

Our Vision for "Project Inclusion"

Ultimately the goal is to increase diversity in Vermont and abolish racism with general acceptance by the public and respect for the dignity of all people.

The Declaration of Inclusion being adopted by towns and the Governor's Proclamation on inclusion provide recognition but not strategic direction, policy sustainability, or operational guidance.

Diversity in our population is an important component required for vital and dynamic town, city, and state economies but how to achieve that diversity and the way to gain acceptance by the largely white population are equally important aspects to consider.

Community leaders at all levels in Vermont must prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion in their decision-making and we should require them to step down if they are unwilling to address their own or the community's biases before making decisions. Municipal leaders and law enforcement officials must engage effectively with community members on the subject of systemic racism, racial justice, public safety, and law enforcement. They need to engage the public in conversations on these and other issues important to an increasingly diverse population.

Community and state leaders can work closely with the many organizations already existing, organizations such as Rutland Forward, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, Vermont's Local Solutions and Community Action Team, the Vermont Equity Caucus, Project VISION, Vermont Council on Rural Development, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and many more. In addition, and very important, is the Vermont Office of Racial Equality and its Executive Director, Xusana Davis.

The difficult work is just beginning but the rewards will be enormous.

– Bob Harnish