



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

2023 Annual Report

— City of —
PICKERING





Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations. This includes Alderville First Nation, Chippewas of Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations. This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion practices and policies are often conflated with Indigenization, Decolonization and Reconciliation. It is important to recognize that, though they share common ground, Indigenization, Decolonization, and Reconciliation require distinct and focused efforts that address settler colonialism, honour Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty, and advance reconciliation as defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Indigenous peoples have lived on Turtle Island, the land also referred to as North America, as stewards of the lands and waters since time immemorial with their own unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages and institutions. As the City of Pickering advances Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, we honour all Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and commit to building relationships of trust, respect, reciprocity, and friendship.

By actively engaging in relationship building, challenging colonial structures, and centering Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, we are reminded of our roots as Treaty peoples with responsibilities toward one another, protecting and preserving the safety, well-being, and inherent dignity of all people wherever this may be challenged.

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Introduction

The City of Pickering is proud to present this inaugural annual report of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives from 2023, highlighting community events, educational workshops, advocacy campaigns, public installations, and the many partnerships and collaborations that made them possible throughout the year.

This vast collection of initiatives represents the City's ongoing efforts to integrate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion into the fabric of our organization and community, a journey that has been marked by several major achievements including:

- Council's unanimous endorsement of the development of a multi-year Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy in August 2020;
- the introduction of dedicated Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion staff led by a Senior Advisor and Community Engagement Coordinator;
- the establishment of community advisory groups such as the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT), the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy Community Working Group;
- the adoption of the City's first ever Corporate Strategic Plan which identifies a distinct commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion throughout the functions and operations of the municipality; and,
- the development of a 10-year Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, to be launched in 2024.

Although much has been achieved, we know that much more needs to be done. The initiatives in this report ultimately demonstrate our commitments in action – from marching together at the Pride Parade in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, to gathering in Esplanade Park to honour Indigenous children and families on Orange Shirt Day, to our celebrations of Black Excellence and Black Joy. These events among many others have not only raised awareness of social issues, but also inspired understanding, engagement, advocacy, and positive change throughout the community.

As we prepare for the launch of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, we know we have a challenging and exciting journey ahead of us, and we are confident in the strength of our community in undertaking this critical work together.



Summary of 2023 Events and Initiatives

- Jan. 17:** Turtle Island Storytelling with Angela Duckworth (Pickering Public Library)
- Jan. 17:** Thai Pongal Celebration
- Feb. 2:** Together We Rise Durham: Excellence Through the Arts
- Feb. 4:** Cultural Expressions Black History Month
- Feb. 28:** Black History Month Wellness Fair
- Mar. 7:** International Women's Day Celebration
- Mar. 31:** Transgender Day of Visibility Flag Raising Ceremony with PFlag Durham Region
- Apr. 25:** Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce Orientation
- May 2:** Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce Meet & Greet
- May 15:** City of Pickering Civic Awards
- May 24:** Virtual Anti-Hate Symposium
- Jun. 2:** Pride Month Flag Raising Ceremony
- Jun. 3:** Pickering Public Library Drag Queen Storytime
- Jun. 4:** Pride Durham Annual Pride Parade and Festival
- Jun. 5-6:** Staff Book Club featuring "Five Little Indians" by Michelle Good
- Jun. 11:** Awareness Pin Beading Workshop with Janet Dugan
- Jun. 17:** Youth Pride Durham
- Jun. 21:** National Indigenous Peoples Day / National Indigenous History Month Flag Raising Ceremony
- Jun. 21:** CAREA Big Drum Social
- Jul. 6, 11, 15, 22:** EDI Working Group Information Sessions
- Aug. 1:** Emancipation Day Celebration
- Aug. 3:** Turtle Island Storytelling with Angela Duckworth (Esplanade Park)
- Aug. 10:** Turtle Island Storytelling with Angela Duckworth (Claremont Public Library)
- Aug. 17:** Turtle Island Storytelling with Angela Duckworth (George Ashe Community Centre)
- Aug. 24:** Turtle Island Storytelling with Angela Duckworth (Millennium Square)
- Aug. 31:** PABRT International Day for People of African Descent Community Celebration
- Sep. 1-30:** Orange Shirt Interactive Community Installation
- Sep. 7:** Region of Durham Community Networking Dinner
- Sep. 15:** Staff Lunch & Learn: Two-Spirit Champions with Jack Saddleback
- Sep. 18:** National Day for Truth and Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day Flag Raising Ceremony
- Sep. 22:** Survivors March for Truth and Reconciliation
- Sep. 27:** PABRT Confronting Anti-Black Racism Community Workshop with Zhora Adatia
- Sep. 29:** Truth and Reconciliation Community Gathering
- Oct. 26:** Staff Lunch & Learn: Black History in Canada and Anti-Black Racism with Channon Oyeniran
- Nov. 3:** Nbi ayaa mshkiki (Water is Medicine) Art Installation Opening Ceremony
- Nov. 20:** Transgender Day of Remembrance Flag Raising Ceremony with PFlag Durham Region
- Nov. 25:** Winter Solstice Ornament Workshop with Janet Dugan and Judith Kessic
- Nov. 24-26:** PABRT and Durham Family Cultural Centre Black Joy Holiday Market and Afro-Caribbean Community Food Basket Initiative
- Nov. 28:** Staff Lunch & Learn: Treaty Relations & Indigenous Ways of Knowing with Kim Wheatley
- Dec. 10:** Dangle Earring Beading Workshop with Janet Dugan



Learning and Education



Creating intentional learning opportunities is the first step in integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within all facets of the workplace and broader community. Focusing on areas such as anti-racism, decolonization, reconciliation, gender diversity, accessibility, and social justice, aims to challenge our own unconscious biases, address systemic inequalities and enhance cultural understanding.

Addressing these topics helps to dismantle systemic barriers that exist within the public sector. This knowledge can empower staff to challenge and change discriminatory practices, policies, and procedures. It allows individuals to develop a deeper appreciation for the diverse perspectives, experiences, and the contributions of their colleagues and the communities they serve. This understanding fosters collaboration, empathy, and respect, creating a more inclusive and equitable City that serves the needs of all communities.

Lunch & Learn Series

In 2022, the EDI Team hosted a series of Lunch & Learn sessions for City of Pickering and Pickering Public Library staff as a call to action surrounding several critical significant dates in Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation. Staff were invited to attend:



- An Introduction to Land Acknowledgments with Jocelyn Pelletier from Durham College's First Peoples Indigenous Student Centre, in honour of Treaties Recognition Week;
- Gender Diversity in the Workplace with Jake Farr from PFlag Canada Durham Region, in honour of Transgender Awareness Week;
- Unpacking Ableism 101 with facilitators from the Community Resistance Intimacy Project, in honour of International Day of Persons with Disabilities;
- Hate Crimes Town Hall: Exploring the Role of the Business Community. Featuring panelists: Dr. Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Ontario Tech University and Dinesh Kumar, Ajax/Pickering Board of Trade.

This year, staff were invited to respond to calls to action for continuing education with a new workshop series including:

Two-Spirit Champions: There are no Closets in Tipis *with Jack Saddleback*

September 15, 2023: A collaborative virtual Lunch & Learn with the Municipality of Clarington, International speaker and current Director of Programs with JusticeTrans Jack Saddleback highlighted the colonial roots of transphobia and homophobia, Indigenous perspectives of Two-Spirit Champions, and transformation and healing practices for all communities.

Black History in Canada and Anti-Black Racism *with Channon Oyeniran*

October 27, 2023: Facilitated by historian, author, and educator, Channon Oyeniran, attendees were provided an overview on the rich and expansive history and experiences of people of African descent in Canada over 400 years. Channon covered topics including: Black and Indigenous enslavement in Canada, the history and background of Emancipation Day and the International Decade for People of African Descent, and legacies of enslavement with a focus on anti-Black racism (including racial microaggressions). This workshop provided an opportunity for attendees to think critically about the various experiences and contributions of Black people in Canada, race and anti-Black racism.

Treaty Relations & Indigenous Ways of Knowing *with Kim Wheatley*

November 28, 2023: Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother & Ancestral Knowledge Keeper Kim Wheatley guides attendees on a journey of Indigenous exploration through history and contemporary impacts. This session examines terminology and how to navigate with confidence topics such as: land acknowledgements, nation naming and treaty territorial importance—including discussions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Reports, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and the Indian Act.

Channon
Oyeniran



Kim
Wheatley



Jack
Saddleback





Staff Book Club

In collaboration with the Pickering Public Library, the EDI Team brought a new learning opportunity to colleagues through a staff book club. Participants are provided with the chosen novel to read independently, and later gather for a lunch & learn discussion. Coinciding with National Indigenous History Month, staff read *Five Little Indians* by Michelle Good and came together to discuss, dissect, and share their thoughts on the novel.

EDI Community Working Group

The EDI Strategy Community Working Group consists of 12 members who are residents of Pickering and represent diverse communities, interests, and needs. Members were selected based on their residence within Pickering and affiliations with the City of Pickering and/or Pickering Public Library through various advisory groups and community partnerships. This includes representation from PFLAG Durham Region, Dedicated Advocacy Resource Supports (DARS) Community Outreach, the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce, the Pickering Public Library Anti-Black Racism Working Group, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Pickering Public Library Teen Advisory Group, and the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle, among others. As part of their commitment to the working group, members participated in multiple information sessions and workshops that provided opportunities for meaningful discussion and strategic visioning. These consultations were integral in aiding the development of focus areas outlined in the City's EDI Strategy.

Education Cards

Education cards were first developed in 2021 as a tool for community engagement and learning. In 2023, the EDI Team expanded this collection to acknowledge days of significance including, International Transgender Day of Visibility, National Indigenous History Month, National Truth and Reconciliation Day, and Emancipation Day. Education cards are used to facilitate the dissemination of information and resources, inspire individuals to take action, and promote a culture of continuous learning, engagement, and collaboration towards creating positive social change. These cards were designed to provide concise and impactful information on various topics while including important community resources for individuals seeking knowledge, understanding, and support.



Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce



Established in January 2021, the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT) is a Council appointed body of community members, whose mandate is to address and combat anti-Black racism in all its forms within the City of Pickering and broader community. The PABRT members actively work to dismantle systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that disproportionately affect Black communities, while aiming to increase understanding and awareness of the historical and contemporary issues faced by Black individuals. The Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce plays a vital role in fostering dialogue, advocating for change, and promoting social justice within the community. Since 2021, the PABRT has engaged the community in several successful events including:

- 416 Meets 905, a youth open mic night in collaboration with Shakkoi and RISE Edutainment;
- The Powerfully Informed Initiative, a series of events aiming to support awareness, education and engagement around municipal elections, and promote civic engagement among Black residents more broadly;
- Reaching Higher, an event to support Black youth in their pursuit of post-secondary education; and,
- the 1st Annual Black Joy Holiday Market in collaboration with Durham Family Cultural Centre (DFCC), an event highlighting and supporting local Black-owned businesses.

The first PABRT term completed their appointments in February 2023 and new taskforce members were appointed on March 27, 2023. The City of Pickering Council appointed CC Canzius, Denise David, Donovan Dill, Zakkiyya Donaldson, Andrew Fraser, Odessa Grignon, Kenisha Hanson, Bethina Loiseau, Paul Martin, Sharleen Mascoll, Keisha Petrolo, Chantelle Russell, Veronica Shaw, and Karleen Smith to the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce.

The EDI Team, as PABRT Staff liaisons, organized a comprehensive orientation session for new members in April 2023, and a Meet & Greet session where new PABRT members had the opportunity to come together with members of the first term, ask questions, and receive advice. In 2023, the PABRT both partnered in and hosted various community events throughout the year including:

Together We Rise Durham

February 2, 2023: The 2023 Together We Rise Durham: Excellence Through the Arts Black History Month celebration took place at The Robert Mclaughlin Gallery in Oshawa. This celebration brought the community together for an uplifting evening of music, spoken word, dance and more. The event featured keynote speaker Cameron Bailey, CEO of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

16th Annual Black History Month Celebration

February 4 & 5, 2023: Cultural Expressions Art Gallery Inc. presented the 16th Annual Durham Black History Month celebration at J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate in Ajax. As Durham's longest running and most extensive, free Black History Month event, community partners, organizations, and municipalities came together to celebrate the beauty of Black culture and the diversity of the Black experience. This year's theme, FOCUS, invited our community to look at Black History and Black History-Makers right here at home - the people to inspire us, the resources we need to grow, and the networks that can lift us are all in our backyards.

Pickering Public Library Black History Month Wellness Fair

February 28, 2023: The AIDS Committee of Durham Region (ACDR) partnered with community organizations and agencies to highlight various community resources focused on supporting the health and wellbeing of Black communities in Durham Region. The 2023 Black History Month Wellness Fair featured a variety of booths representing Black serving and Black-led organizations, hosted by the Pickering Public Library.

International Day for People of African Descent Celebration

August 31, 2023: PABRT and Pickering Public Library's Anti-Black Racism Working Group (ABRWG) hosted a joint community celebration in Esplanade Park in honour of the International Day of People of African Descent. The event provided a platform for Black serving and Black-led community groups and organizations to network, share resources, and celebrate with the community.

2nd Annual Black Joy Holiday Market and Afro-Caribbean Food Basket Initiative

November 24 - 26, 2023: After the success of its first iteration, PABRT and DFCC joined the City of Pickering's Winter Nights, City Lights Festival, bringing the Black Joy Holiday Market to the community as a 3-day initiative spanning from November 24th - 26th at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. Open to all community members, the holiday pop-up market included 50+ Black-owned businesses, artists, and performers, and had more than 3500 people attend across its three days. Donations and support raised during the market resulted in 105 Afro-Caribbean food baskets retailing at \$150 each, for families in need across Durham Region.





Indigenous Relationship Building Action Plan



In 2020, the City adopted a multi-year Indigenous Relationship Building Action plan that focused on establishing meaningful and intentional relationships with diverse Indigenous communities. This led to the formation of the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle (IRBC), a local network of Indigenous residents, Indigenous-led organizations, and allies that come together to provide guidance and leadership on community initiatives that center the voices and honour the contributions, history and cultures of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples.

Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Call to Action 14 on "...the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures...", and Call to Action 79 calling on government "...in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration," the Indigenous Relationship Building Action Plan supported many essential community events and initiatives in 2022 including:

- Awareness Pin Beading Workshops with Indigenous Artisan Janet Dugan;
- Traditional Drum-Making Workshop with Mary George from Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services;
- an author reading of the children's book, Bubbly Beth by Nikki Soliman;
- the Truth and Reconciliation Community Memorial; and,
- the re-installation of the Commemorative Orange Crosswalk, designed by artist Jon Cowell of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation

In 2023, the Indigenous Relationship Building Action Plan supported the following programs and initiatives:

Turtle Island Storytelling Series

The EDI Team, in collaboration with City of Pickering Animal Services, Pickering Public Library, and Carea Community Health Centre (CCHC) hosted a series of storytelling sessions for children and families, facilitated by Angela Duckworth, an Indigenous Health Provider from the CCHC. Angela shares Anishinaabe stories of how Turtle Island came to be and our deep connection to animals that we share the land with. In total, 90+ people attended the sessions across the five City locations.



Beading Workshops

Indigenous Artisan and teacher, Janet Dugan of Changing Sky Designs, brings several traditional beading workshops to the Pickering community for children and adults alike, ranging from beginner to advanced. This year, Janet hosted an Awareness Pin Beading workshop, Dangle Earring beading workshop, and a winter-themed ornament making workshop with Indigenous artisan Judith Keesic. Janet emphasizes through her sessions that beading is medicine and an important part of her healing journey.



Big Drum Social

June 21, 2023: In honour of National Indigenous Peoples Day, Carea Community Health Centre Partnered with the City of Pickering and Pickering Town Centre to bring the Annual Big Drum Social to Esplanade Park. A traditional celebration filled with music, dancing, storytelling, and more, this event is Durham Region's largest gathering for National Indigenous Peoples Day where all community members are welcome.

Nbi ayaa mshkiki (Water is Medicine) Art Installation

November 3, 2023: As a part of the City's ongoing efforts and commitments to Indigenize community spaces, the City of Pickering worked with the artist collective Dbaajmowin (story/narrative, Ojibwe Eastern and Odawa dialect), to design and develop a public art piece at Rotary Frenchman's Bay West. The collective is led by Anishinaabeg artist Amber Smith Quail and Algonquin artist Karl Chevrier, and includes Quebecois sculptor Jacques Baril, and SpruceLab designer Sheila Boudreau, with support from the SpruceLab team. The City's Public Art and Community Services teams also consulted with IRBC members during the planning and development of this project. "Nbi ayaa mshkiki" (Water is Medicine) was unveiled in November 2023 with a community gathering.

Orange Shirt Interactive Community Installation

September 1 - 30, 2023: In honour of Orange Shirt Day/ National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, an interactive installation featuring a special mosaic of orange ribbons was launched for the month of September to engage and educate the community on the realities of the residential school system across Canada.

Truth & Reconciliation Community Gathering

September 29, 2023: In commemoration of the ongoing legacy of residential schools, the IRBC and City of Pickering hosted a community gathering in Esplanade Park featuring reflections, teachings, and ceremonies with Indigenous community leaders. The gathering included reflections and storytelling from Elder Lana Brasher and IRBC members Stephanie Bourque, Jocelyne Pelletier, Melissa Roberts, Kylie Soundy, and Rielle Lantaigne. Indigenous teachings, song, and dance were shared by Bkwene Miikan, a traditional singing, drum, and knowledge group of local Indigenous people from all Nations. This was Durham Region's largest National Truth & Reconciliation Event in 2023, garnering participation from over 300 community members, residents, schools, and community organizations.



Community Initiatives and Partnerships



Community initiatives and partnerships play a vital role in the City's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy. Creating meaningful relationships with community organizations, partners, and other municipalities provides invaluable resources and support while navigating EDI spaces and discourse. These relationships have resulted in joint programming, sharing of best practices, and achieving a wider impact across communities in the Durham Region. Engaging in equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives with a collaborative approach fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility, leading to sustainable and meaningful outcomes.

International Women's Day Celebration

March 7, 2023: The Region of Durham partnered with municipalities and organizations across the region to host a free hybrid event, hosted at the City of Pickering's Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex. Celebrating the achievements and contributions of women in the community, the theme "Radical Restructuring: Empowering Women for Tomorrow" was the focus for this empowering event. The celebration featured keynote speaker Paulette Senior, CEO of the Canadian Women's Foundation, followed by a panel discussion with Cheryl Wilson, Owner of The Maker's Hub; Michel Shah, Program Director at York University; Sally Rivers, Director of Services at Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiyag Child & Family Services; and Paulette Senior. The event also included live performances, a women in business trade show, and a networking lunch.

Municipal Anti-Hate Symposium

May 24, 2023: Partnering with several municipalities, the City of Pickering offered a virtual event for City staff featuring a discussion panel of industry experts exploring tangible ways to combat hate, discrimination, and oppression in our communities. Topics discussed included, Indigenous relations with panelist Frances Elizabeth Moore, Anti-Black racism with panelist Selam Debs, Islamophobia with panelist Shahina Siddiqui, and Anti-Asian racism with panelists Agnes Man and Jennifer Vong.

Pickering Public Library Drag Queen Storytime

June 3, 2023: In partnership with Durham Children's Aid Society and Youth Pride Durham, all libraries in Durham Region presented Drag Queen Story Time, featuring two fabulous queens. This family-friendly program hosted at the Pickering Public Library showcased stories celebrating diversity and inclusion, followed by musical performances and activities for children.



Pride Durham Annual Pride Parade & Festival

June 4, 2023: The City of Pickering was a proud partner in the 2023 Pride Durham Annual Pride Parade hosted in the Town of Ajax. With support from 15 City staff members from various departments, volunteer community members, and family and friends, the City of Pickering was well represented while walking alongside the community.

Youth Pride Durham

June 17, 2023: The City of Pickering partnered with Youth Pride Durham to bring a safe, inclusive celebration for youth, children and families who are part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities, as well as allies. This event championed acceptance through an afternoon of performances, music, dancing, and a community resource village.

Emancipation Day Celebration

August 1, 2023: The Region of Durham partnered with several community organizations and municipalities to host an Emancipation Day celebration featuring live performances from amazing local talent, black-owned local business vendors and family-friendly activities. With the theme "*Liberation. Legacy. Progress*", this celebration was an opportunity to address anti-Black racism through education on Emancipation and create an avenue for community members to connect and learn in a welcoming, fun-filled environment.

Region of Durham Community Networking Dinner

September 7, 2023: In partnership with Region of Durham, the City of Pickering helped welcome and connect newcomers in our community to Canada, including refugees and asylum seekers, through a community dinner.

Region of Durham Survivors March for Truth & Reconciliation

September 22, 2023: The City of Pickering partnered with the Region of Durham for a Truth & Reconciliation gathering where community members across Durham Region came together to march in honour of residential school survivors, those who were lost, and their families. Community members were joined by Chief Kelly La Rocca of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation who gave opening remarks.





Community Recognition





Throughout the year, the City of Pickering collaborated with local community organizations to recognize and honour days of significance that aim to foster a culture of respect, understanding, and belonging within our community. These acknowledgements allow both City staff and community members to engage in meaningful conversations and learning that promote awareness and appreciation for different cultures, histories, and lived experiences. Going further, recognizing these days helps to raise awareness on the ongoing challenges faced by marginalized communities, encouraging dialogue and reflection.

2023 Flag Raisings and Ceremonies

March: International Transgender Day of Visibility

June: Pride Month

June: National Indigenous Peoples Day/ National Indigenous History Month

August: Emancipation Day

August: International Day for People of African Descent

September: National Truth and Reconciliation Day/ Orange Shirt Day


November: Transgender Day of Remembrance

November: Treaties Recognition Week



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