

THE EQUITY, ANTI-RACISM AND RECONCILIATION (EAR) ANALYSIS TOOL

In 2025, the Tamarack Institute introduced the Equity, Anti-Racism and Reconciliation (EAR) Analysis Tool to help bring the organization's commitments into everyday decisions.

This tool reflects the commitment to transform systems, foster belonging, and centre the voices and leadership of equity-denied communities. This approach aligns with the **Water of Systems Change** framework, which illustrates how inequity is held in place through mental models, relationships, power dynamics, resource flows, and policies.

It supports staff, partners, and collaborators to look closely at how their work affects different communities, especially communities that continue to face racism, exclusion, and other systemic barriers.

[Download the tool](#)



The goal is simple: help notice where inequity is showing up, understand why it is happening, and choose actions that shift power, strengthen belonging, and support community-led change.

The tool builds on Seeds of Transformation, Tamarack’s living framework for equity, reconciliation, and belonging. Like that framework, this tool invites reflection, listening, learning and unlearning, and ongoing adaptation. It is not a one-time checklist, but a practice we return to throughout a project, partnership, policy, or decision.

This tool asks practical questions:

Who benefits from the way things work now? Who is left out? What needs to change? How will we know if our work is moving us toward equity, anti-racism, reconciliation, and belonging?



PURPOSE

The EAR Analysis Tool helps us ask better questions before, during, and after decisions are made. It helps us look at how we work, who benefits, who is left out, and what needs to change.

The tool supports Tamarack's broader vision of communities where equity is actively built, racism is challenged and dismantled, and reconciliation is lived through practice. It also connects directly to Seeds of Transformation by helping teams address root causes, shift power, foster belonging, and use community-defined ways of understanding progress.

The tool is both a lens and a practice. It helps us:

- Identify inequities and exclusions in strategies, programs, policies, partnerships, and community initiatives
- Understand how race, Indigeneity, gender identity, disability, class, language, age, geography, and other identities shape people's access to resources, safety, and outcomes
- Look for root causes instead of responding to symptoms
- Co-create solutions with communities most affected by inequity
- Share decision-making power and resources more intentionally
- Measure not only what we do, but how we do it and who shapes the work

Why It Matters

Real change invites us to look at power, resources, policies, relationships, governance, narratives, and deeper patterns that support inequities.

This tool is designed to support teams to move beyond symbolic actions, and support decisions that are measurable, accountable, community-led, and connected to systems change.

For example, a youth employment initiative might find that Indigenous youth face lower rates of success in employment due to significant barriers such as transportation gaps, lack of culturally safe supports, and distrust created by past institutional harms. The EAR analysis tool could be used to change course by shifting resources to Indigenous-led organizations, create land-based mentorship opportunities, and evaluate success using community-defined outcomes, not only job placement numbers.

A Practice of Accountability and Growth

This tool creates space to notice bias, name power, learn from mistakes, and share progress honestly. It is meant to support growth without avoiding responsibility. It helps us keep asking: What are we learning? What needs repair? What will we do next time?

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

Before using the tool, teams should consider whether the right conditions are in place. Readiness does not mean everything is perfect. It means the team has enough support, clarity, and relationship to use the tool in a way that is meaningful and does not create harm or extra burden for communities.

Readiness markers include:

- Leadership commitment to equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation
- Clear mandates, roles, and decision-making processes;
- Trustworthy relationships with communities most affected by the work
- Capacity to gather, protect, interpret, and share disaggregated data responsibly
- Culturally safe and accessible engagement practices
- Staff time, training, coaching, and support
- A willingness to address harmful narratives, resistance, or broken trust before moving forward

Helpful resources to explore include [CommunityWise's anti-racism organizational tool](#) and the Government of Nova Scotia's Equity and Anti-Racism Self-Assessment Tool.

HOW TO APPLY THE TOOL

The tool can be used at any point in a project or decision. It is especially useful when designing something new, changing an existing approach, responding to community feedback, making funding or policy decisions, or evaluating impact.

It follows the five-phase collaborative improvement framework from Seeds of Transformation. The phases are flexible and non-linear. Teams may move back and forth between them as they learn more. [View the collaborative improvement framework](#)





Notice where inequity is showing up in your work



Understand the root causes of the inequity



Choose actions that reduce inequity, shift power, and strengthen belonging

REFLECTION

These reflections can be used at any point in a project, especially for new actions, initiatives, or ideas

DIGGING DEEPER

Use these questions to further explore your work through an equity lens

Who benefits from how things are now?

Who is currently excluded?

What factors contribute to this exclusion?

Which people or communities benefit most from this approach? Are benefits shared fairly?

Who has access to decision-making power?

Which communities are missing from decisions, programs, services, or benefits? Which identities and experiences shape this exclusion?

What policies, practices, rules, narratives, or norms keep this exclusion in place?

How will you contribute?

How do your biases, privileges, and experiences shape your perspective?

What commitments can you make in your role?

How will you model equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation in daily practice?

How have your experiences shaped how you see this work?

What assumptions or biases do you need to challenge?

How will we know equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation are centred?

Where did we apply the tool and what changed as a result?

What evidence, stories, and data will show progress?

How will communities most affected define and recognize success?

How will we assess, adapt, and share progress?

How do we use, validate, and interpret data?

How will progress be measured and communicated?

Who decides what data is collected, how it is used, who owns it, and who can access it?

How are stories and lived experience valued alongside numbers?

How does the data inform systems change?

Who benefits now, and who is excluded?

Begin by mapping who could be affected, who already benefits, and who is missing. Use both data and community insight. Treat stories, lived experience, cultural knowledge, and land-based knowledge as valid evidence alongside numbers.



Scope identification: Map the communities, neighbourhoods, regions, and jurisdictions that could be affected. Use this as a starting point, then revisit it as more information becomes available.



Program participation and use: Compare who uses programs, services, funding, or benefits with who lives in the community or who could be affected. Look for gaps by race, Indigeneity, disability, gender identity, age, class, language, geography, and other relevant factors.



Under-representation: Compare participant data with local and regional demographic data. Notice which communities are under-represented or absent.



Decision-making representation: Look at who sits on governance tables, advisory groups, committees, and leadership spaces. Participation in a program is not the same as having influence over decisions.



Engagement records: Review who attends meetings, focus groups, workshops, town halls, and surveys. If some groups are not participating, look for structural barriers instead of assuming lack of interest.



Community conversations: Speak with Indigenous governments, grassroots organizers, Black and racialized leaders, disability justice groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ advocates, youth leaders, and others connected to the issue.



Census and demographic data: Use Statistics Canada, provincial dashboards and local data sources to understand who lives in the community and how access and/or outcomes differ across groups.



Policy and practice review: Review eligibility rules, outreach methods, language access, timelines, technology requirements, and application processes for hidden barriers.



Community media and informal signals: Look at community newsletters, local media, social media, and grassroots conversations to identify concerns that may not appear in formal data.



Qualitative validation: Use interviews, listening circles, storytelling spaces, and feedback sessions to test whether the data matches people's real experiences.

What factors contribute to exclusion?

After identifying who is missing or harmed, look deeper at **why**. The goal is to understand the systems, histories, relationships, rules, and assumptions that produce unequal access.



Historical and structural context: Look at the histories and systems connected to the issue, including colonization, anti-Black racism, ableism, gender-based violence, restrictive immigration policies, and economic inequity.



Institutional practices and norms: Review formal processes and informal rules that may advantage some people over others. This may include professional language, western-centred communication styles, fast timelines, or expectations that people already know how to navigate systems.



Power and decision-making: Ask who has authority, who controls resources, and whose timelines shape the work. Power imbalances can show up in exclusive governance structures, limited community leadership, or meetings that exclude people because of caregiving, mobility, shift work, or access needs.



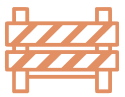
Eligibility and gatekeeping: Review rules, screening processes, documentation requirements, funding criteria, and timelines. Requirements such as government ID, formal references, internet access, or English/French fluency can exclude people. Consider making fluency in other languages an asset.



Cultural safety and trust: Ask whether the space feels safe, respectful, and culturally connected. Communities may step away because of past harm, discrimination, or broken trust.



Communication and information access: Look at how information is shared, which languages are used, what literacy level is assumed, and whether the message is culturally and/or practically relevant.



Practical and material barriers: Identify barriers such as transportation, childcare, scheduling, cost, accessibility, technology, and the physical design of spaces- be explicit about accessibility.



Digital barriers: Assess internet access and reliability, digital literacy, online platform design, and whether online engagement or applications exclude some communities.

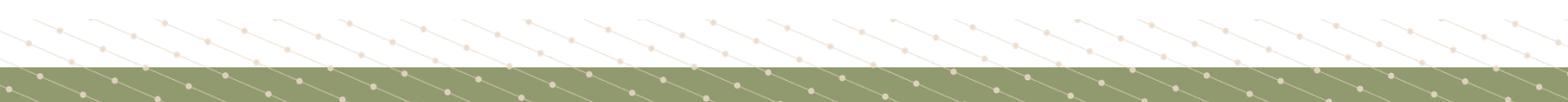


Narratives and public perception: Reflect on stereotypes, deficit-based framing, and assumptions about communities. These narratives can shape both policy and interpersonal behaviour.



Community feedback: Talk directly with people most affected, including people who tried to participate but experienced dismissal, micro-aggressions, racism, ableism, or other administrative barriers.

How will we know the work centers equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation?

- Define success with the communities most affected. Ask what change should look and feel like to them.
 - Invite Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, community partners, and people with lived and living experience to help define progress.
 - Co-design indicators, surveys, stories, and evaluation methods with community.
 - Use mixed evidence: numbers, stories, cultural knowledge, artwork, photos, maps, and lived experience.
 - Return findings in formats that people can use, such as plain-language summaries, visuals, story reports, or community gatherings.
 - Focus on learning, not only key performance indicators. The most important question is whether communities recognize the change as meaningful.
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How will we assess, adapt, and share progress?

- Build regular review moments into the project, such as quarterly or annual reflections.
- Include staff, community partners, people with lived and living experience, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and others most affected.
- Share progress in clear and accessible ways, such as dashboards, short story summaries, community check-ins, and plain-language updates.
- Use reflection questions: What did we learn? Who benefited? Who was harmed? What needs to change next time?
- Invite community members and partners to help interpret results.
- Document learning and apply it to the next phase of work.
- Treat review as a cycle, not a checkbox.


How do we use, validate, and interpret data?

Data can help reveal inequity, but it can also cause harm if it is collected or interpreted without community leadership. Use data with care, consent, and accountability.

- Ask who is collecting, interpreting, owning, and controlling the data.
- Disaggregate data by race, Indigeneity, gender, disability, language, geography, and other relevant factors to reveal patterns that averages can hide.
- Use stories, interviews, maps, artwork, photos, and cultural knowledge alongside numbers.
- Hold shared data-review sessions with community members. Ask: What does this mean? What are we missing? What assumptions are showing up?
- Create clear agreements about consent, privacy, ownership, access, retention, and how results will benefit the community.
- Respect Indigenous data governance, including OCAP principles where they apply: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession.
- Return findings to community in accessible and culturally relevant ways.
- Use data to understand deeper stories and guide systems change, not only to report outputs.

How do bias, privilege, and experience shape our perspective?

Equity work requires personal reflection as well as organizational change. This does not mean focusing only on individual behaviour. It means recognizing that people make decisions inside systems, and those decisions can either reinforce or disrupt inequity.

- Examine your social location. Notice where you hold advantages and where you experience marginalization.
 - Slow down before making decisions. Pay attention to your reactions, assumptions, fears, and defensiveness.
 - Use bias reflection tools to surface unconscious associations that may shape decisions.
 - Track choice points: everyday moments where you can challenge bias or unintentionally reinforce it.
 - Talk through in community through peer learning, dialogue circles, affinity spaces, coaching, or facilitated reflection.
 - Connect reflection to action. Change how you lead, communicate, make decisions, share power, and show up in community spaces.
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Example in Action

Scenario: A cross-sector housing initiative is reviewing its priorities and funding approach.

Who benefits from how things are now?

Homeowners, larger developers, and organizations who are already familiar with the funding system

Who is currently excluded?

Low-income renters, Indigenous youth, newcomers, disabled tenants, and people without stable documentation or consistent digital access.

What factors contribute to this exclusion?

Zoning rules, financial eligibility criteria, systemic racism in tenant screening, lack of accessible application processes, and limited tenant decision-making power.

How will we know equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation are centred?

Increased housing security for Indigenous and racialized tenants, tenant-led decision-making, policy changes, and resources directed to community and Indigenous-led housing solutions.

How do we use, validate, and interpret data?

Tenant stories, community-led surveys, and disaggregated housing data shape the evaluation. How are people named or anonymous in their sharing?

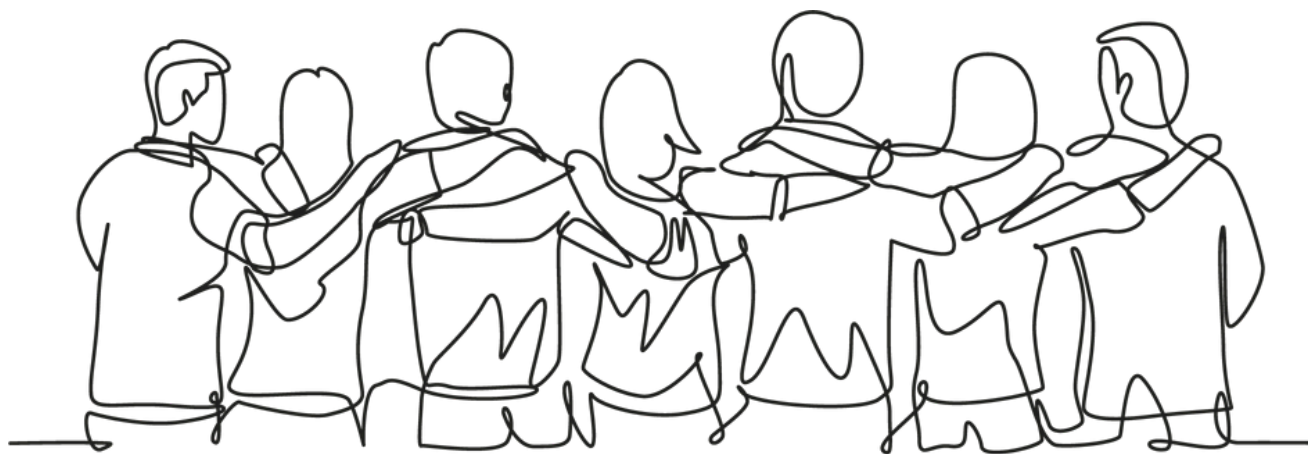
How do your biases, privileges, and experiences shape your perspective?

Project leads notice a bias toward large-scale development models and make room for co-op, non-market, and community-led housing approaches.

Commitment Statement

Using the Equity, Anti-Racism and Reconciliation Analysis Tool is not a checkbox. It is an ongoing practice shaped by Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing, Sankofa, and Ubuntu- the grounding philosophies that guide us.

Each time we use these questions, we strengthen our ability to bring together different knowledge systems, face historical truth, honour relationships, and act with accountability. This is how we move closer to change that advances equity, challenges racism, and practices reconciliation in real and tangible ways.



RESOURCES

To show up in equity work as our best selves, we must do our own inner work to stay accountable, act with care, and centre equity-denied people. These tools and resources can support your journey as an ally and changemaker.

FRAMEWORK | [Seeds of Transformation](#)

ETUAPTUMUK | [Etuaptumuk / Two-Eyed Seeing](#)

SANKOFA | [Go Back and Retrieve](#)

UBUNTU | [Hunhu/Ubuntu](#)

BIAS | [Implicit Association Test](#)

SUPPORT | [Care and Support Resources](#)

ABCD | [Asset-Based Community Development](#)

TOOL | [Community Wise Organizations and Anti-Racism Tool](#)

TOOL | [Government of Nova Scotia Equity and Anti-Racism Self-Assessment Tool](#)

REPORT | [Diversity and Board Directors and Officers, Statistics Canada](#)

TOOL | [Equity Impact Review Tool](#)

GUIDE | [Principles of the Circle of Trust](#)

TOOL | [Wheel of Power and Privilege](#)

COURSE | [First Nations Principles of OCAP](#)

TOOL | [Health Equity Impact Assessment](#)

ARTICLE | [Community Based Participatory Research](#)

FRAMEWORK | [City of London Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression](#)

TOOLS | [Racial Equity Tools dot Org](#)

