

# INCLUSION CHARTER FOR YORK REGION PROGRESS REPORT

2021

## Fostering a Welcoming and Inclusive Community

The [Inclusion Charter for York Region](#) is a community initiative that brings together organizations with a common commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all who live, work and play in York Region. The Inclusion Charter was developed by the **Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group (MDIG)**, comprised of 20 member organizations, including all nine local municipalities, police services, hospitals, school boards, conservation authorities and agencies. The Regional Municipality of York (York Region) co-chairs MDIG, along with the York Regional Police, and acts as the driver and secretariat of the initiative. Learn more about this initiative by reading previous progress reports ([2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#)).

**2021 marks the third-year anniversary of the Inclusion Charter initiative.** Since its launch in 2018, 35 organizations have endorsed the Inclusion Charter and that number continues to grow.





## 2021: A Year of Action

2021 continued to highlight the multitude of injustices faced in our communities, the country and the world. The many tragic events that occurred underscore the importance of the Inclusion Charter initiative and the work that must continue to further our mission of fostering inclusion and belonging in our communities. Despite the ongoing pandemic, MDIG met virtually to share information, resources and support the inclusion and accessibility work of member organizations. MDIG also continued to work on shared actions: an **education and awareness campaign**, a public-facing **diversity calendar** and an **inclusive language guide**.

### MDIG Collective Action Campaign: Internal Education and Awareness

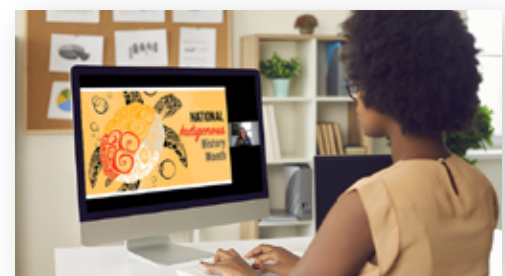
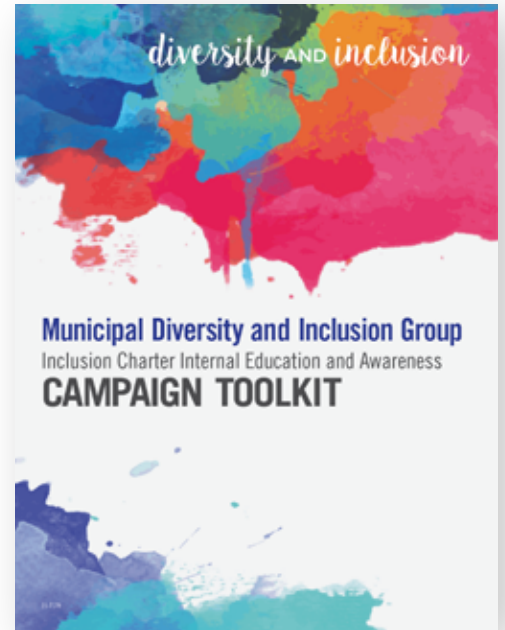
Together, MDIG organizations launched the **first phase of the collective action campaign**: an internal education and awareness campaign focused on educating staff about the Inclusion Charter for York Region, what the collective commitment means and what the Inclusion Charter means to each organization. As endorsees of the Inclusion Charter, each MDIG organization affirmed and committed to the shared vision of the Inclusion Charter and developed a vision tailored to their organization.

In 2021, MDIG organizations raised awareness about the Inclusion Charter internally through campaigns that fit the mission of their respective organizations. Some tactics used to educate staff included:

- **Written communications** such as e-newsletters, emails and intranet sites that aimed to raise awareness about the organization's commitment to inclusion and highlighting the Inclusion Charter
- **Communications campaigns** that employed engaging storytelling techniques
- Positioning **leadership** as champions of change to foster inclusion and communicate their commitment to the Inclusion Charter
- Sharing **resources** with staff to learn more about diversity and inclusion

### Internal Education and Awareness at York Region

At York Region, the internal education and awareness campaign focused on creating an inclusive and welcoming workplace and increasing a sense of belonging at work by relating **inclusion initiatives to the Inclusion Charter for York Region**.



Throughout 2021, York Region:

- Communicated all inclusion-related initiatives as **one of the many actions resulting from the Inclusion Charter for York Region**
- Developed and implemented an ongoing, multi-faceted internal awareness raising campaign to educate staff about the Inclusion Charter. This included a five-minute **video** that celebrated the third-year anniversary of York Region's endorsement of the Inclusion Charter

In addition to the internal education and awareness campaign, MDIG organizations continued to implement the Inclusion Charter within each of their organizations through **concrete actions** that varied from organization to organization. Some actions implemented over the years include:

- Gaining leadership support through building a business case for diversity, equity and inclusion work
- Developing diversity and inclusion plans and/or strategies
- Creating diversity and inclusion staff committees
- Educating staff about the importance of land acknowledgments

- Introducing employee resource groups
- Offering diversity and inclusion education and training to staff
- Providing resources for staff and management
- Developing and implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives



## MDIG Priority Action: Public-Facing Diversity Calendar

Learning about each other is fundamental to enhancing one's commitment to inclusion, as envisioned by the Inclusion Charter. Ethno-cultural and faith-based observances are an important part of many people's lives.

In 2021, York Region, as MDIG co-chair, made Multifaith Action Society's electronic **diversity calendar available online** so that residents and stakeholders can access important information about various faith dates and internationally, nationally and provincially recognized dates.



For more information and to view the Diversity Calendar, visit [york.ca/inclusiveyr](http://york.ca/inclusiveyr).

## MDIG Priority Action: Inclusive Language Guide

Language has a significant impact on a person's sense of belonging. Building and maintaining welcoming and inclusive communities and environments where everyone feels like they belong is a collective responsibility, and using inclusive language helps to foster a sense of belonging for all.



In 2021, York Region, as MDIG co-chair, developed the Inclusive Language Guide. This online tool will be available for all MDIG partners, local businesses and residents to use. The Inclusive Language Guide will be available on [york.ca/inclusiveyr](http://york.ca/inclusiveyr) in early 2022.



## Regional actions that advance the Inclusion Charter

York Region launched various actions resulting from the Inclusion Charter in 2021, including:

- Implementation of a **corporate framework for action to address anti-Black racism** including:
  - Creation of the Anti-Black Racism Advisory Group comprised of Black staff that guide the actions
  - Senior management’s [acknowledgment and denouncement of anti-Black racism](#)
  - Customizing training to address anti-Black racism for management and staff
  - Engagement with the local Black community to explore and advance community development opportunities, partnerships and collective actions
  - Launch of employee resource groups (Communities of Belonging), to provide staff with an opportunity for community building and networking, beginning with Black staff
- Actions focused on **truth and reconciliation** through staff education, awareness and reflection to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, including education sessions on Indigenous history, truth and reconciliation, resources and training materials. The Region launched the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation training, which promotes a renewed relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada through transformative learning about truth and reconciliation
- Release of an **employee demographic survey** to understand the employee landscape, with data used to inform corporate diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Introduction of **workplace initiatives** that foster a stronger sense of belonging at work:
  - Monthly diversity greeting messages to raise awareness and educate about significant dates
  - Monthly inclusion resources for staff on inclusion topics (e.g., intersectionality, ageism)
  - Corporate diversity celebrations to mark Black History Month, International Women’s Day, Asian Heritage Month, Jewish Heritage Month, National AccessAbility Week, National Indigenous History Month, Pride Month, Emancipation Day and Islamic Heritage Month





## Partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research

A partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) began in 2017 when they endorsed the Inclusion Charter as a leading practice model that communities around the world could use to become more inclusive; in fact, the Inclusion Charter bears their logo to recognize this support. The partnership has strengthened since then. In 2019, UNITAR, York Region, York Region Police and York University signed a three-year partnership agreement to work together on initiatives that promote inclusive communities. Much of the collaborative activities have been on hold due to the pandemic.



## CIFAL York: UN Opens First Canadian Leadership Training Centre at York University

In May 2021, York Region participated in the launch of Canada’s first [Centre International de Formation des Acteurs Locaux](#) (CIFAL) at York University. This international training centre, the first of its kind in Canada, is focused on helping authorities and leaders build inclusive societies and promote equal opportunities. CIFAL centres provide innovative training around the world and serve as hubs for the exchange of knowledge among government officials, the private sector, academia and civil society.

This Canadian launch is a **key outcome** of the partnership with UNITAR. Further actions emerging from the partnership, including those focused on sustainable development goals and interfaith and intercultural dialogue, will continue in 2022 and beyond.

“In welcoming a CIFAL Centre to York University, we are further expanding collaborative opportunities between all levels of government, international organizations, the business community, and the public sector to continue building strong, caring, safe communities where everyone can develop to their full potential.”

Wayne Emmerson  
York Region Chairman and CEO





## 2021 Inclusion Charter Updates

### Endorsement Highlights

Inclusion Charter endorsement continues to expand. In 2021, endorsement included organizations in Region-led councils and boards, specifically the Community Partnership Council, which supports the integration of newcomers in York Region and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region, which provides strategic advice to Regional Council on human services matters and initiatives in York Region. As of December 2021, **35 organizations** endorsed the Charter. An up-to-date list of endorsees and links to individual Inclusion Charters are [online](#).

### Community of Practice

York Region launched the **Inclusion Charter Community of Practice** to support endorsees by providing a space for them to expand their network of inclusion and accessibility practitioners in York Region, learn from and inspire each other, share ideas and collaborate with each other. At the inaugural meeting in October 2021, 15 endorsees updated one another on their inclusion and accessibility accomplishments in 2021, shared their plans for the remainder of 2021 and 2022 and resources and asked the group any questions they had.

### Updated Online Presence

As the lead and secretariat of the Inclusion Charter for York Region, York Region updated the [york.ca/inclusiveyr](http://york.ca/inclusiveyr) webpage, which now contains actions launched in 2021 including the Diversity Calendar, the Community of Practice and Collective Actions, the Region's actions to address anti-Black racism and resources to support further learning.

## Looking Ahead

### Collective Action Campaign

MDIG is committed to fostering inclusion through a collective education and awareness campaign that addresses two priority areas: increasing the sense of community belonging amongst York Region residents and decreasing the incidence of hate crimes. The first, internal phase of this plan launched in 2021. In 2022, work will focus on the second, external phase of this plan and will focus specifically on developing and launching

the campaign. While this external campaign was put on hold to focus on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic much of 2020 and 2021, dedicated efforts are being re-initiated in 2022.

In November 2021, York Regional Council unanimously endorsed a motion to reaffirm its commitment to the Inclusion Charter for York Region, condemn increasing hate-related incidents, including those against residents of Asian descent, and declare zero-tolerance for any form of hate-related behaviour and conduct against its residents. Council recognized and supported MDIG's collective action campaign.

### Endorsements

Additional endorsements are expected as relationships expand through community engagement and development. York Region is developing a strategy to expand endorsement of the Inclusion Charter for York Region. It is likely that the expanded endorsement will use a phased approach. Updates regarding endorsements and expansion will be communicated accordingly on [york.ca/inclusiveyr](http://york.ca/inclusiveyr).

### Inclusion Charter Community of Practice

As endorsement of the Inclusion Charter continues to increase, plans to better support endorsees will be further developed. This includes exploring and implementing plans to expand the Community of Practice through additional supports, benefits for endorsees and actions for the group.

## Follow Our Journey

For updates about the Inclusion Charter and to view previous Inclusion Charter Progress Reports, visit [york.ca/inclusiveyr](http://york.ca/inclusiveyr). You can also join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #InclusiveYR. For more information about the Inclusion Charter, please contact [inclusion@york.ca](mailto:inclusion@york.ca)

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request. Contact the Inclusion and Accessibility Unit at [aoda@york.ca](mailto:aoda@york.ca) or call 1-877-464-9675 ext. 74912.