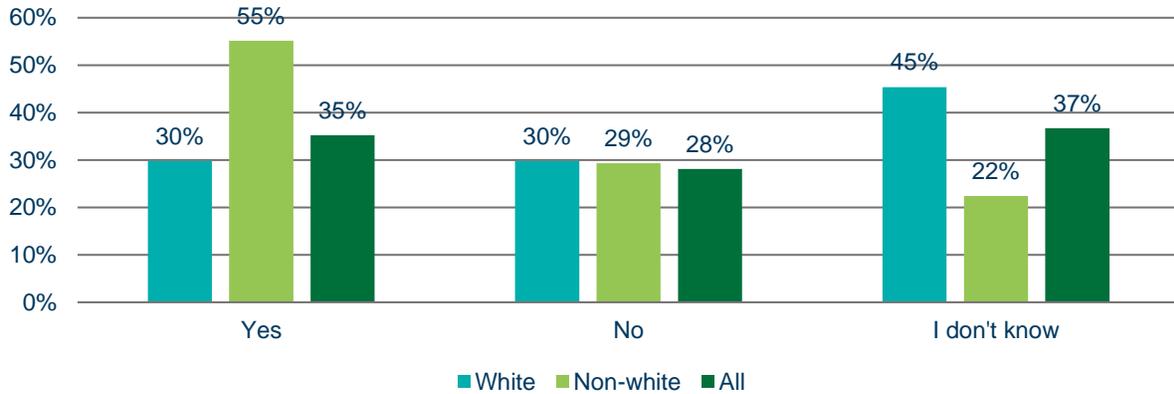
**Figure 4: Which of these principles or practices do you think are the most important for future Saanich Programs and Services on a scale from 1 to 5?**



The survey provided the respondents the option to list the principles and practices not included here that they feel are important for enhancing equity at Saanich. 138 respondents provided a response to this question. While several respondents voiced concern over the question and/or the difficulty in achieving equity, there were some dominant principles and practices put forward. These included ensuring facilities are accessible, have adaptive equipment, gender neutral bath/change rooms; consulting and doing outreach to understand what (tangible and intangible) barriers exist to participation from diverse groups and what might be done to mitigate the barriers; correcting the lack of visible diversity in leadership and staff; age considerations and programming for elders; and economic factors that impact participation and more subsidized programming.

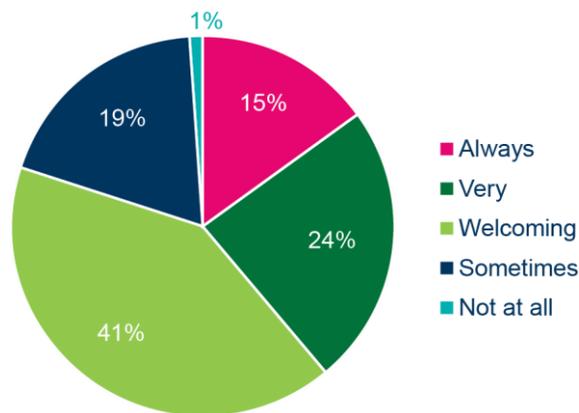
When asked if community respondents thought that the colour of a person’s skin may impact their access to facilities and employment in Saanich, as presented in Figure 5 below, the responses were almost evenly distributed across “yes”, “no”, and “I don’t know”. When disaggregated by racial identity, however, of those who identified as a race other than white, 55% responded that they thought skin colour would impact access. This is significantly more than those who identified as white/Caucasian.

**Figure 5: Do you feel that a person’s skin colour may impact their access to facilities and employment opportunities in Saanich?**



Two questions asked respondents their perceptions on how welcoming Saanich is. Figure 6a highlights the responses to the question about whether Saanich is a welcoming community for them and their family. The responses were generally positive, with 41% of respondents selecting “welcoming”, 24% “very welcoming” and 15% selecting “always welcoming”. On the negative end of the scale, 19% responded, “sometimes welcoming” and 1% (2 respondents) said “not at all”.

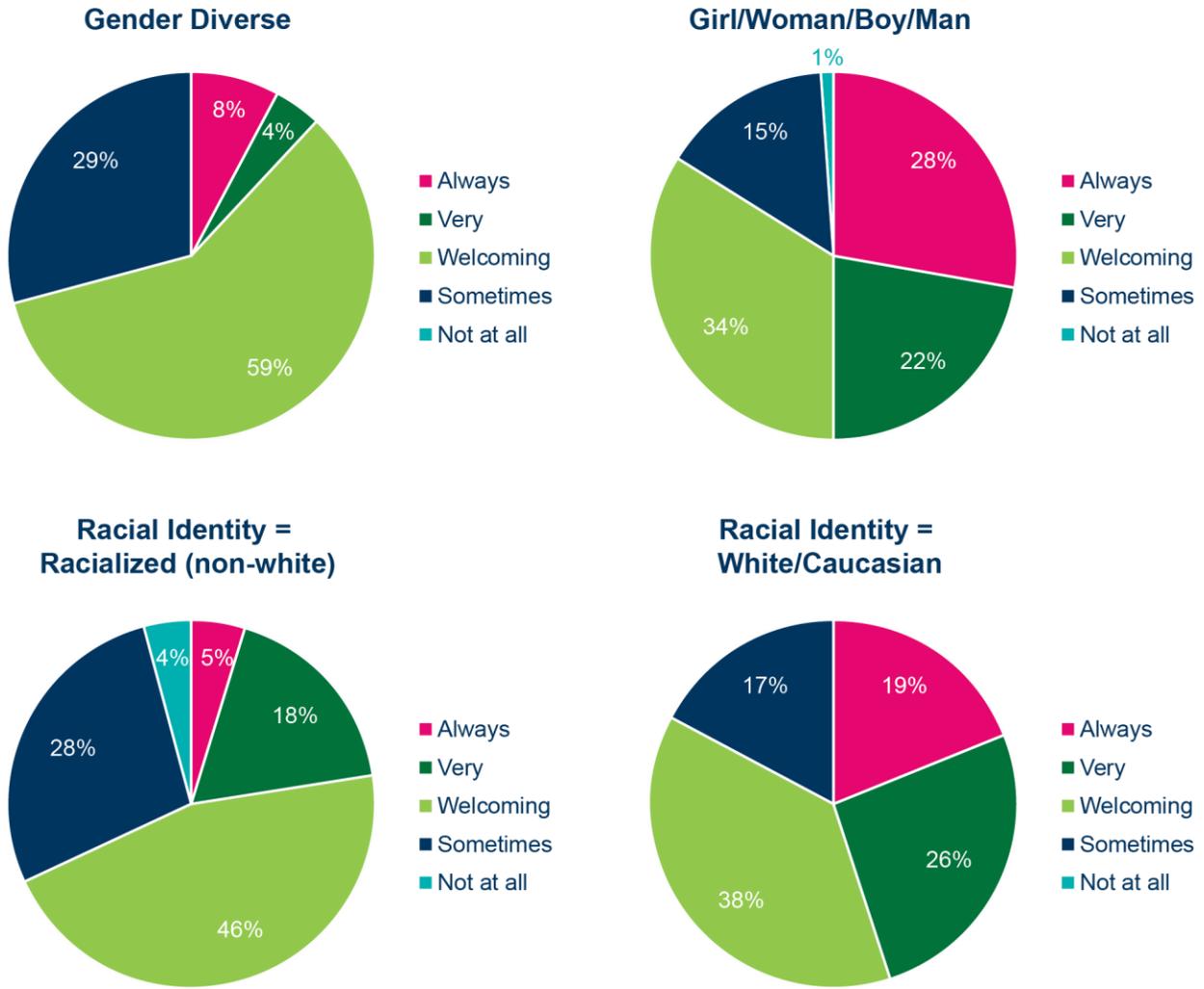
**Figure 6a: Generally speaking, do you feel Saanich is welcoming for you and your family?**



Again, disaggregated by racial identity and by gender identity, dominant groups report more positively than under-represented groups such as those who identify as non-white or who do not identify as woman/girl or man/boy.

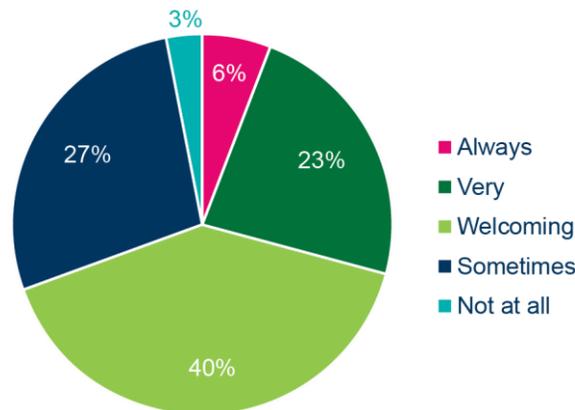
The comparison between groups illustrates how different groups feel about how welcoming the District of Saanich is. For example, those who identified their gender with girls/women or boys/men have a more positive perception than those who identified as gender diverse; and those who identified their race as white/Caucasian had a more positive perception than those who identified as a non-white category.

**Figure 6b: Generally speaking, do you feel Saanich is welcoming for you and your family?**



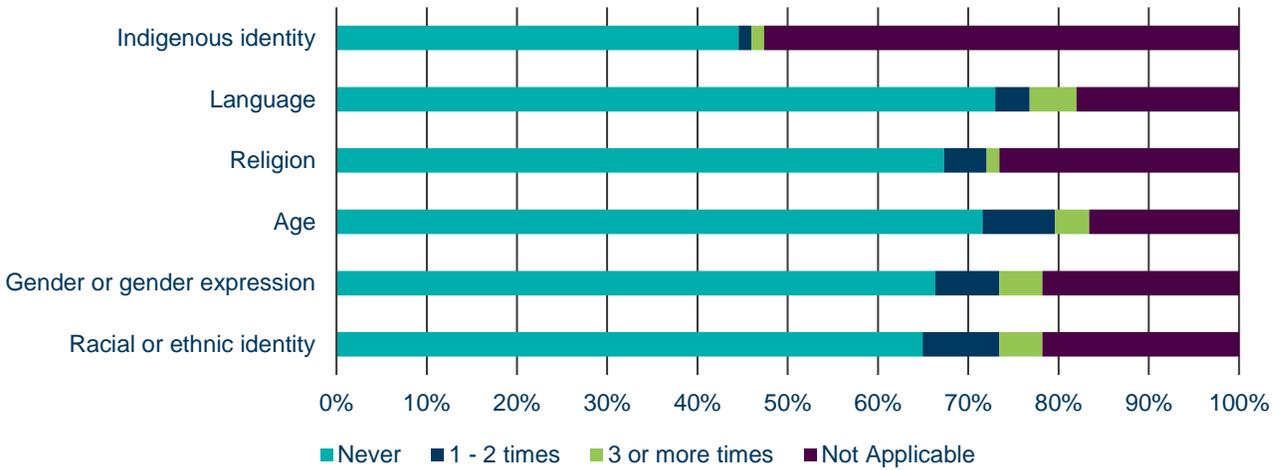
Following the question asking respondents about how welcoming Saanich is for them and their families (recall that 73% of respondents identified as white/Caucasian and 68% as women), respondents were asked about how welcoming Saanich is for diverse groups of people. The results in Figure 7 below demonstrate that there is a perception among respondents that Saanich is less welcoming for diverse groups of people: only 6% think it is “always welcoming”, 23% think it is “very welcoming”, and 27% think it is “sometimes welcoming”.

**Figure 7: To what extent do you feel that Saanich is a welcoming community for diverse groups of people?**



In the final question, respondents were asked: over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced discrimination at a Saanich event because of your racial or ethnic identity, gender or gender expression, age, religion, language, Indigenous identity, or other? As demonstrated in Figure 8 below, most respondents have never experienced discrimination for these reasons, or the reason is not applicable to them. Given that we know only 7% of the respondents identified as Indigenous, and yet 44% of respondents selected “never” for Indigenous Identity, these results suggest that respondents are selecting “never” even if “not applicable” is a more accurate response. The frequency of discrimination was greatest for language, gender or gender expression, and racial or ethnic identity – 5% of respondents selecting “3 or more times” for each of those reasons. Eight percent of respondents selected 1 to 2 times for age discrimination, and 9% of respondents selected 1 to 2 times for racial or ethnic identity. The data therefore suggests that racial or ethnic identity, age, and gender or gender expression are the most frequent kinds of discrimination at Saanich for this group of respondents. Again, given the small sample size of respondents, the application of these findings to the larger population requires further inquiry.

**Figure 8: How often have you experienced discrimination at a District of Saanich event because of your:**



The question included a category of “other”, to which 20 respondents took the time to input a response. These responses included discrimination because of neurodiversity or neurodivergence, physical disabilities, and economic factors such as not being a homeowner. Several “other” responses referenced COVID-19. The responses related to COVID-19 noted that people were not actually attending “Saanich events” as implied in the question because of COVID-19 and/or that they were not able to access services because they were unvaccinated.



## Part 5

# What We Heard: District of Saanich

## District of Saanich Staff Voices

The following section outlines the main themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews and focus group discussions with Saanich staff, including members of the DEI Steering committee (see Appendix G for mandate and membership). From the analysis, we identified that there are four main focus areas that staff feel should be addressed in the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework to make the District of Saanich activities, programs, and services more diverse, equitable and inclusive. These themes are described in more detail below.

- **Theme 1: Support Transition within Saanich to a More Inclusive Workplace Through Organizational Change**
- **Theme 2: Benchmarking and Key Performance Indicators (KPI)**
- **Theme 3: Support Change Allowing for a More Diverse Workforce**
- **Theme 4: Saanich as a Barrier-free and Equal Opportunity Employer**



## Theme 1: Support Transition within Saanich to a More Inclusive Workplace Through Organizational Change

Through our conversations with staff, we heard that when workplaces focus on inclusion, they create higher levels of employee engagement, and people feel motivated and inspired to create innovative change at the organizational level. An example of this was illustrated in a conversation with one participant when they said the following:

***“The leadership team will move the change, but the real change will need to be HR because they hold power over the policies. We need commitment from the leadership team to drive the policy change, and HR needs to drive an inclusive process of developing policies. If our senior managers are not on board to create an inclusive culture, we are lost.”***

Our conversations also pointed to the positive changes happening within the District of Saanich and that organizational change which will support DEI is on the rise. It was suggested by the vast majority of our participants that creating and maintaining working groups, such as the Indigenous inter-departmental working group, can help to achieve the desired buy-in for the organization.

Participants also noted that there is a need for leadership to help achieve the buy-in for DEI throughout the entire District of Saanich. We also heard that leadership is important, and commitments are well underway to make the desired and proposed changes. For example, one participant explained that he understands that “individuals of visible minorities will feel more energized to contribute to creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Saanich if they see other people of visible minorities in the rooms of influence”.

The discussions with Saanich staff identified several key themes that are important for organizational change. These themes are connected and form a cycle to achieve effective change over time. Foundational change means looking at the culture and systems within the organization to ensure that the desired change is lasting and meaningful.



## Theme 2: Benchmarking and Measures

Another clear message from Saanich staff was the need for the District to create measurable actions towards achieving greater diversity, equity, and inclusion for Saanich. The following table highlights areas of focus and measures that were identified through the interviews and focus group discussions.

Area of Focus	Measure
Address representation of individuals of visible minorities within the structure of the organization.	Increased number of individuals of visible minorities participating on committees, boards, and staff in the District of Saanich.
Establish a budget allocation.	Increased spending on diversity, equity, and inclusion planning and implementation.
Conduct an internal audit on current policies and procedures relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion, including hiring processes.  Conduct a business process review (systems and practices) to ensure systemic discrimination is being looked at in a fulsome way.	Creation of additional policies relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion.  Number of policies reviewed and updated based on a diversity, equity, and inclusion and Gender Based Analysis (GBA)+ lens.

### Theme 3: Making Saanich a Diverse Workforce

Individuals interviewed identified instances where the District is completing important work on the topic of DEI. Paired with the District of Saanich's decision to undertake this work in DEI, there is an identified desire for continuing to build on current work. The District is using pronouns in email signatures now, and the use of pronouns was identified as a strength by two of the individuals interviewed. One participant provided a comment on one key value within Saanich:

***“Saanich has a ‘culture of safety’ which will help lay the groundwork for DEI.”***

### Theme 4: Make Saanich a Barrier-free and Equal Opportunity Employer

Saanich continues to become more diverse and has historically been a diverse community. Therefore, continued work in this area should be able to reflect and embrace the reality of the diversity which exists in the community. One participant explained: *“Diversity and inclusion help us be more flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of our workforce.”* Through our conversations, we heard that employee expectations are changing, and this challenges employment systems and practices to be more flexible. District of Saanich staff are wanting the organization to value their diversity and have programs and work cultures that make them feel welcomed and included. Suggestions that staff recommended in terms of building a more welcoming and inclusive organization for racialized and gender-diverse people include:

- Recognizing and developing internal talent; and
- Attracting and hiring talent that is more reflective of the cultural diversity of the District of Saanich.

It was further recommended that the District of Saanich pay attention to how other municipalities are addressing their strategies for DEI. One of the participants felt there was great merit in

***“...observing best practices from other organizations and asking how do municipalities or other organizations manage this issue?”***

That being said, it is important to pay attention to the external DEI landscape, but also to notice the good work that is being undertaken within the District of Saanich. For example, one participant identified that there had been recent changes to Human Resource practices and feels that this change resulted in a *“different focus towards recruitment and people programs”*.

Another participant explained that part of the challenge faced internally is that *“Having strategies and tools in place is one thing, but they need to be followed and supported. Staff turnover can be an opportunity and a challenge. Some long-serving staff have more trouble buying into change (they have seen it over and over again, hard to get behind it).”* Therefore, there is a real desire for all involved to be patient with this change. One individual indicated a desire to be patient with the change process, stating that there needs to be *“an understanding that results aren't always going to be immediate. Keep an eye on the longer-term change that needs to happen.”*

In the next section, we provide a strategic implementation approach and several recommendations based on the knowledge exchanges and empirical data gathered through our DEI engagement activities and review of current best practices in DEI from other jurisdictions.

## DEI Staff Survey Results

Our conversations with key District of Saanich staff pointed to the changes happening within the District of Saanich and that organizational change focusing on DEI is beginning to align with the requirements for the organization. There was a clear desire to maintain the momentum on the identified change.

The following section highlights some of the key findings from Saanich staff, beginning with some demographic information about the respondents and then presenting respondents' views on some of the key DEI questions from the survey.

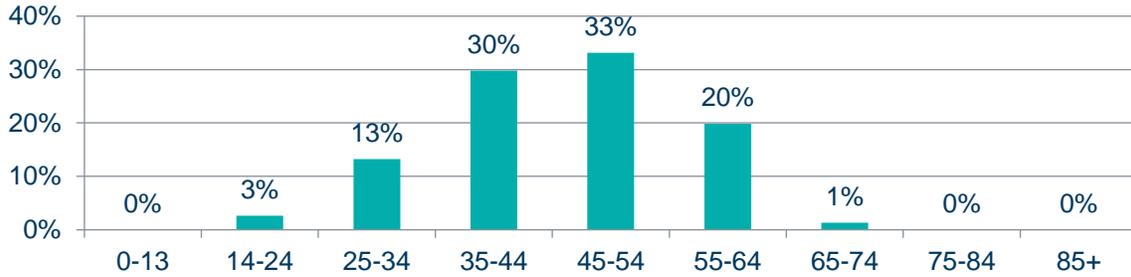
Of the approximate 1,650 employees in the District of Saanich, 161, or about 9%, responded to the first question and 103 responded to the last question in the employee survey. Given the low rate of response, findings from the survey are not representative of Saanich employees and should not be used to draw general conclusions about District of Saanich staff attitudes or beliefs regarding DEI. Furthermore, most survey respondents were white, English-speaking women, and less diverse than the community respondents. The departments and types of employees (union or management) were not included in the demographic data to maintain confidentiality.

- 69% identified as woman/girl; 28% as man/boy; 1% as non-binary, and 3% preferred not to say.
- 87% of participants identified their race as white, 4% as Asian, and 5% preferred not to say.
- 98% speak English most often at home.

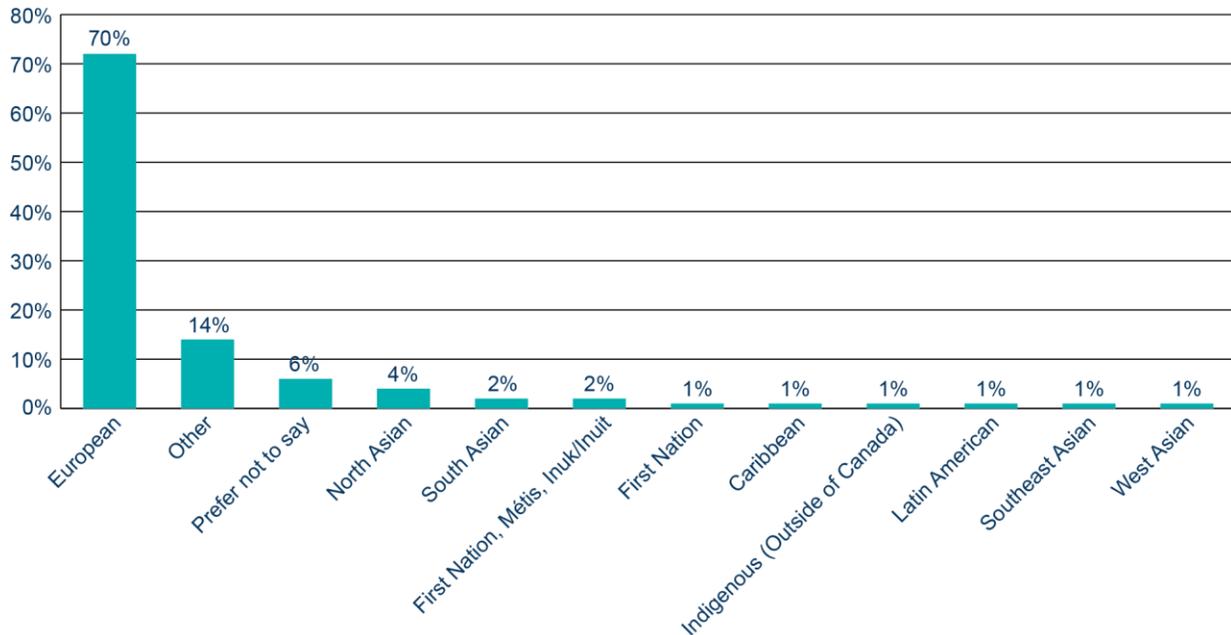


The data from the staff survey provide a starting point for the District of Saanich to commence conversations or reflect upon the lack of diversity among survey respondents, which may reflect a lack of diversity in terms of gender identity, race, and ethnicity among Saanich employees. The age distribution of respondents, however, corresponds to the general labour force.

**Figure 9: Please select one of the following age ranges:**



**Figure 10: What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply to you.)**



### What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply to you)

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Count
European (e.g., French, British, Dutch)	72%	109
Other	14%	21
Prefer not to say	6%	9
North Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)	4%	6
South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	2%	3
If you checked First Nation, Métis, Inuk/Inuit - please identify your Indigenous community	2%	3
First Nation	1%	2
Caribbean (e.g., Jamaican, Guyanese, Trinidadian)	1%	2
Indigenous from a nation/community outside of Canada	1%	1
Latin American (e.g., Brazilian, Colombian, Mexican)	1%	1
Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)	1%	1
West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Syrian, Afghan, Saudi Arabian)	1%	1

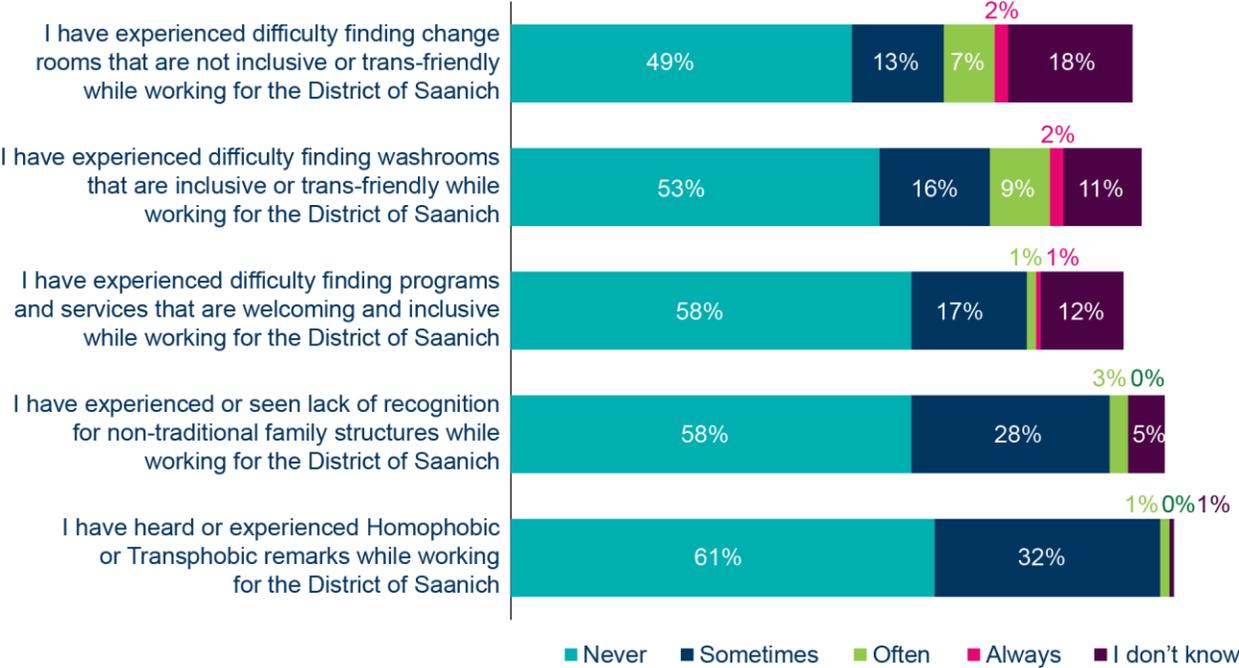
### What is your racial identity?

Answer Choices	Responses	
	Percentage	Count
White or Caucasian	86.75%	131
Prefer not to say	4.64%	7
Asian or Asian American	3.97%	6
Other (please specify)	3.31%	5
Multi-racial	3.05%	4
Bi-racial	3.05%	4
Person of Colour	3.05%	4
Black	0.66%	1
Indigenous	0.66%	1

Following the opening questions about identity, responding employees answered a series of questions designed to gather insights on their experiences and attitudes or beliefs related to DEI in their engagement with Saanich, in the delivery of Saanich’s programs, and in employee recruitment, hiring, and retention. The questions presented here looked at how staff perceive opportunities and challenges with respect to diversity and inclusion while working at the District of Saanich. The questions were structured with a set of principles, practices, or factors for respondents to rank related to current and future programming, as well as hiring.

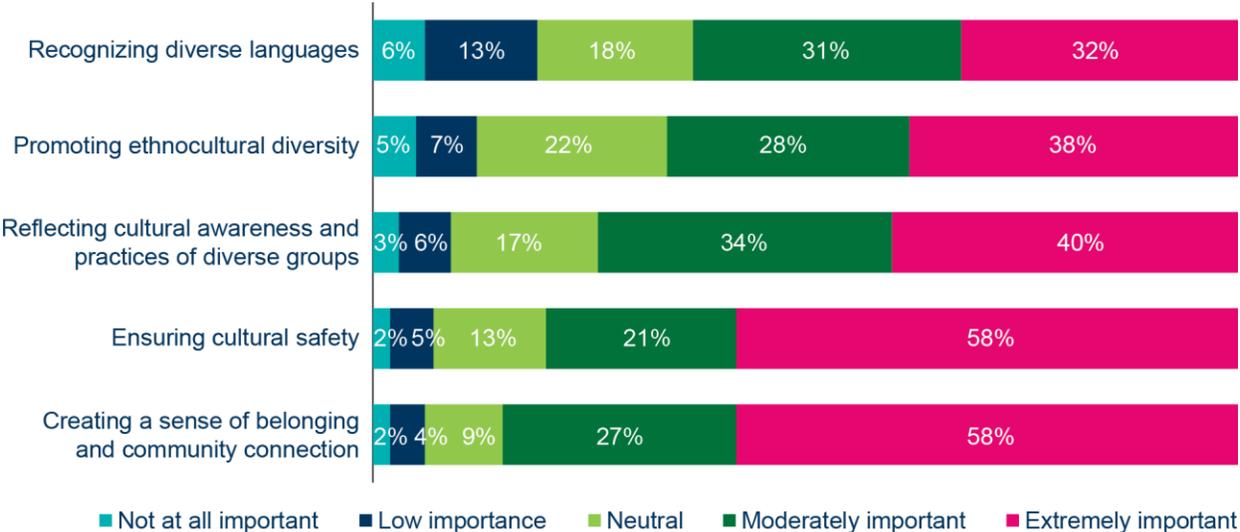
The first question in this set invited staff to rate the frequency of experiencing certain situations while working for the District of Saanich. As depicted in Figure 11 below, for each of the situations about 50% of respondents had never experienced such a situation. For situations experienced by employees, very few respondents selected “always” (never more than 2%). Respondents selected “often” for difficulty finding inclusive change rooms (9%) and washrooms (7%), but not for other situations. Respondents selected “sometimes” for several situations. Perhaps most concerning, 32% of respondents sometimes experienced or heard homophobic or transphobic remarks while working, and 28% of respondents sometimes experience or see a lack of recognition for non-traditional family structures. Taken together, the results show that staff respondents are rarely experiencing these situations, but all of them have been experienced by District employees.

**Figure 11: On a scale from 1 to 5, how often have you experienced any of the following situations while working for the District of Saanich?**

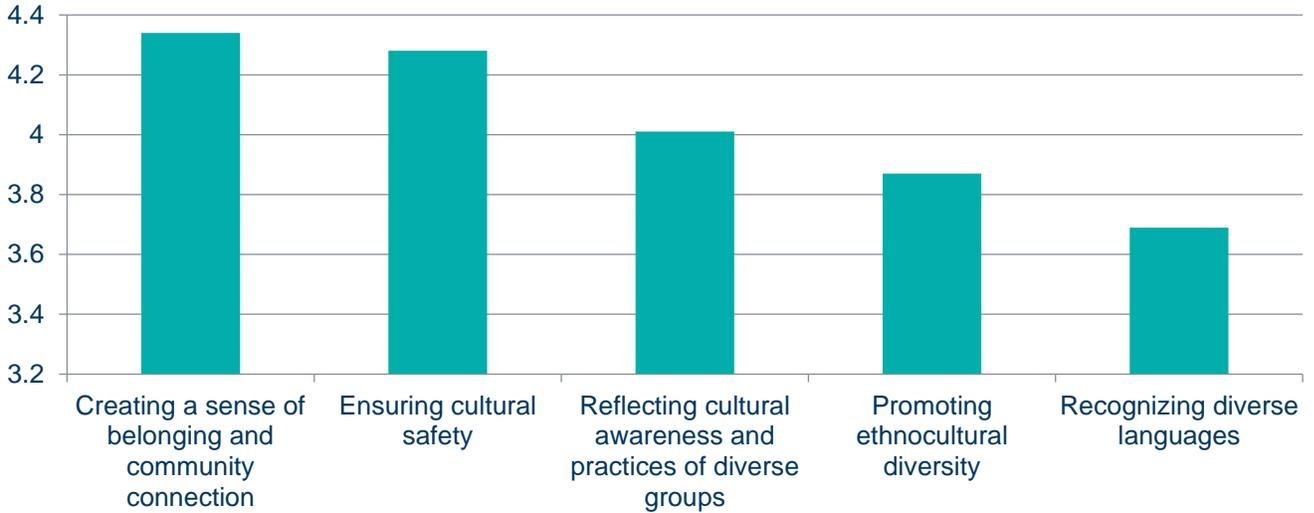


The next question invited participants to rate how important various factors are for Saanich to provide culturally diverse programs. The survey listed the factors for the participants and asked them to rank each factor from not at all important to important for Saanich in providing culturally diverse programs and events. Figure 12 shows that over 60% of respondents selected moderately important or extremely important for every factor, but creating a sense of belonging and community connection and ensuring cultural safety ranked as the most important. Figure 13 reinforces this with the weighted average of responses and reflects the importance of the factors relative to each other. It should be noted that respondents were not allowed to select “extremely important” for every factor.

**Figure 12: On a scale from 1 to 5 how important are the following factors for Saanich in providing culturally diverse programs and events?**



**Figure 13: On a scale from 1 to 5, how important are the following factors for Saanich in providing culturally diverse programs and events? (weighted average)**



The survey asked respondents which principles or practices they thought were the most important for future Saanich programs and services on a scale from 1 to 5. The survey results presented in Figure 14 below reveal that respondents ranked, in order of the highest: respect, transparency, non-discriminatory practices, and access to programs and services. These results are represented as a weighted average but reflect that the majority of respondents selected moderately important (4) or extremely important (5) as their response. The survey provided the respondents with the option to list the principles and practices not included here that they feel are important for enhancing equity at Saanich. Responses included neurodiversity, accessibility, reconciliation, and trust.

**Figure 14: Which of these principles or practices do you think are the most important for future Saanich Programs and Services on a scale from 1 to 5? (weighted average)**

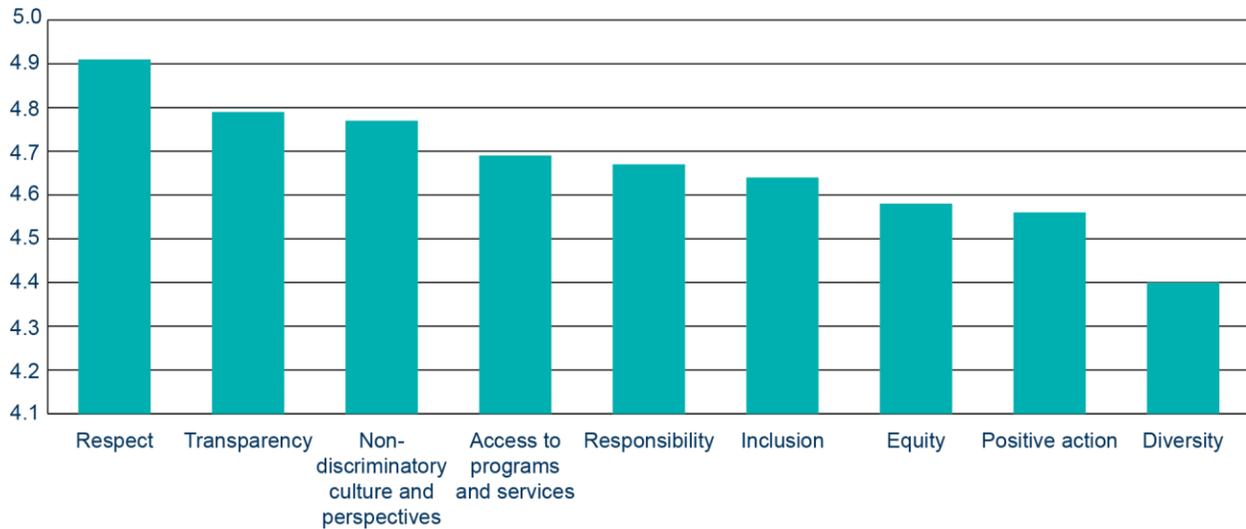
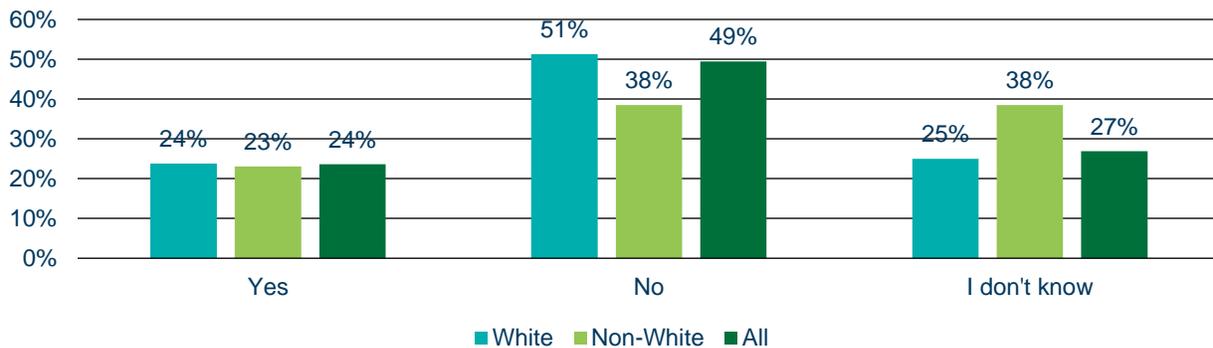


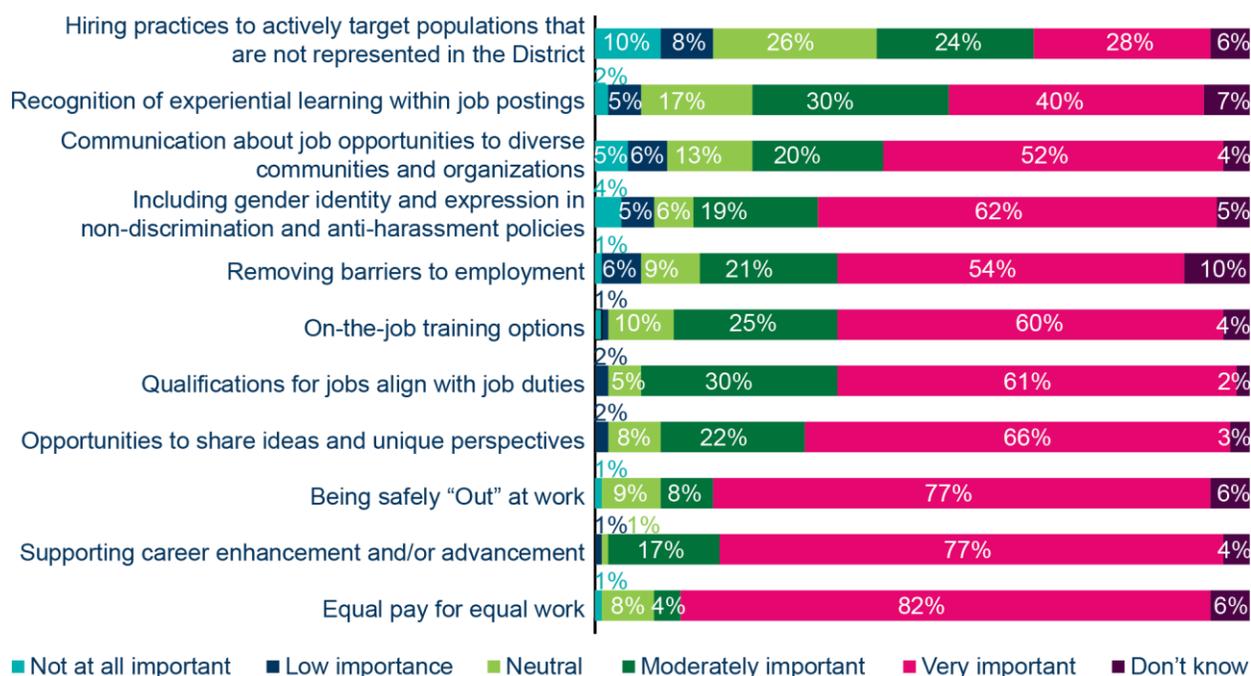
Figure 15 illustrates that the staff responses about whether they feel that a person’s skin colour may impact their access to facilities and employment/job opportunities and promotions within the organization also differed from community participants. For staff, only 24% said yes. When we consider racial identity, there were only 14% of staff participants identified as non-white, and the non-white staff were more likely to respond “no” or “I don’t know”. Of those employees identifying as white, 51% responded that the colour of one’s skin does not impact access, while only 38% of non-white employees responded “no”.

**Figure 15: Do you feel that a person’s skin colour may impact their access to facilities and employment opportunities in Saanich?**



In addition to practices, principles, and factors that are important in Saanich program and service provision, the DEI survey also asked participants about important considerations when hiring and retaining a diverse workforce. The considerations provided to respondents come from research and best practices related to DEI hiring practices and as demonstrated by the results, respondents found almost all of them moderately or very important. Perhaps of note, respondents undervalued the importance (relative to other considerations) of hiring practices to actively target employees from underrepresented groups which is a known best practice for improving workforce diversity.

**Figure 16: What are the important considerations for the District of Saanich when hiring and retaining a diverse workforce? Rate from 1 to 5.**

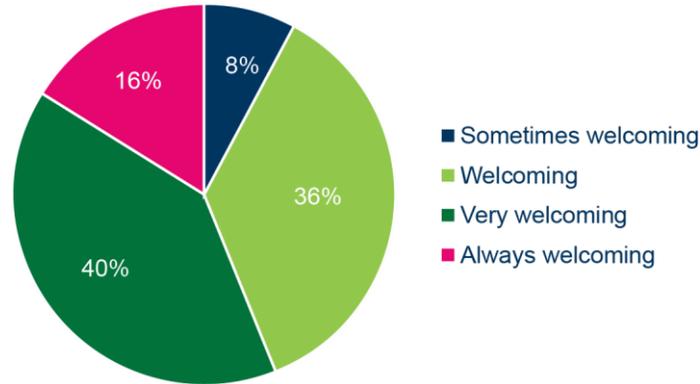


The ability to derive a more nuanced conclusion from this question than “everything is important, but some things are more important than others”, is difficult. This difficulty arises because it is unclear if respondents were selecting what they think are important considerations or what they think Saanich considers important in hiring and retaining a diverse workforce. Furthermore, given the demographics of the respondents, the results do not necessarily reflect insights from many people from underrepresented groups.

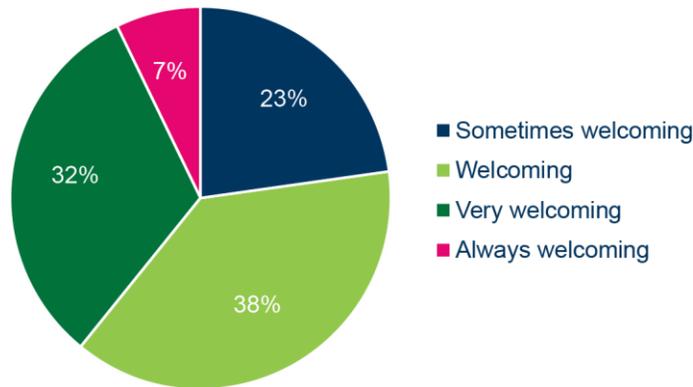
Staff were asked to what extent they feel that Saanich is a welcoming community for them or for diverse groups of people, with the survey results displayed below. When asked if Saanich is welcoming for them, 56% of staff participants provided a positive response of “very” (40%) or “always” (16%) welcoming. On the negative end of the scale, no one selected “not at all welcoming” and only 8% selected “sometimes welcoming”. When asked about welcoming for diverse groups, however, again no one selected “not at all welcoming”, but 23% selected “sometimes welcoming”. Thirty-nine percent selected a positive side of the scale, with 32% responding “very welcoming” and 7% responding “always welcoming” for diverse groups. In comparison, over half of participants selected the positive side of the scale for themselves, while

less than half of participants selected the positive side of the scale for diverse groups. Given the demographics of the respondents (white English-speaking women), the responses regarding welcoming for diverse groups denote a perception of the experience of diverse group members and not a lived experience. Nonetheless, these respondents think Saanich is more welcoming of them than of diverse groups.

**Figure 17: Welcoming for you**



**Figure 18: Welcoming for Diverse Groups**



The DEI survey included questions related to perceptions and experiences of discriminatory practices. We asked Saanich staff the following question: over the past 12 months, how often have you experienced discrimination at a District of Saanich event because of your racial or ethnic identity, gender or gender expression, age, religion, language, Indigenous identity, other?

**Figure 19: Reasons and frequency for discrimination at Saanich**



The majority of Saanich employees who responded to the survey have not experienced discrimination themselves for any of the reasons listed above (recall that the demographics of the survey respondents render several of these reasons “not applicable”, not “never”. However, the most cited reasons for discrimination when it was happening were for age and gender or gender expression, with 20% of participants saying they had been discriminated against one to two times for age, and 8% three or more times. 16% of participants had been discriminated against one to two times for gender or gender expression and 11% more than three times. It is interesting to note that a category of “other” was provided, to which 13 participants took the time to input a response. These responses included as reasons: disability, queerness, financial status, sexist hiring practices and sexist behaviours, and political views.

In the following section, we outline DEI strategies and priority areas for the implementation to ensure that the District is building a culture of inclusion and connectedness.



## Part 6

# Looking Ahead

## DEI Strategic Priorities for the District of Saanich

The District of Saanich is committed to working from the strategic priorities put forward in this DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework to build, enhance, and foster positive working relationships. What is important at this stage is to develop a Strategic Framework that creates sustainable relations and positive communications with the Saanich community, leadership, staff, community organizations, residents, racialized peoples, and Indigenous Nations and communities. In this section, we outline recommended strategies to address DEI.

As part of these strategic priorities, the dialogue and engagement with community members identified a spectrum of activities and initiatives that can inform implementation actions – referred to as community toolkits in the following sections. These toolkits highlight suggestions from community members and organizations to support meaningful and visible progress on advancing DEI throughout Saanich. These combined strategies will support relationship-building and ensure that the District of Saanich centres the values associated with creating DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination activities, programs, and services for and with the Saanich community. Below we outline the strategic priorities and action toolkits to ensure that the District creates a culture of inclusion and connectedness.

### Strategic Priority #1: Building a culture of DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination.

Creating a culture of DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination means striving to build awareness and understanding, and placing emphasis on actions rather than words. Building this culture starts with dialogue, having conversations, embracing values in policies and policy implementation as well as engaging in learning across the organization. This strategic priority focuses on increasing diversity within the District of Saanich workforce. There are a number of strategies that are important to employment outreach, recruitment of a diverse workforce, and building a culture of awareness, respect, and understanding.

## Strategic Priority #2: Supporting leadership for organizational change.

Leadership occurs throughout an organization and across different roles and responsibilities. Addressing positive change within policy, planning, human resource, and program systems requires building awareness of anti-racism, anti-discrimination, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and positive and consistent action by leadership.

## Strategic Priority #3: Building relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities based on understanding and respect.

The District of Saanich continues to build strong and vibrant relationships with the many Indigenous Peoples and Nations in the community. Growing and nurturing relationships is an ongoing process and needs to occur through consistent and respectful communications.

## Strategic Priority #4: Creating and sustaining a welcoming environment.

The District recognizes the importance of providing spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences can gather information, participate in programs, join various events, and participate in dialogue. Ensuring a welcoming environment means identifying and addressing racism, discrimination, and exclusion within places, programs, and services.

## Strategic Priority #5: Measuring and monitoring outcomes and continuing improvement.

Measuring in a meaningful way the impacts of the DEI Strategic Framework on communities and the residents of Saanich is critical to creating positive change. Gathering perspectives from community organizations, residents, and Indigenous Nations and communities is the primary tool for improving outcomes and creating meaningful change over time.

## Community Focused Toolkit

### **Strategic Priority #1:**

Building a culture of DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

- Share information with community organizations, First Nations, and Indigenous organizations about District employment opportunities.
- Continue to engage in dialogue with diverse communities about the DEI Strategic Framework.
- Organize regular community forums, in collaboration with community organizations, to provide an opportunity for community members to discuss and be heard on issues of DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, including the effectiveness of local policies and programs.
- Build awareness within communities on racism and discrimination and the impacts on people and their families.

**Strategic Priority #2:**

Supporting leadership for organizational change.

- Provide support services for persons impacted by, or victims of, racism and discrimination, including safe spaces and access to services and counselling.
- Involve citizens by providing space where voices can be heard in DEI and anti-racism initiatives and decision-making.
- Engage in discussion with other governments about DEI policies, practices, and funding.
- Work with community organizations to plan new or revised services.
- Support or establish, in collaboration with community organizations, a monitoring and response system or network to identify and respond to acts of racism, hate crimes, and other incidents, including bringing such incidents to the attention of the appropriate authorities.
- Develop and distribute awareness materials and campaigns to inform residents and community members about their rights and obligations, including available resources and mechanisms for the prevention of and redress against racism and discrimination.
- Establish complaint mechanisms within the District's authority (ombudsperson, anti-discrimination unit, etc.) to deal with allegations of systemic and individual acts of racism and discrimination.
- Seek partnerships with community organizations and local First Nations on the collection of data and information.

**Strategic Priority #3:**

Building relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities based on understanding and respect.

- Support initiatives that build and bridge capacity within Indigenous Nations and communities.
- Educate and sensitize Council and District staff on mutual respect, citizenship, and the obligation to protect and promote human rights, including *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*.
- Build understanding and respectful relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities and identify ways to incorporate and amplify Indigenous voices through dialogue.
- Engage with the leadership of local Indigenous Nations at the Council level with respect to building sustainable and meaningful District to Indigenous Government relationships.
- Develop and implement Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) and/or protocols with local First Nations around shared commitments, including DEI.
- Engage in dialogue with Indigenous Nations and communities about interests and priorities.
- Support Indigenous-led projects and events through funding and in-kind contributions.

**Strategic Priority #4:**

Creating and sustaining a welcoming environment.

- Hold an annual forum with community organizations on DEI actions and progress.
- Develop and make available a newcomer information package.
- Communicate events more extensively and focus information on the interests and perspectives of diverse groups.
- Continue to engage with community organizations on addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in programs and services.
- Hold meetings with community organizations and distribute annual DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination survey to understand what barriers to participation exist and what might be done to mitigate the barriers.
- Complete a facility review and identify changes to support DEI and a welcoming environment, such as gender-diverse washrooms and appropriate signage.
- Assess economic factors that impact the participation of residents in District activities and seek organizational direction about subsidized programming.

**Strategic Priority #5:**

Measuring and monitoring outcomes and continuing improvement.

- Engage with community organizations and local First Nations to receive input and feedback on progress in implementing the Strategic Report and Action Framework actions and potential gaps.
- Implement online and in-person surveys to gather information from community members on DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination, and also to measure the Framework outcomes on an annual basis.
- Collect and evaluate data and information on racism and discrimination in specific areas within the District's mandate such as housing, recreation, K-12 schools, and culture.

## District Internal Focused Toolkit

### **Strategic Priority #1:**

Building a culture of DEI, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

- Provide options to support where English may not be people's first language.
- Review descriptions for all jobs to incorporate accessible and inclusive language and Indigenous-lived experience.
- Establish a policy and system for staff to self-identify as BIPOC, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2S+ within privacy requirements.
- Review screening and interview policies and practices to remove language and cultural, racial, or other barriers to recruitment.
- Encourage staff to participate in training and to use resource materials on DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination (cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency).
- Build a DEI resource and reference library for staff online.
- Discuss implementation of the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework during annual employee reviews and planning.

**Strategic Priority #2:**

Supporting leadership for organizational change.

- Increase vigilance in identifying and addressing systemic and individual racism and discrimination.
- Audit various aspects of the District's operations, including corporate planning, policy and program development, and procedures and practices with respect to employment, service delivery and contracting, as well as organizational culture to identify barriers to DEI, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination.
- Establish a clear diversity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination vision statement, and implement changes to policies and procedures (including a complaints/accountability mechanism).
- Develop language for procurement opportunities and contracting to support and reflect DEI.
- Facilitate the appropriate collection and use of data on incidents of hate activities, racism, and discrimination in the community, and share results in a manner that advances human rights.
- Establish protocols to liaise with organizations such as human rights commissions, legal clinics, and community advocacy or counselling services that can help facilitate prevention, interventions, and remedies for staff who experience racism and discrimination.

<p><b>Strategic Priority #3:</b> Building relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities based on understanding and respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage staff to participate in Indigenous cultural awareness training and to use related resource materials.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Priority #4:</b> Creating and sustaining a welcoming environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop information on the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework, communicate with staff, and hold Q and A sessions on the Framework.</li> <li>• Review and revise external District communications material to reflect diversity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination language, including brochures, information sheets, newsletters, etc.</li> <li>• Listen to the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse communities and consider these experiences in District decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Priority #5:</b> Measuring and monitoring outcomes and continuing improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement mechanisms for monitoring and measuring the Strategic Report and Action Framework outcomes.</li> <li>• Ensure accountability for its actions and create specific metrics for measuring progress toward addressing anti-racism.</li> <li>• Create an anti-racism team within the District to implement services, measurement, recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, and education.</li> </ul>

## Strategic Implementation

The District of Saanich recognizes that implementation of the Strategic Report and Action Framework will require ongoing oversight and review. As noted, the Framework is an evolving and living document. This means that leadership across the organization will be essential for creating the changes necessary to support and integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion within the District. To achieve this goal, Saanich will appoint a District-wide advisory committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Criteria for the recruitment of members to this Committee should include:

- Diverse representatives from each department and individuals with different roles and positions within the District. Committee members should have or develop expertise that lends itself to implementing the DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework.
- Coordinating and preparing an implementation progress plan on an annual basis. As part of the progress planning, information about the outcomes achieved and areas of advancement will be shared by the District with the public.

The strategic priorities and toolkits outlined in this DEI Strategic Report and Action Framework reflect short-, medium-, and long-term directions based on the engagement completed over the last year. This Strategic Report and Action Framework is intended to guide meaningful change within the District but also represents a living framework that will evolve and change over time with emerging knowledge and research, leadership, understanding, and evolving dialogue. The District of Saanich is committed to making and monitoring progress towards the five strategic priorities and updating this work on an ongoing basis.



# Appendix A:

## Quintessential Research Group Inc.

The Framework was prepared by Quintessential Research Group Inc (QRG), which is a socio-economic, health, and DEI consultancy with offices in Victoria, British Columbia, and in several remote locations throughout B.C. Our team is culturally and gender diverse and comprised of Black, Indigenous and People of Color and gender diverse researchers and community DEI practitioners. We are committed to working with racialized, Indigenous, and gender-diverse communities, all levels of government, and non-profit organizations, and we advise on research and policy issues to diverse groups of communities nationally and internationally. We have developed training programs in anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches to research, teaching and learning, and we regard using a gender-based and intersectional lens (GBA+) as a key component to making our work meaningful and transformative. We have strong local community relationships and understand that our community engagement practices must be aligned with cultural protocols as a key starting point from which to build meaningful partnerships that enhance the strength of our research partnerships. Our commitment to reconciliation is based in listening in a way that our work with Indigenous communities is reflected in our values which supports an ethical framework guided by Indigenous peoples, communities, nations, and governments. Our four core values are: Respect, Partnership, Integrity, and Relational Accountability.

# Appendix B: Council Policy on Anti-Racism

## Council Policy

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	POLICY ON ANTI-RACISM	
<b>DATE:</b>	March 2023	<b>REFERENCE:</b>

## Public Statement

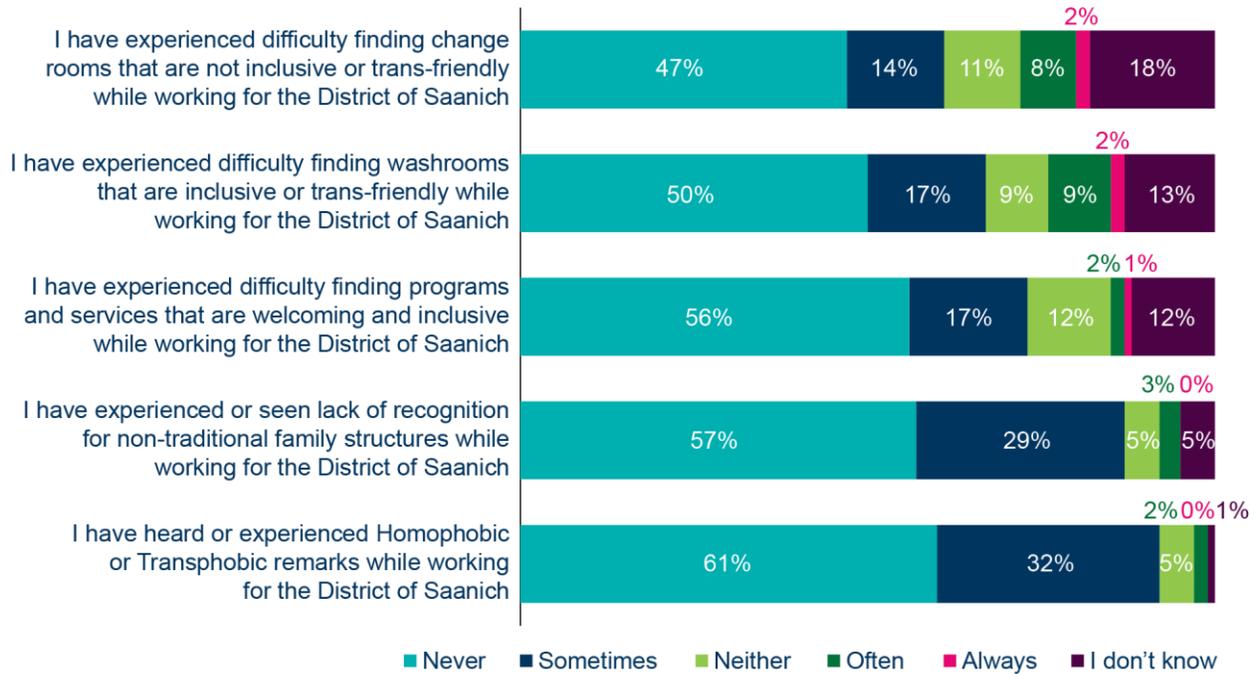
The District of Saanich is committed to eliminating racial disparities and building more equitable communities. Through training, education, and online resources, the District helps create safe places where people from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds thrive socially, economically, academically, and physically.

Racism is more than just prejudice. It is a systemic social problem that is embedded in institutions. Racism is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create limited opportunities, barriers, and racialized outcomes for people based on race. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is further accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress, define, or limit the rights of others.

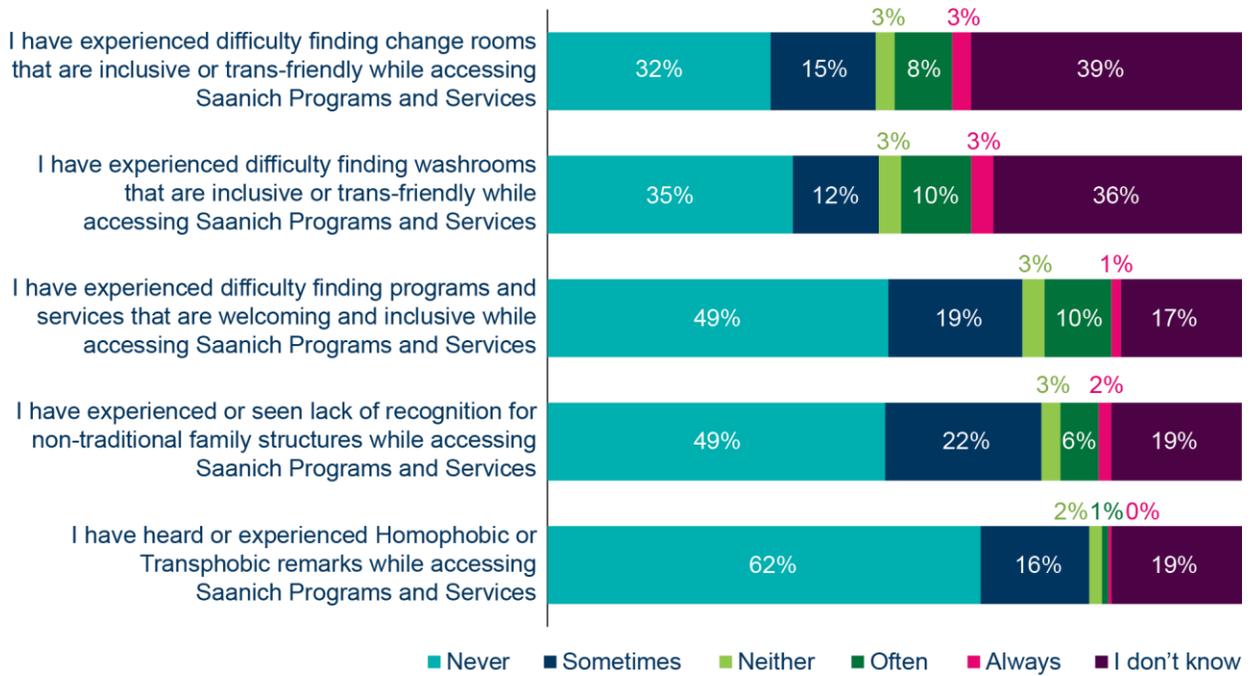
Council members, District staff and contracted professionals will champion anti-racism as a core value. The District is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion, reflecting the communities it serves, and will work to ensure that it challenges and addresses racism, discrimination, and marginalization.

# Appendix C: Additional Survey Results

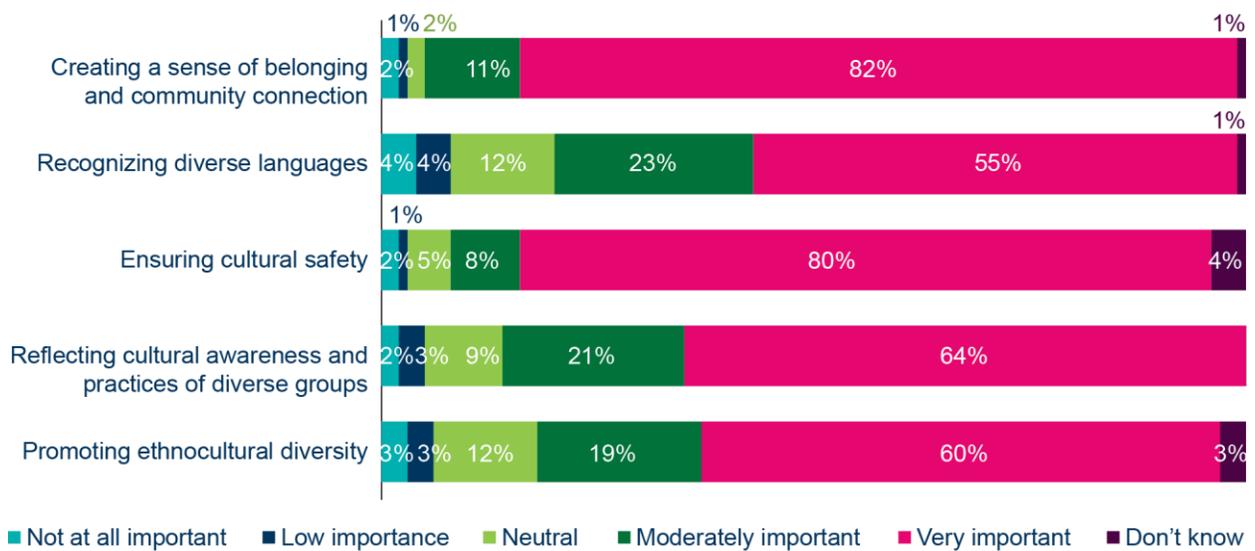
**Figure 20: On a scale from 1 to 5, how often have you experienced any of the following situations while working for the District of Saanich?  
(Please select all that apply to you)**



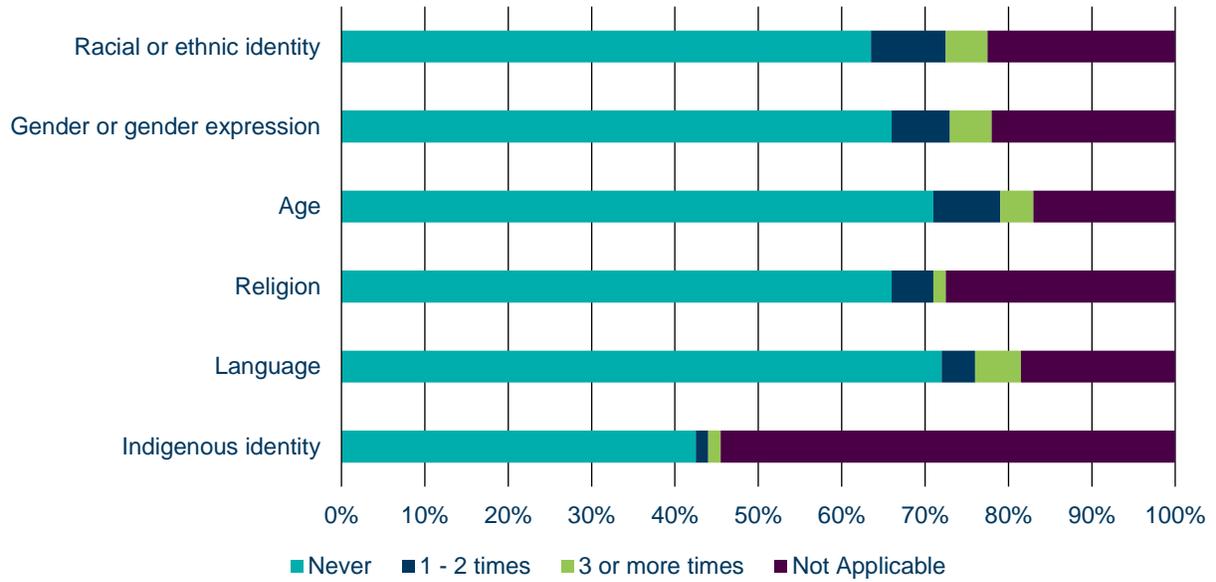
**Figure 21: On a scale from 1 to 5, how often have you experienced any of the following situations while accessing Saanich Programs and Services? (Please select all that apply to you)**



**Figure 22: On a scale from 1 to 5, how important are the following factors for Saanich in providing culturally diverse programs and events?**



**Figure 23: Reasons and frequency for discrimination at Saanich**



# Appendix D:

## Indigenous Nation Interview Questions

- To what extent do you feel Saanich programs and staff provide a welcoming environment?
- To what extent does your Nation participate in Saanich's programs and services?
- How can the District of Saanich support your Nation in terms of goals and self-determination, economic and social development, and health? What are some ways beyond implementing those MOUs?
- What are your perspectives on advancing reconciliation within the District of Saanich?
- Is there anything we haven't spoken of that you think is important to note or point out?

# Appendix E: Community Organization Focus Group Questions

## Building local relationships and partnerships

- What is your organization's relationship with the District of Saanich?
- To what extent is your organization involved with Saanich on developing strategic directions and actions on diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- From your perspective, how does Saanich partner with organizations representing and serving diverse populations?

## Commitment to cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion

- To what extent do you feel that Saanich staff and programs offer a welcoming environment? From your perspective, what actions can Saanich take to make their environment more inclusive?  
Please explain...share examples...
- What recommendations do you have on how Saanich can make their programs, services, and events more culturally and gender diverse?
- What recommendations do you have on how Saanich can make their programs, services, and events more racially and ethnically diverse?
- What recommendations do you have on how Saanich can provide equitable opportunities in recruiting, hiring, retention, and career growth for people of all different backgrounds?

## Developing strategies and plans

- How does your organization engage the participation of diverse constituents in developing its strategic directions?
- What are key elements that should be included in a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy for Saanich (principles, actions)?
- How can outcomes be measured?

# Appendix F: Staff Interview Questions

The District of Saanich is committed to improving its programs and practices as they relate to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We are guided by the principle that embracing diversity enriches the lives of all people and enhances the cultural fabric of our District as a whole. We want to ensure each member of the community has the opportunity to inform decision-making within the District. This often means removing barriers and diverse perspectives and ways of life are valued and respected. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and ideas.

1. Introductions
2. What is your understanding of DEI, and what is your experience?
3. How diverse do you think the management and executive teams are?
4. Strengths and weaknesses in the organization?
5. Tools and training?
6. Anyone else you should talk with?
7. Questions for us or final thoughts?

# Appendix G:

## District of Saanich Steering Committee

The DEI Committee provides direction and guidance on DEI policies, programs, and initiatives within Saanich. Through this work, the Committee focuses on advancing the creation of a DEI Strategic Framework and oversees its implementation across the organization.

### Members

Suzanne Samborski

Cristina Caravaca

Jason Jones

Angila Bains

Ben Bowker

Carroll Porter

Ryan Hix

Rebecca Newlove

Trevor Stubbings

Darrell Underwood

Sharon Hvozdzanski