

# Bridging the Gaps

## Gender Equity & Economic Security

A Series of Tools for Employers in Restigouche (New Brunswick) and Avignon (Quebec)

March 2024

This project was created to help advance the economic recovery of women and gender minorities in our communities as we rebuild from the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Tool #2:

### Inclusive and Equitable Workplace Culture

20 Minute read



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# About this tool

This tool is informed by research conducted locally by CBDC Restigouche, as well as by national findings relating to emerging trends and best practices.

## This tool addresses:

- What inclusive and equitable workplaces look like.
- Why inclusion and equity matter in your workplace.
- National trends and best practices relating to inclusion and equity.
- Various regional, provincial and national resources.




# Key research findings

Since the initial outbreak of COVID-19, a number of research studies have been conducted to better understand the pandemic's impacts on:

	<p><b>Certain groups of people</b> (e.g., Indigenous, immigrants, women, 2SLGBTQIA+, racialized)</p>		<p><b>Industries</b> (e.g., tourism, healthcare, manufacturing, technology)</p>
	<p><b>Communities</b> (e.g., cities, rural areas, various provinces)</p>		<p><b>Workplaces</b> (e.g., small businesses, offices, factories, public service)</p>

## In a 2022 research study led by CBDC Restigouche, we found that:

	<p>Across Canada, the pandemic <b>did not affect all women and gender-diverse people in the same ways</b>. Existing inequalities were exacerbated for groups such as racialized, immigrant and Indigenous women, as well as for single parents and individuals living with disabilities or in rural areas.<sup>1</sup></p>
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During the pandemic, Indigenous residents of the First Nations of Listuguj, Gesgapegiag and Ugpi’Ganjig or living outside of Indigenous communities in the Restigouche and Avignon regions experienced an **increase in racial profiling and harassment**, especially when dealing with the NB border protocol or accessing health services and essential goods in New Brunswick.<sup>2</sup>



In a 2021 Atlantic Canada-wide survey, the Two-Spirit Indigenous community reported significant negative impacts since the onset of the pandemic. 95% of respondents said they were worried about their mental health while 88% were worried about healthcare access and **70% were worried about the long-term impacts of the increased racism they were experiencing.**<sup>3</sup>

## Inclusion and equity in the workplace

As the world becomes more and more interconnected, Canadian workplaces are more culturally diverse than ever before. As diversity grows, so too does the need to ensure that each individual feels respected, understood and valued.<sup>4</sup> While workplace diversity has been shown to have multiple benefits, being truly inclusive of employee diversity requires a deliberate effort by employers to provide an environment in which diversity and equity are fostered and celebrated.<sup>5</sup>

There is much talk about equality, a term that typically means that each individual is given the same resources, treatments and opportunities. Discussions of equity take things a step further: we must acknowledge that providing everyone with the exact same resources and opportunities does not necessarily ensure equal outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

We don't always have to accommodate the same people or give more to one person in order to become equitable, it can be done by removing systemic barriers, like shown in the third image in Figure 1 of next page. By doing so, we are creating an equal outcome for everyone without providing special accommodations or support to a specific group/person.



The following images illustrates the differences between equality and equity.

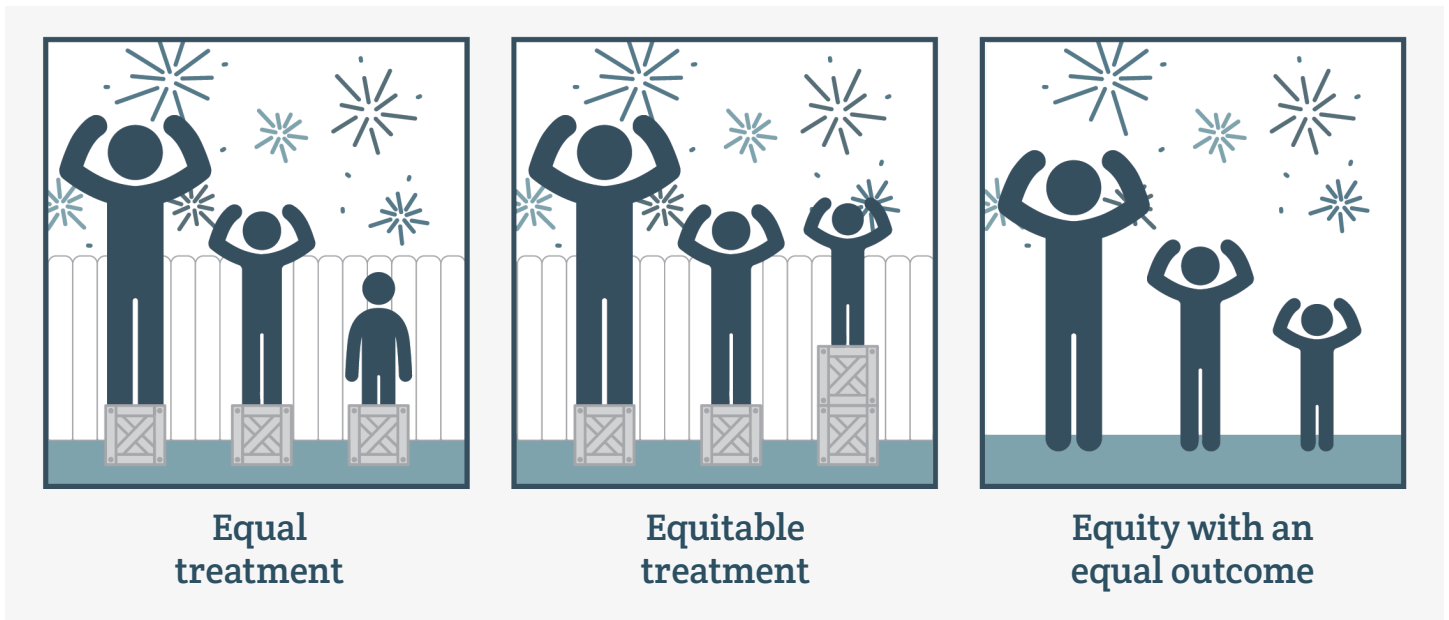


Figure 1.

This figure was inspired by [City for All Women Initiative \(CAWI\)](#)



## What are the benefits of inclusion and equity in the workplace?

- It not only benefits the broader economy and individual businesses—it is a **moral duty that benefits us all.**<sup>7</sup>
- Feeling safe in the workplace and knowing that various cultures and values are respected serve to boost **employee motivation, engagement and commitment.** When employees feel safe at work, conflicts are reduced and creativity and innovation are sparked, leading to more effective problem-solving and teamwork.<sup>8</sup>
- Businesses that focus on cultural safety tend to be **more advanced while also attracting the top people and obtaining better results.**<sup>9</sup>
- Businesses with diversified workforces **better serve the interests of diverse clientele**, which may help to boost sales and various opportunities.<sup>10</sup>
- Organizations that support women to **enhance family economic well-being**<sup>11</sup> often have **happier and more successful employees.**<sup>12</sup>





## Best practices for fostering inclusive and equitable workplaces

Tangible changes such as offering employees increased flexibility have many reported benefits in terms of overall satisfaction, but **addressing deeper systemic equity and inclusion issues is necessary as well** (as shown in Figure 1 above). For example, it is not enough to simply add women or gender-diverse people to your workplace in the hopes of achieving gender equity. To reduce inequity, you must also focus on cultural and organizational changes.<sup>13</sup>

**When you reflect on the following best practices and how you can integrate them into your policies and practices, staff members should also be involved in the process.** For example, you can ensure that a diversified committee is in place to ensure that the realities of all employees are considered. You could also bring in external consultants or reach out to diversity committees in the community.

Here are some ways to increase gender equity in your workplace:

You can use the following recommendations as a checklist to see if your business is already doing it  or keep track for later if you want to explore more  on the subject.

	 Equitable hiring and workplace policies and practices
	 Enhance <b>equitable hiring and recruitment practices</b> in your workplace. <sup>14</sup> This may include basic steps such as <b>reviewing language bias in job postings or in the interview/hiring process.</b> <sup>15</sup> <b>Also consider reviewing signage in your business, forms or other documents and online content for language bias.</b> For example: Bathroom signs to represent all genders.

Here are some useful resources:

- [Hire for Talent](#): Free training, tools and resources for employers looking to better understand and integrate disability inclusion in the workplace.
- [Restigouche Multicultural Association](#) and [New Brunswick Multicultural Council](#): Training, workshops, tools and resources for hiring and retaining newcomers.
- [Welcome service for newcomers to Avignon-Bonaventure](#) and [Immigration Québec](#): Resources for tapping into the potential of immigrants to meet workforce needs.
- [Pride At Work Canada](#): Empowers employers to build workplaces that celebrate all employees regardless of gender expression, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Refer to **page 05** of this document for **Indigenous resources**.
- Refer to **Tool No. 3: Inclusive and Equitable Recruitment Strategies** in this series of tools for more information.



## Equitable hiring and workplace policies and practices



Ensure equitable pay and strive to **address gender pay gaps** in your workplace. Here are some resources to guide you:

- Government of New Brunswick's [Quick Guide to Pay Equity](#)
- CNESST Québec's [Pay Equity Guide](#)
- For more information about gender pay gaps, visit the [Canadian Women's Foundation](#) Website.
- Or the Canadian human rights commission : [Pay Equity Act](#)



Put in place **fair and transparent compensation/promotion procedures**. Researchers have found that developing a fair and transparent compensation model is a key part of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace; it also promotes trust between employers and employees, as well as among employees.<sup>16</sup>



**Help women and gender-diverse people, especially those from marginalized groups, to grow in their careers by offering guidance, mentoring and training opportunities.** When good mentoring and learning opportunities are available, employees are more likely to stay with their employer, enjoy their work more and do better in their jobs.<sup>17</sup>

*\*Marginalized group: According to the Government of Canada, a marginalized group is a group of people who are excluded from full and meaningful participation in society, typically through discrimination or other means of oppression. Groups experiencing social and economic marginalization include but are not limited to women, gender-diverse people, people living with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+, Indigenous and racialized people, people of lower socio-economic status, etc.<sup>18</sup>*



**Address the lack of women and other diverse groups in higher-level or management positions.** In Canada, there are more men in managerial positions in all economic sectors (60% vs. 40%).<sup>19</sup>



## Equitable hiring and workplace policies and practices



**Foster flexibility and accommodate family responsibilities.** These goals can be achieved by making small changes such as discouraging “always on, always available” cultures and allowing employees to customize their work arrangements to suit unique lifestyle demands or diverse needs. This may mean offering alternative arrangements such as short-term contracts, job sharing, reduced hours or longer hours with reduced weeks.<sup>20</sup>



**Encourage balance regarding parental leave and domestic responsibilities.** This may include challenging gendered notions of care by adopting gender-neutral policies (e.g., do not penalize employees for taking time off and encourage men to take parental leave).<sup>21</sup> This may also include supporting employees through “back to work” programs after longer absences.<sup>22</sup>



**Get men involved in gender equity initiatives in the workplace.** Although gender equity is often seen as a “women’s issue”, it’s important to recognize the crucial role that men play in driving progress towards gender equity and broader equity.<sup>23</sup>



## Reconciliation and cultural inclusion



**Encourage your workplace to accommodate and embrace Indigenous cultures and values.** Hiring Indigenous employees is not just about filling job vacancies; it also means learning about Indigenous cultures, identifying what barriers may prevent Indigenous people from applying and determining which best practices should be implemented to make sure Indigenous people are hired and thrive in your organization.<sup>24</sup>

- If you’re an employer in New Brunswick, contact the Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) or visit their website at <https://jedinb.ca/>. JEDI created the [Developing Best Practices](#) and [Employer Toolkit](#) resources to help you in your hiring journey.
- You can also contact the [Ugpi’ganjig Eel River Bar First Nation’s](#) Economic Development Department at 1-506-684- 6279 to get assistance with various business-related topics.
- If you’re an employer in Quebec, contact the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Economic Development Commission (FNQLEDC): <https://cdepnql.org/en/>.
- You can also contact contact the Economic Development Departments of the [Listuguj First Nation](#) at 1-418-788-2136 or the [Gesgapegiag First Nation](#) at 1-418-759-3441.



## Reconciliation and cultural inclusion



**Understand and uphold reconciliation principles.** This is a priority for all Canadians and Canadian organizations, as set out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action. For more information on why this matters and how to bring critical training to your workplace, please visit the [TRC website](#).



**Consider languages from other cultures and integrate them into your workplace.** For example, give thought to including English, French, Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey in your welcome signs and email signatures.<sup>25</sup>



**Organize cultural, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation training activities or workshops for management and employees.** There are many free options available, as well as specialized consulting firms that can address specific issues in your workplace. Here are some examples of potential training activities:

- [IRAM](#) provides education for employers and employees on the history of Indigenous peoples and how to implement reconciliation within your workplace to foster Indigenous inclusion in New Brunswick's economy.<sup>26</sup>
- [4 Seasons of Reconciliation](#) offers online courses and films designed to provide comprehensive and customized anti-racist education in line with the TRC's 94 Calls to Action.<sup>27</sup>
- [Restigouche Family Services](#) offers workplace inclusion workshops and local training on gender identity, sexual orientation, homophobia and transphobia in the workplace, along with tangible steps for both employees and employers.



**Recognize specific holidays and awareness days, weeks or months** for diverse cultures and create policies and practices to recognize these occasions, e.g., National Indigenous Peoples' Day, International Women's Day, Black History Month, etc.<sup>28</sup>





## Employee wellbeing and inclusion



**Foster cultural safety for employees.** This means creating a work environment where people feel safe and appreciated. For more information on strategies for creating a culturally safe workplace, visit [Wellness Works Canada](#).<sup>29</sup>



**Foster psychological safety for employees.** As we recover from the pandemic and explore new ways of working (e.g., hybrid work), fostering psychological safety in the workplace is a key part of inclusion.<sup>30</sup> This may mean hosting regular group and individual check-ins or integrating “open-door” policies that invite employees to openly discuss challenges and barriers and learn from them.<sup>31</sup>



**Review your bereavement policy.** There may be a cultural expectation or a need on the part of certain employees to attend a funeral or ceremony not covered by current policies.<sup>32</sup> For example, some cultures or groups might need bereavement leave for a member of their chosen family, whereas traditional policies may only cover biological family.



**Understand the impact of trauma and mental health in the workplace.** Employees live full lives away from the workplace and may also have faced difficult life experiences. Trauma, whether past or present, can affect an employee’s performance or sense of safety and wellness in the workplace. Understanding trauma and the various ways it manifests can be a key part of facilitating equity and inclusion for employees, especially those who may face discrimination, oppression or other types of marginalization in the workplace or in society at large.<sup>33</sup>



Put in place policies and plans to **address workplace harassment and discriminatory conduct** or comments towards women or any other groups. The Government of Canada’s [Department of Employment and Social Development](#) outlines what workplace harassment is, how to develop effective policies and how to address incidents if they occur. Here are some provincial resources:

- New Brunswick tools for workplace violence and harassment: [WorkSafeNB](#)
- Quebec tools: CNESTT: [Physical or psychological violence, including spousal, family and sexual violence](#)



## Employee wellbeing and inclusion



**Understand and implement policies and principles that target domestic and intimate partner violence** that could occur outside your workplace and how it could affect employees. To access a series of free tools and resources, please visit:

- New Brunswick tools for domestic violence in the workplace: [www.toolkitnb.ca](http://www.toolkitnb.ca) (provincial resource) or the [Breaking Workplace Silence toolkit](#) (Restigouche resource)
- New Brunswick tools for domestic violence and remote work: [Resources - Restigouche Family Service \(sfr-rfs.ca\)](http://Resources - Restigouche Family Service (sfr-rfs.ca))
- Quebec tools: CNESST: [Physical or psychological violence, including spousal, family and sexual violence](#)



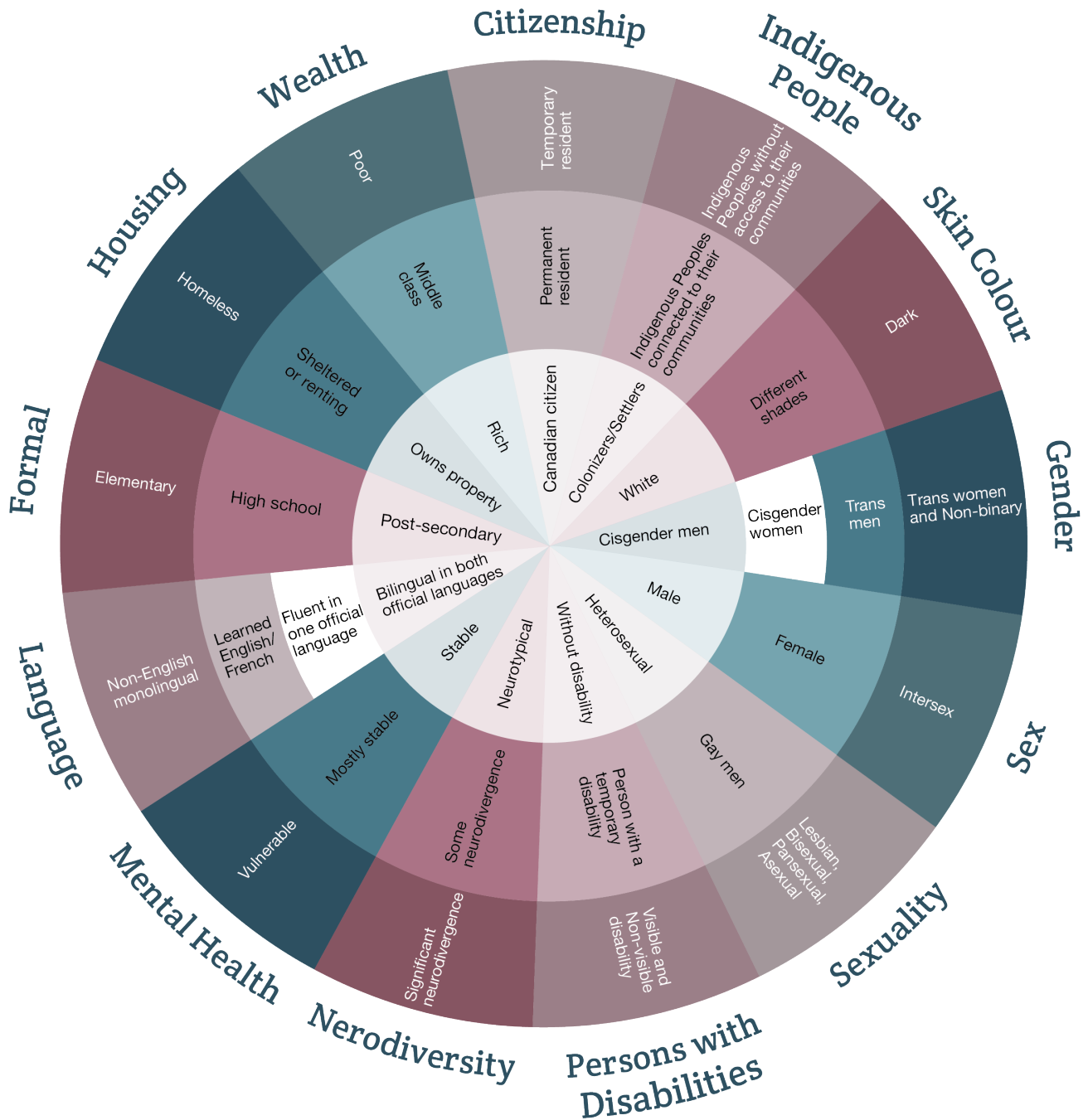
**Understand privilege and power.** The Government of Canada created the Wheel of Privilege and Power (see Figure 2 on next page) as a tool to better understand our own social status and proximity to power. The closer we are to the centre, the greater our privileges and the greater the power we have over others or within a given system (such as a company or other organization). Those who find themselves closer to the outer edge of the wheel have fewer privileges and less power. This can be a useful tool for conceptualizing power and privilege and understanding our role in dismantling oppressive systems to increase equity for systematically marginalized groups.<sup>34</sup>



**Explore the free online course, Gender-Based Analysis+** offered by the Government of Canada. This course is open to the public and has transferable lessons to any place of employment. GBA+ is an analytical tool to improve equity and inclusivity in policies and programming of the federal government and beyond. The course explains how different people are affected differently by projects and policies and how to mitigate systemic barriers. To view or complete the course (and receive an official certificate at the end), visit <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/take-course.html>.<sup>35</sup>

# Wheel of Privilege and Power

(the closer you are to the centre, the more privilege you have)



Note: the categories within this wheel are only examples in the Canadian context, and we should not limit ourselves to them. Intersectionality is a broad concept, and this tool is only a beginning point.

Figure 2.

This figure was inspired by the [Government of Canada's Wheel of Privilege and Power](#).

# What's Next?

Our workplace cultures continue to evolve due to major world events such as pandemics as well as in response to employees' shifting concerns and needs. It is important that, as an employer, you adapt and learn from your employees on the path to inclusion and equity in the workplace. You can also cultivate deep engagement and trust within your workforce by showing support and appreciation.

Learning about diversity, inclusion and equity is an ongoing journey. As you learn, use your knowledge thoughtfully by reflecting on how you, as an employer and individual, can make a difference.<sup>36</sup> Key questions to begin engaging with these concepts include:

How can I use my position and privileges to listen to my employees and learn about their diverse needs?

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How can I demonstrate leadership and take tangible steps to address these needs in my workplace?

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What small steps can I take today to foster inclusion and equity in my workplace?<sup>37</sup>

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Prioritize the recommendations or actions from the earlier pages that you would like to explore more in the next 3 to 6 months. Come back later to prioritize more once these are done.

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2. 

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3. 

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## Endnotes

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