



Staff Report to Council

Corporate Services

FILE: 07-2510-01/24

REPORT DATE: March 06, 2024 **MEETING DATE:** March 12, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Stephanie St. Jean, Director of Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment and Strategy

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW/APPROVAL:

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council:

- A. Receive for Information the report titled “Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment and Strategy” as presented at the March 12, 2024 Council Meeting; OR
- B. Other.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of key insights resulting from the internally-focused Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) assessment as well as to outline the subsequent steps that the City intends to undertake in its ongoing EDI journey.

- Information Report Decision Report Direction Report

DISCUSSION

Background:

In 2023, the City embarked on a journey of introspection aimed at evaluating our internal stance on equity, diversity, and inclusion among our employees. By creating a space for honest reflection, learning, and adjustment, we are striving to foster a workplace culture where every employee feels a deep sense of belonging, receives ample support, and forges meaningful connections within our municipal organization. To ensure that we remain relevant and

impactful as an employer, it's imperative that we acknowledge our past, assess our current situation, and actively pursue necessary changes to propel us forward in a manner that is inclusive and equitable for all members of our workforce.

Analysis:

In the fall of 2023, we engaged the services of a Canadian equity, diversity, and inclusion consulting firm 'Inclusivity' (formerly called HRx) to guide us through this process with an unbiased perspective. They carefully reviewed our policies and procedures, engaged with our leaders and staff, conducted a survey, and carefully analyzed our internal data to identify any disparities in opportunities and experiences based on age, race, gender, and other diversity factors. We extend our sincere gratitude to the over 100 individuals who actively participated in this endeavor; their narratives, insights, and aspirations have helped shape our path forward.

Key Insights:

In the feedback gathered, these key insights emerged:

1. There's perception of limited racial diversity within the City;
2. Overall, employees rated their inclusion experience at an average level;
3. Management commitment and voice received lower ratings, indicating a desire for stronger commitment to EDI and increased collaboration between leadership and employees on EDI matters;
4. Employee groups with diverse sexualities and neurodivergent individuals scored notably lower on the survey;
5. While recent efforts have shown improvement in EDI, there's a call for more deliberate actions towards diversity and inclusion within the organization; and
6. Interviews highlight a need to prioritize indigenous relations and initiatives.

Current EDI Related Initiatives:

Internal:

- Staff training:
 - EDI introduction;
 - Understanding unconscious bias;
 - Indigenous relations / truth and reconciliation workshops;
 - Anti-racism response; and

- Respectful workplace.
- Social media and website:
 - images representative of diverse backgrounds; and
 - promotes recruitment & onboarding practices dedicated to employment equity and diversity reflective of our community.
- Orange shirt day;
- Spirit committee events: (i.e. international cuisine potluck, pink shirt day [anti-bullying]);
- City's website;
- Optional use of pronouns on employee email signature lines;
- Completed independent internal audit of the City's accommodation and implemented improvements;
- Increased gender diversity of the PMFRS team with 25% of new firefighters being female; and
- Hired EDI consultant 'Inclusivity' (formerly called HRx) to conduct independent evaluation.

External:

Although the initial focus of the EDI strategy was internal to the organization as it relates to equity, diversity, and inclusion among our employees, it is worthy to mention some of the external initiatives:

- Establishment of the Community Support and Accessibility Committee to provide a communication platform between City Council and community organizations that promote inclusion and serve equity-seeking groups;
- Accessibility plan development in 2024 work plan to identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals with disabilities in or interacting with the organization;
- Recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day and National Truth and Reconciliation Day;
- PRIDE concert;
- Gender neutral washrooms at Harris Park and in the Youth Lounge;
- Free access support pass to drop-in programs for participant to bring a support worker;

- Fee subsidization for eligible Pitt Meadows residents who meet low income thresholds;
- Partnerships with Indigenous Artists for culture programs.

Moving Forward

Our work will be guided by the following three principles, which establish a framework for behaviours and decision making:

1. **Intentionality.** We intentionally attract people from diverse backgrounds to be part of our team and we create environments for them to thrive while being themselves. We also work diligently to serve diverse communities especially those who might face systemic barriers in accessing our services.
2. **Courage.** We challenge ourselves and others to maintain the highest standards of quality service so our people feel safe and supported in their work. To do this, we need courage to acknowledge mistakes, speak up and do things differently if needed.
3. **Community.** We are a community serving organization. We advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion in the community by creating partnerships with organizations and individuals who share our values and work collectively to remove barriers for marginalized groups.

While the guiding principles shape our mindset regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion at the City of Pitt Meadows, the following four pillars represent essential action areas. These pillars are structured in a sequential and systematic framework to be implemented gradually, ensuring lasting impact and sustainability.

1. **Governance and Accountability.** The City will establish a clear governance structure to achieve its EDI vision and goals. The structure will support and empower employees to be involved and providing meaningful feedback, especially in regards to their lived experience.
2. **Education and Training.** The focus will be on communicating the organization's EDI vision and framework. This will build trust and confidence in leadership's ability to make change. Additionally, prioritizing education initiatives will equip individuals with the foundational knowledge necessary to propel EDI efforts forward.
3. **Systemic Change.** The organization will have knowledge and structures to collaborate and remove barriers for employees from marginalized communities. The focus internally will be on increasing diversity and removing barriers for people from marginalized communities.

4. **Community Engagement.** The organization will develop relationships with partners to increase its diversity and to elevate the voices of people from diverse communities.

Within each stage, there are a number of operational recommendations to be considered, prioritized and actioned in order to advance the City.

Next Steps

A key operational recommendation that will be prioritized is the creation of an Employee Advisory Committee, intended to support and expand City efforts. It's purpose is to provide a forum for employees to offer insights, perspectives, and recommendations on matters related to equity, diversity, and inclusion within the organization. This committee will serve as a platform for fostering dialogue and collaboratively developing strategies and initiatives to promote a more inclusive and equitable workplace environment. Additionally, the committee will advise the Corporate Leadership Team on an EDI vision, EDI policies, practices, and programs, and goal measurement tools, ensuring that the voices and needs of employees from diverse backgrounds are heard and considered. Overall, the committee will play a crucial role in driving organizational change and promoting a culture of belonging and respect for all employees.

Summary

The journey towards equity, diversity, and inclusion within the City of Pitt Meadows is not a destination but an ongoing commitment to fostering a workplace where every individual is valued and empowered. As we move forward guided by our principles of intentionality, courage, and community, and anchored by our action pillars of governance, education, systemic change, and community engagement, we recognize the importance of collective effort and continuous improvement. The establishment of the Employee Advisory Committee, along with recommendations subsequently implemented will mark significant steps towards amplifying diverse voices and driving meaningful change. With dedication, collaboration, and focus on our shared values, we aim to create an environment where all employees thrive and contribute to a vibrant, inclusive community.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

- Principled Governance Balanced Economic Prosperity Infrastructure
 Community Spirit & Wellbeing Corporate Pride Public Safety
 Not Applicable

WORKPLAN IMPLICATIONS

- Already accounted for in department workplan / no adjustments required
- Emergent issue / will require deferral of other priority(ies)
- Other

It is anticipated that different departments will incorporate EDI initiatives into their upcoming workplans which may require additional resources to implement. Staff members will receive training to facilitate their learning and support for these efforts.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- None
- Budget Previously Approved
- Referral to Business Planning
- Other

There is no immediate financial implications associated with the assessment and strategy. Any prioritized recommendations with a financial cost will either be considered in the future business planning processes or approved by the CAO if the cost can be accommodated within the existing approved budget, per our standard practice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

As the City progresses into the Community Engagement phase of its EDI journey, it may explore opportunities for collaboration with community organizations, convening roundtables, and/or conducting consultations with marginalized communities in Pitt Meadows.

KATZIE FIRST NATION [KFN] CONSIDERATIONS

- Referral
- Yes
- No
- Other

Woven within the EDI initiative is an overarching consideration, recognizing that social equity for Indigenous Peoples arises from a distinctly different history and cultural and legal relationship to land than other equity-seeking groups. It is important to acknowledge this distinction, rather than categorizing the experiences and rights of Indigenous Peoples with those of settlers and immigrants. Many believe that Indigenous Peoples do not seek equity but rather reconciliation and a restoration of the health, wellness, self-determination and sovereignty which were eroded through historical and ongoing colonization. This distinction needs to be recognized in the City’s EDI work, and efforts to develop and implement a reconciliation framework with ic y (Katzie) First Nation (as identified in the City’s 2022 OCP) will be pursued independently of the City’s EDI work.

SIGN-OFFS

Written by:

Stephanie St. Jean,
Director of Corporate Services

ATTACHMENT(S):

None.