

# Edmonds Diversity Equity & Inclusion Commission



PREPARED BY MOLLY JAY

LAST UPDATED: June 2022

## Our Mission.

The purpose of the Edmonds Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission is to promote an environment that accepts, celebrates, and appreciates diversity within our community. The nine-member volunteer advisory Commission [adheres to these guidelines](#) and is intended to:

- Serve as a resource for City government and the community by providing information, education, and communication that facilitate a better understanding and appreciation of our differences.
- Provide recommendations to the Mayor and City Council that would identify opportunities to address diversity issues, promote diversity programs and events, and/or provide guidance to create a more accessible, safe, welcoming and inclusive government and community.
- Assist the City of Edmonds in supporting and challenging all areas of government and the community to eliminate and prevent all forms of discrimination.

## Our Objectives.

To best serve the needs of the Edmonds community, the Commission has three sub-committees: Events, Partnerships and Policy. The purpose of each committee is to develop and promote strategies and best practices within the realms of racial, social, sexual, physical and gender diversity. Specifically:

- Establishing Edmonds as a “welcoming city” for all and a cohesive community that respects all by encouraging cooperation, tolerance and respect among and by all persons who come in contact with the city of Edmonds (i.e. residents, visitors, employers, employees, store owners, etc.).
- Recommending effective strategies for public engagement, removing barriers, and increasing access to city services for our city’s diverse population.
- Recommending areas for investing upstream and where needs are greatest, addressing root causes of inequities and lack of access and smartly allocating our public resources, and recommending opportunities for community partnerships as a strategy to better understand and address equity impacts throughout Edmonds.

- Cultivating and building relationships with under-served and under-represented communities and serving as Trusted Messengers to the community at large.
- Partnering on, hosting, co-sponsoring and publicizing diverse events in Edmonds.
- Performing such other duties as the mayor and/or city council may direct.

### *Policy Committee*

We develop recommendations and suggestions for proclamations to the City Council and Mayor to be vetted through the full Diversity Commission.

### *Events Committee*

Infuse Edmonds with inclusive community events and support partners with their events.

### *Partnership Committee*

Build partnerships with other offices and individuals leading DEI initiatives on campus and elsewhere. Through these collaborations we have shared resources, discussed strategies and developed workshops and set the groundwork for future collaborative events.

Who does the proclamations? What's the workflow there? The subcommittee objectives need work.

## DEI Commission Proclamations.

The Commission will write and recommend proclamations which are official announcements issued by the Mayor and/or City to recognize an event, day, week or month that will have a major citywide impact and/or deserves recognition from a DEI standpoint. The goal of the proclamation is to honor, celebrate or create awareness of an event, special occasion, cause or significant issue.

**Examples:** a proclamation of solidarity with Ukraine; the celebration of Black History Month; recognition of Pride Month.

## Our Voice in The Community.

Disability. Age. Race. Neurodiversity. Immigration status. Income level. Religion. Nationality. Medical history. Ethnicity. Size. Type of job. Gender. Sexual orientation.

Our identities are unique and complex mixtures of these and many other factors. They are also all topics that can be the subject of biased, stigmatizing language.

Many of us are familiar with – and consciously choose not to use – hurtful or dangerous slurs and slang. But language is remarkable in the subtle, often invisible ways it reinforces biases, stigmas and stereotypes. Science has revealed how profoundly words, phrases, framing and metaphors affect the way we think. The way we think affects the way we create and implement public policy. Additionally, the way we use language often creates barriers that – intentionally or not – result in only some people understanding what we are saying. The way we use language can either make information accessible to diverse audiences, or make that information exclusive to certain communities.

As a public agency committed to equitably serving all Washingtonians, our language must be:

- Respectful of people and their lived experiences
- Inclusive of all people
- Plain and universal so it can be easily understood by the broadest audiences possible, and easily translated

### *Evolving and learning together ...*

This guide provides a framework for thinking about language. It is NOT a definitive reference with definitive answers. Why not?

1. Our language – including language related to how people describe their individual or collective identity – is constantly evolving. If you read a book from the 1800s, then the early 1900s and then today, you see many differences. Some changes happen subtly over many years, some within mere months. Sometimes we will find ourselves a step or two behind, and that's OK.
2. There is no checklist of “correct” phrases guaranteed to make everyone happy, because no group of individuals will feel the same about language or how they identify themselves. In the disability community, for example, people-first language ("people with disabilities") has become the norm, but some groups and people prefer identify-first language ("disabled people"). Many people of color don't identify by race but instead want to be identified specifically by their ethnicity or nationality.
3. There is no expectation that any of us will know or choose the perfect words all the time. The expectation is that we listen to understand, evolve and learn together, and we use our language in ways that break down stereotypes and stigmas instead of upholding them.

### ***Resources to think or talk about:***

- VIDEO: [How language shapes the way we think](#) (TED Talk)
- ARTICLE: [The Journey from ‘Colored’ to ‘Minorities’ to ‘People of Color’](#) (NPR)
- ARTICLE: [Good intentions don't blunt the impact of dehumanizing words](#) (The Marshall Project)
- ARTICLE: [Recognizing that words have the power to harm, we commit to using more just language to describe places](#) (Brookings Institute)

# Things to think about ...

## Perfection isn't the goal. Every single one of us has space for learning.

If you're preparing content about or for a specific community, be open to a dialogue about the language the community uses and how you can incorporate that into your communications.

## People-first language ... maybe.

People-first language is about identifying a person or group as people first and placing any condition or experience second. It reduces the risk of dehumanizing or "otherizing" groups of people. The idea is to describe the condition or experience as something a person has, rather than making that condition or experience who the person is. Two common people-first examples are "people with disabilities" or "people experiencing homelessness."

This is NOT the universal preference among all groups, however. Some groups and individuals [prefer identity-first language](#) because they view their identity and their personhood as inseparable. They might even view person-first language as further stigmatizing their disability or condition.



Alex Dacy | WheelchairRapunzel  
@dacy\_alex

Hi! I'm Alex. I'm disabled. I'm NOT a person with disability. Disability is not something I carry around with me sometimes. I live it every single day. I cannot separate myself from it. It's an integral part of my identity. I'm disabled and proud.

6:46 PM · Mar 4, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

The Commission generally encourages people-first language, but also encourages conversations with stakeholders who represent the likely audiences of a presentation or document to confirm their preference.

## Plain talk (or plain language).

Using complex language and terms of art -- or industry jargon -- can cause confusion, misunderstanding and frustration. It can also be perceived as patronizing. Plain language ensures broad audiences can easily understand content, including people who are neurodiverse or not fluent in English. Plain language makes it easier to interpret spoken words or translate written material into other languages.

For anyone who thinks using plain language will make them appear less knowledgeable, [research shows time and again](#) that using plain language instills a much better sense of trust and confidence than being overly technical. Using plain language has become so common (and is simply the right thing to do and more effective) that it's also a requirement for [state](#) and [federal agencies](#).

### Resources to think or talk about:

- RESOURCE: [Plain talk resources and guidelines](#) (Office of the Governor)
- RESOURCE: [Eight plain language tips for writers and translators](#) (Translators Without Borders)
- RESOURCE: [Be concise; keep the subject, verb and object close together](#); and [use positive language](#)

## Universal phrases.

It's hard to avoid completely, but every language is full of idioms, metaphors and jargon. These might be well-known to many fluent speakers but make no sense to some people, such as folks who are neurodiverse or not fluent in the language.

Idioms (or figurative language, such as "raining cats and dogs") are also difficult for interpreters and translators.

Examples: "hot button issue" could be "controversial issue," or "take a raincheck" could be "let's reschedule."

## Gender neutral (or gender inclusive) language.

This is also hard to avoid completely. But when possible, try to avoid gendered phrases and greetings. "Hey, guys" could be "hey, folks" and "manpower" could be "people power."

You might also see some communities incorporating "x" to create gender-neutral or more inclusive alternatives to binary gendered language. Examples some people use include Latinx, folx and womxn. Don't assume that's the preference of the group you might be communicating with, however. Some groups might oppose these alternatives. As with people-first language, you might generally find this option a useful starting point but are encouraged to have a conversation with stakeholders who represent these communities about the terminology they prefer.

### **Resources to think or talk about:**

- RESOURCE: [Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English](#) (United Nations)
- ARTICLE: ['Penmanship' is now 'handwriting' as WA removes gender bias in statutes](#) (Reuters)
- ARTICLE: [What you need to know about the letter 'X' in words like folx, womxn and Latinx](#) (Well + Good)

## History.

Many phrases and words that are commonly used today have ableist, racist or sexist origins. Remaining curious about the history of our language helps us understand the stigmatizing or harmful impact of phrases like "peanut gallery" and "loony bin." Hopefully, we can help our language evolve so those phrases are no longer the norm.

### **Resources to think or talk about:**

- ARTICLE: [The harmful ableist language you unknowingly use](#) (BBC)
- VIDEO: [6 phrases with surprisingly racist origins](#) (MTV News - Decoded)
- ARTICLE: [Everyday words and phrases that have racist connotations](#) (CNN)

## Framing.

Every story has a frame. Frames implicitly – but profoundly – shift how we think about a problem and who we assign accountability to. American culture is deeply rooted in individualism, and we often attribute success or

failure on an individual's actions and choices – and create policies accordingly. [Other cultures are more collectivist](#). Both frames influence how we think and communicate.

These individualistic frames are commonly observed when we talk about issues such as poverty and crime (or public safety). We tend to place accountability for these conditions on individuals rather than on leaders who control systems and institutions. Phrases like “he worked his way out of poverty” imply a community or individual can escape poverty if they make good choices and work hard. Compare that to a phrase like “removing barriers to education, housing and child care,” which focuses on systems that need to be fixed.

**Resources to think or talk about:**

- ARTICLE: [Is crime a virus or a beast? Stanford study shows how the word you pick can frame the debate](#) (Stanford News)
- VIDEO: [How the words we use affect the way we think](#) (TED Talk)

## Intent.

Take a moment to make sure your intent in telling a story matches the impact in the way it's told. It's common to tell stories about people overcoming adversity, and those stories can be inspiring. But there's a fine line between an inspiring story and an exploitative one.

Two common forms of objectification or exploitation are tokenism and saviorism.

“Tokenism” is when we exemplify the accomplishments of a "model minority" -- a person of color, disability or other marginalized status -- to argue that anyone willing to try hard enough can have that same level of success. Tokenism essentially silences any consideration of systemic barriers faced by those not in the dominant group.

“Saviorism” is when we use a story to focus on and elevate the role of a dominant group and cast them as “saviors” helping those who are unable to help themselves.

One other place we sometimes see good intentions result in harmful impact is when we tell stories about people's experiences with trauma. It's important to remember that an individual's well-being always comes first. We don't want to use someone's experience at the expense of their dignity and well-being.

**Resources to think or talk about:**

- VIDEO: [I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much](#) (TED Talk)

## Language guides

The following guides aren't exhaustive or definitive lists or glossaries. They provide examples and resources for you to think or talk about.

Please refer to the [AP Stylebook](#) for guidance on specific terms.

# QUICK LIST OF TERMS TO AVOID

Adapted primarily from the [Equity Language Guide](#) from the Washington State Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities, December 2018

| Instead of...   | Try...   |
|---|--|
| Aliens, illegals, illegal immigrants                                    | Individuals who are undocumented, immigrants, migrants   |
| Challenged, differently abled, handicapable, handicapped, special needs | People with disabilities   |
| Citizens  | If it isn't necessary to refer to citizenship status, use people, residents or community members |
| Disparities due to race, Disproportionality by race/ethnicity           | Inequities due to racism   |
| Homosexual  | LGBTQ+ people, the LGBTQ+ community  |
| Minorities (ethnic or racial)   | People of color, communities of color, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color)             |
| Sexual preference(s)  | Sexual orientation   |
| Special interest groups, special populations, vulnerable populations    | Marginalized communities, marginalized people  |
| Transgendered, transsexual  | Transgender person, trans person   |

| Instead of... | Try...   |
|---------------|--|
| Prostitute    | Sex worker (there are numerous variations of this depending on the level of consent, the context of individual situations, type of work and other factors) |

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES OR NEURODIVERSITY

Ableist language is very prevalent in our day-to-day communications. Terms like “crazy,” “retarded” and “OCD” are often used as insults or self-deprecating comments. Avoid using words and phrases that stigmatize people with disabilities, health conditions or neurodiversity. Also, remember that some people with developmental disabilities or who are neurodiverse interpret language very literally and don't process sarcasm, humor or slang the same as those who are neurotypical.

| Instead of...                                | Try this...                            | Why?   |
|--|--|--|
| He's confined to a wheelchair.               | He uses a wheelchair.                  | “Confined” implies that being in a wheelchair is a negative thing and reinforces the stigma of using a wheelchair. “Uses a wheelchair” is a matter-of-fact description of a person's mode of mobility.   |
| My neighbor is driving me crazy/nuts/insane. | I feel so frustrated with my neighbor. | A temporary feeling of frustration or anger isn't equivalent to a condition that requires treatment. Mental illness is still misunderstood and misrepresented broadly in the U.S. By more accurately stating our emotion, we don't perpetuate stigma about mental illness. |

## PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY OR HOMELESSNESS

Use poverty and homelessness as nouns, not adjectives. Because poverty and homelessness aren't merely consequences of personal choices, use a collectivist frame over an individualist frame. Instead of negatively framed phrases like “struggling to pay bills” use empowering phrases such as “working hard to make ends meet.”

**Examples** (primarily sourced from [DC Fiscal Policy Institute Style Guide for Inclusive Language](#) and the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities' [Equity Language Guide](#)):

| Instead of...                                | Try this...   | Why?   |
|--|---|--|
| What should we do about the homeless people? | Why is there an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness? | People-first language places homelessness as a noun, not an adjective. When people hear the term “homeless people” or “the homeless,” they might unintentionally associate that term with <a href="#">negative and harmful stereotypes</a> . |



|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Disadvantaged, struggling to make ends meet, poor                    | Must make ends meet on low wages<br>Working hard to make ends meet<br>People facing barriers<br>People with incomes below the poverty line<br>Low-income   | We can choose empowering phrases that respect the work people are putting into the struggles we all share, such as raising children, caring for sick relatives, paying bills, etc.<br><br>These phrases also help frame poverty as a collective/community issue, rather than an individual issue. |
| Black women are more “at risk” of delivering low birthweight babies. | The cumulative stresses of racism and inequities in health care access and services cause Black women to be more likely to deliver low-birthweight babies. | The first phrase implies race is the cause of being “high risk,” while in the second, racism is the cause.  |

## LGBTQIA+

LGBTQ (or LGBTQIA, or LGBTQ+) is an acronym that encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer folk ([or folx](#)). There are additional identities, including two-spirit, asexual, agender and intersex.

One cannot assume a person’s gender identity based on external appearance, name or biological sex. The way a person “presents” themselves might or might not align with their true gender identity. Some people will introduce themselves along with their pronouns as a way to invite others to do the same, or ask others what pronouns they use, though those approaches aren't universally preferred.

In addition, avoid using "Mr.," "Ms." and "Mrs." Instead, use a person's first and last name to avoid assuming gender.

### **Resources to think or talk about:**

- RESOURCE: [Glossary of terms and resources](#) (Washington State LGBTQ Commission)
- RESOURCE: [2021 RAIN Pride Month Toolkit](#) – vocabulary guide begins on page 54 (Washington State Employees LGBTQ+ Business Resource Group)
- ARTICLE: [The Problem With Pronouns](#) (Insider Higher Ed)

# BIPOC/POC

BIPOC is an acronym standing for groups of people who are Black, Indigenous and people of color. The acronym is very broad and is an evolution of people of color, or POC. It defines Black and Indigenous peoples as having distinct identities and experiences outside of other people of color.

BIPOC isn't universally preferred among Black or Indigenous communities. When describing issues specific to Black or Indigenous communities – or any community of color – it is preferable to list the communities specifically and individually.

Importantly, “race” is a social construct – much like gender – and is different from ethnicity. You'll find significant differences in how individuals or groups identify themselves when it comes to race and ethnicity.

This best practice is worth repeating frequently: When describing issues specific to any community of color, it is preferable to list the communities specifically or ask how they want to be identified.

## ***Resources to think or talk about:***

- ARTICLE: [The meaning of the BIPOC acronym, as explained by linguists](#) (Vox)
- ARTICLE: [Is it time to say R.I.P. to 'POC'?](#) (NPR)
- VIDEO: [Race isn't biologically real](#) (Vox)

# Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine

Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably, but they are distinct. Hispanic identity is broadly associated with people who come from Spanish-speaking countries. It is a racial term first introduced by the U.S. Census in 1970. Those who identify as Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine come specifically from Latin American countries.

Some organizations and individuals use the gender-neutral Latinx or Latine terms, but not all. The Edmonds Diversity Commission uses Latinx.

Similar to other race identities, the Hispanic and Latino identities encompass numerous ethnicities and nationalities. [Research indicates](#) that “when it comes to the labels that people want to use to describe themselves, more often than not, they prefer their country of origin. That's true particularly of immigrants, but it's also true even of U.S.-born Hispanics or Latinos who are the children of U.S.-born parents. Into the third generation, oftentimes the most common term used references the country of origin, like Mexican, Dominican, Cuban or Puerto Rican.”

When describing issues specific to any community of color, it is preferable to list the communities specifically and individually or ask how they want to be identified. Don't use BIPOC when talking specifically about Hispanic or Latino communities or individuals.

## ***Resources to think or talk about:***

- STUDY: [About one-in-four U.S. Hispanics have heard of Latinx, but just 3% use it](#) (Pew Research Center)

## African American/Black

As with other race categories, Black is a term that includes individuals who identify with various ethnicities and nationalities, including Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino or African. AP style says African American is acceptable for those in the U.S. But it is generally preferable to be more specific when possible and relevant (for example, Caribbean American, Somali American or Senegalese American).

Black is always capitalized and is a singular term. Don't refer to a group of Black individuals as Blacks. Don't use BIPOC when talking specifically about the Black community or individuals.

When describing issues specific to any community of color, it is preferable to list the communities specifically and individually or ask how they want to be identified.

### **Resources to think or talk about:**

- ARTICLE: [AP says it will capitalize Black but not white](#) (Associated Press)
- ARTICLE: [The shift from 'slave' to 'enslaved person' may be difficult, but it's important](#) (Chicago Tribune)

## Indigenous/Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native peoples

The [National Congress of American Indians says](#) there are 574 federally recognized Native nations (variously called Tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages) that share geography with the United States. Native nations are separate, sovereign nations. There are more than 200 Native nations that don't have federal recognition. More than 75% of Native people don't live on Tribal land.

There are 29 federally recognized [Native nations and Tribes that share geography with Washington state](#) (31 including the Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon, which have resource interests in Washington state). There are additional Native nations and Tribes that, for various and complicated reasons, aren't federally recognized: Chinook Nation, Duwamish Tribe, Snohomish Tribe of Indians, Snoqualmoo Nation and Steilacoom Tribe.

Common phrases (largely adapted from the [Native Governance Center's Style Guide](#)):

- Capitalize "Tribe" and "Tribal" (Note: This isn't consistent with AP style but defers to Indigenous style and is The Diversity Commission's style standard. Upon first mention of a specific Tribe or Nation, use the Tribe or Nation's full formal name, according to how they self-identify. You can then use "Tribe" or "Nation" in subsequent mentions. Example: "The Yakama Nation is an important partner. We consulted with the Nation on this press release.")
- Usual and accustomed territories
- Indian Country
- Native American communities
- Generally, use Native people, Native or Indigenous when referring to a group of Native people. You can refer to the people of a Tribe as tribal members and people of a Nation as citizens. Use American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) when requested.

- Be careful about patronizing phrases like “The agency is proud to work with our Tribes” or “The Tribes in Washington state.” Tribes are sovereign nations – they aren’t “ours” and they share geography with other government entities.
- Don’t use BIPOC when talking specifically about Native people or groups.

**Resources to think or talk about:**

- RESOURCE: [Tribal maps](#) (Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs)
- RESOURCE: [Descriptions of the Tribes of Washington state](#) (Washington Tribes/Washington Indian Gaming Association)
- RESOURCE: [Guide to Indigenous land acknowledgement](#) (Native Governance Center)
- RESOURCE: [Style Guide](#) (Native Governance Center)

## Asian Pacific Islander (API), Native Hawaiian

Sometimes people will combine API and Native Hawaiian titles with Asian American (AAPI). The [Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs](#) (CAPAA) uses “Asian Pacific Americans,” “Asian American and Pacific Islander communities,” “AAPI community,” or “AAPIs.”

## Asian American

Asian American is a broad term, established in the 1960s. [According to CAPAA](#), “Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are among the fastest growing populations in the state and nation. More than 48 distinct Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups exist representing a diverse range of cultures, languages, religions, and immigration patterns.”

“Asian Americans” is considered overly broad by some because it obscures variable experience across groups.

When describing issues specific to any community of color, it is preferable to list the communities specifically and individually, or ask how they want to be identified. Don’t use BIPOC when talking specifically about the AAPI community or individuals.

**Resources to think or talk about:**

- ARTICLE: [The inadequacy of the term “Asian American”](#) (Vox)
- ARTICLE: [AAPI History: Activist Origins of the Term ‘Asian American’](#) (Time)
- RESOURCE: [Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Washington State](#) (CAPAA)

## PEOPLE WITH CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS/CURRENTLY OR FORMERLY INCARCERATED

Instead of describing people with criminal convictions or experiencing incarceration with stigmatizing negative terms based on their current state, use people-first language that aims toward precision and facts about the individual’s circumstances.

Journalist Jelani Cobb [told the Columbia Journalism Review that](#) “As long as we’re talking about people only in terms of what they’ve done wrong, it’s easy to camouflage the fact that we’re talking about human beings.” She

said that the media’s “lurid language” and “vocabulary of outrage” play a role in cultivating the attitudes and policies that have led to mass incarceration in America.

**Resources to think or talk about:**

- RESOURCE: [The Language Project](#) (The Marshall Project)
- RESOURCE: [Resources for humanizing language](#) (The Osborne Association)
- VIDEO: [We need to talk about an injustice](#) (TED Talk)
- ARTICLE: [What words we use and avoid when covering people and incarceration](#) (The Marshall Project)

## Summary of other language guides and resources

- [Glossary of Equity-Related Terms](#) (Washington State [DEI Committee](#))
- [Equity Language Guide](#) (Governor’s Interagency Council on Health Disparities)
- [Glossary of terms and resources](#) (Washington State LGBTQ Commission)
- [The missing page in your stylebook: people-first language](#) (The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council)
- [Style Guide for Inclusive Language](#) (DC Fiscal Policy Institute)
- [Inclusive Language Guide](#) (University of South Carolina Aiken, Department of Diversity Initiatives)
- [Style Guide](#) (Native Governance Center)
- [Resources for humanizing language](#) (The Osborne Association)
- [Words Matter: Preferred Language for Talking About Addiction](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

