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Social justice in tourism recovery: examining equity, diversity, and inclusion in Canadian tourism restart policies

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyze the incorporation, prioritization and depth of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in tourism industry restart policies of Canadian provinces and territories. This study investigates how the detailing of EDI in policies determine the priority in emancipating tourism workers from the inequities exacerbated during the pandemic. Such investigation enables a better understanding of the complexities, tendencies and rationale of involving EDI in the tourism industry's recovery.

Design/methodology/approach – The research investigated the presence and prioritization of equity, diversity, and inclusion using systematic text analytics of 38 publicly available restart plans and statements from 52 government and non-government agencies. Using web-based software Voyant Tools to assist in text analytics, a hybrid deductive-inductive coding approach was conducted.

Findings – Key outcomes from the analysis revealed scarce to no full and dedicated content on EDI as a holistic initiative necessary for tourism industry relaunch. This lack of EDI content was a result of the greater impetus to prioritize economic generation and limited data due to practical and ideological issues. Results also suggested the tokenizing of EDI in some policies.

Research limitations/implications – Difficulties in data used for research include the lack and availability of restart policies specifically for tourism; most policies were generalized and referred to economic recovery as a whole. Studies of tourism-specific EDI issues were also limited.

Originality – The research is revelatory for investigating EDI prioritizations in restart policies even among well-developed and worker-diverse tourism industries such as in Canada, where inequities and injustices to women, Black, Indigenous, gender-diverse, and newcomer tourism workers among others have been withstanding.

Keywords Diversity, Inclusion, Equity

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

In the post-pandemic relaunch of the Canadian tourism industry, it is crucial to investigate its efforts to correct existent inequities. Policies become key instruments interrogated for their prioritization, or lack thereof (Rao, 2019, p. 182), in addressing long-standing inequity problems grossly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 620). Even Canadian provinces and territories are not spared in questioning the ratification of return-to-business-as-usual edicts that abet tourism's historical complicity in the perpetuation of structural inequality (Benjamin *et al.*, 2020).

As an established economic pillar of advanced economies like Canada, tourism plays a crucial role in its recovery and revitalization. This redevelopment is what Higgins-Desbiolles (2020, p. 617) and Everingham and Chassagne (2020, p. 556) tout as complicit to the neoliberalist agenda of economic growth at all cost. This paper posits how tendencies to prioritize economic regeneration consequently undermine and negate equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in post-pandemic tourism restart policies within Canada's provincial and territorial contexts.

The sudden and unexpected economic pause impelled by COVID-19, however, presents an extraordinary opportunity to examine EDI priority in the crafting of policies for the tourism industry's relaunch. In this light, it is essential to understand how policymakers comprehend the relationship between EDI and effective tourism recovery. In the premise that inclusion, fairness and diversity lead to a more promising and resilient tourism industry, the research asks to what extent are EDI initiatives prioritized in Canadian tourism restart policies? Answering this research question, therefore, warrants the evaluation, interrogation and critique of restart policies of well-developed tourism economies across Canadian provinces and territories.

Setting the paper's context, a policy-centric EDI definition in the Canadian setting along with intersectional nuances and issues will be defined and explained, followed by an examination of inequalities and pandemic impacts in the Canadian tourism industry. Analysis will then center on EDI initiatives, specifically their representation and actual inclusion in provincial restart strategies and policies. By deconstructing policies using text analytics, this paper's Analysis and Discussion section will critique how pandemic complexities perpetuate social justice issues through policy initiatives and recovery directions. A section on Critical Turns will highlight policy reforms and provide recommendations to transform tourism's restart to become more just, inclusive and empowering.

Equity, diversity and inclusion in the Canadian context

Defining equity, diversity and inclusion

Kelly *et al.* (2022, p. 3) define EDI [1] as a "policy-focused initiative aimed at addressing the ongoing exclusion of under-represented groups in employment, education, and other institutional contexts." EDI's definition is contextual to varying sociopolitical spheres, workplace applications and sectors yet is still predominantly concerned with the principle of advancing social justice (Calver *et al.*, 2023, p. 4; Kelly *et al.*, 2022, p. 3). This is the ethos of EDI, whether it is understood in its amalgamated whole or each individual component of EDI.

While copious definitions based on contexts abound, this paper adopts the Canada Research Coordinating Committee (2021) definition of each EDI pillar. The committee defines equity as the removal of systemic barriers and biases to grant fair and equal opportunity for all, while diversity pertains to differences in status of racial, gender identity and perspectives among others; and inclusion means the integration and valuing of all

individuals (Canada Research Coordinating Committee, 2021). This definition is an important foundation for technical data-gathering and analysis to be further discussed in the Methodology section of this paper.

On the other hand, Tamtik and Guenter (2020, p. 44), Cusson *et al.* (2023, p. 32) and Joy (2022) regard EDI as an organizational framework, strategy or practice that, when firmly inculcated in policy, becomes empowering to beneficiaries. Voices of employees with unique lived experiences are heard and valued, while workers are happier and have greater opportunities for creativity and innovation in workplaces where EDI is policy (International Labour Organization, 2022, p. 37). The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (2022) claims how organizations with EDI-forward policies report 50% less turnover, 56% increase in performance and 83% increase in innovation among other favorable metrics. EDI has also been correlated to greater resiliency against disruptions during crises like the pandemic (Tourism HR Canada, 2024; Dixon-Fyle *et al.*, 2020; Dolan *et al.*, 2020).

Under the lens of social justice, EDI in contemporary Canadian society is shaped by critical anticolonial theory that seeks to dismantle historic, systemic and structural barriers, address hegemony and hierarchies and engage in accountable relationships (Lawrence and Dua, 2005, p. 121; Carlson, 2016, p. 4; Garson *et al.*, 2021, p. 273). The tenets of Canada's colonial-settler past continues to perpetuate systemic discrimination today, especially to equity-seeking groups, such as Indigenous people, Black people, people of color, gender-diverse people and the disabled in human resource policies (Kelly *et al.*, 2022, p. 2; Lawrence and Dua, 2005, p. 123). For instance, Black folks in Canada have historically been disproportionately over-represented in service industry work later deemed highly susceptible to coronavirus hazards (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021). Despite the ratification of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 and the Employment Equity Act in 1995 that enshrined equal treatment and protection against systemic barriers, much work is still needed to push EDI forward in the public and private domains of policy.

Reimagining equity, diversity and inclusion through the lens of intersectionality

The growing prominence of EDI initiatives has led to an increasing focus on broader organizational frameworks that promote social justice. However, as the EDI framework becomes more widely adopted, it is essential to recognize the importance of intersectionality in understanding the nuanced experiences of equity-seeking individuals. Intersectionality is about reimagining EDI in its deeper contexts, foundations and agencies. As an analytical paradigm, intersectionality probes the complexities behind a person's overlapping social identities such as gender, race, class and physical ability to reveal power differentials, privilege and systems of oppression such as ableism, racism, homophobia and classism (Kelly *et al.* (2022, p. 2). This becomes helpful to understand why examining a singular nuance of social identity is insufficient to reveal the inner workings of injustices (Hankivsky and Christoffersen, 2008).

Intersectionality is rife in circumstances surrounding gender issues among tourism workers. For instance, women in the tourism industry may experience gender discrimination in the hiring process. However, the discrimination experienced by a lesbian Black woman immigrant applying for a front desk job may be more distinct, where the oppression is dynamic and rooted from quadrupled injustices of heteronormativity, racism, sexism and nativism by the employer. Thus, it becomes important to note that intersectionality is not solely concerned about compounding social categories but the nature of converging experiences, circumstances, positionalities and their resulting susceptibility to

oppression and discrimination (Hankivsky and Christoffersen, 2008, p. 278; Mooney, 2018, p. 176).

While the promotion of equity in EDI is important, it is essential to acknowledge that equity-seeking groups that experience racism, classism, ableism and other oppressions may live in intersecting realities; policies may homogenize these individuals into narrowly defined groups with the assumption that all group members have identical experiences (Sheikh, Fox-Robichaud and Schwartz, 2023, p. 77). The narrowed attention to the race category, for instance, risks treating the roots of all anti-Black discrimination the same and neglecting the fluidity and dynamics of intersecting agencies such as economics, privilege, religion, ethnicity, gender, education, housing and job (in)security (Hankivsky and Christoffersen, 2008, p. 273; Sheikh, Fox-Robichaud, and Schwartz, 2023, p. 77).

How such agencies intertwine with race provides a deeper understanding of inequities. In the Canadian health-care sector, the failure to undertake race-based and Indigenous identity data gathering to understand distinct needs of racialized and Indigenous communities has led to ineffective policies to the detriment of equity-seeking groups (Grant and Balkissoon, 2019; Sheikh, Fox-Robichaud, and Schwartz, 2023). Similarly, Tourism HR Canada (2023) has disclosed that Indigenous groups have not been equitably represented in data-gathering protocols. Moreso, surveys have excluded entangled elements of entrenched circumstances and underlying issues such as historical traumas, reconciliation struggles and colonial legacies (Tourism HR Canada, 2023). EDI, therefore, risks being incomplete without intersectional lenses in data-gathering, subsequently reifying and perpetuating exclusion and marginalization in policy-making. Moreover, understanding the intricate relationship between intersectionality and EDI is among the many challenges that organizations encounter in fostering EDI in the workplace.

Equity, diversity and inclusion debates and issues

The tremendous attention and popularity given to EDI during the pandemic has exposed problems with organizations having a watered-down approach, making it a one-off training engagement rather than a long-term policy commitment to action and change. With corporate investments in the billion dollar mark in Canada (Imagine Canada, 2023), the gold rush expansion of EDI has transformed itself into a competitive and lucrative industry that Friedersdorf (2023) claims has trendified the EDI training business. The "DEI [E and D arranged differently] industrial complex," as described by Zheng (2022), has produced an army of self-appointed EDI "experts" who claim to be knowledgeable of broad issues of all ethnicities. Further scrutiny reveals that most EDI trainings are largely ineffective because the "extreme lack of standards, consistency, and accountability among DEI practitioners," where intentions were prioritized more than the results (Zheng, 2022). This concern is at the core of the EDI debate that is expected to persist.

Kelly *et al.* (2022, p. 5) assert that the common issue with EDI is its perfunctory utilization, more so when organizations are compelled to require EDI policies only to tick the box of regulatory compliance. Consequently, EDI policies are reduced as commodified blanket statements without explicit end goals, success indicators and concrete applications. Rather than being transformative, EDI has become depoliticized and performative. Akin to greenwashing, there is tendency to "EDI-wash" policies to present itself to be socially responsible for the needs of employees, only to hide its strategic business positioning and the ultimate agenda of profitability (Gotsis and Kortezi, 2015, p. 23; Friedersdorf, 2023; Calver *et al.*, 2023, p. 21). In this reality, the frenzy in having EDI policies in an organization becomes more of a business rather than a moral case; the former becomes the rhetorical justification for EDI work (Zheng, 2022).

As the dust settles from the post-pandemic EDI trend, organizations realize the complex, expensive and uncomfortable work that EDI demands (Friedersdorf, 2023; Zheng, 2022; Singal, 2023). As inequities are often intersectional, organizations might require diving deep into personal issues, which might cause unease, especially in typical "strictly business only" work environments. Many organizations also realize that practicing EDI requires the unpleasant but necessary admission that they are complicit to perpetuating inequity and oppression; the first step in dismantling injustice is to admit that it is inherent and oftentimes systemically embedded in policies within the organization (Government of Canada, 2023).

Inequality and disenfranchisement in the tourism industry

Beneath the façade of enthusiastic and commonly multicultural work spaces, structural inequalities and injustices have been historically pervasive in the tourism industry (Benjamin *et al.*, 2020, p. 2; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 612; Calinaud *et al.*, 2020, p. 689). Inequalities and their epiphenomena are drawn from the industry's highly sexualized and gender-typecasted nature of work (Calinaud *et al.*, 2020, p. 680). In parallel, McDowell (1997) states the lack of gender neutrality in tourism employment, as most positions are constructed to embody masculinity and femininity. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2024) ([UNWTO]), Tourism HR Canada (2016) and Baum's (2013) report to the ILO highlight the gender imbalance, where the women majority of the tourism workforce accounts to 54% globally and 51% in Canada, yet face dismal compensation, greater discrimination from reconciling work and family life and significant vulnerability to workplace stress and sexual harassment.

Similar to aesthetic standardization impacts confronted by women in tourism and hospitality, LGBTQ2 workers are suppressed from safely expressing identity, legitimizing their voices and working free from workplace ostracism. Despite the scarcity of statistical research on LGBTQ2 workplace issues in Canada (Waite and Denier, 2019, p. 94), and more so within the tourism industry, there is clear plausibility for potential and existing conundrums to impact such a diverse group of workers. Given the programmed growth, increased employment of members from the LGBTQ2 community and promotion of Canada as an inviting LGBTQ2 destination (Government of Canada, 2019), it is reasonable to surmise the manifestation of homophobia, discrimination and bullying in such sector. Common among new market players, birthing pains are anticipated in LGBTQ2 travel, which is forecasted to be a $12bn tourism sector (Tourism Industry Association of Canada, 2020).

Inequity issues transcend sex and gender and affect Indigenous workers as well. Canada's colonial legacy of territorial dispossession, prohibition of cultural practices and intergenerational trauma from residential schools is arguably the greatest contributor to Indigenous people's profound socioeconomic marginalization and disproportionate access to opportunities in tourism (Department of Justice, 2023; Tourism HR Canada, 2023). The cascading effects of the lack of education and opportunity have resulted to Indigenous people getting hired and retained in low or unskilled, entry-level work that reinforces postcolonial tendencies of unfair treatment, exploitation and abuse (Camargo *et al.*, 2022, p. 6). Turnover among Indigenous workers is rife, where Indigenous Tourism BC (2021, p. 113) identified discrimination, racism, social exclusion and unfair treatments as major reasons why Indigenous people leave work. As a result, Indigenous people are underrepresented, accounting to only 4.1% of the tourism labor market (Tourism HR Canada, 2018).

Tourism is a highly performative and meritocratic industry where skilled workers are privileged and favored in mentally and kinesthetically intense service work (Bærenholdt

and Jensen, 2009). Meritocratic ideology, which glorifies people based on their physical and cognitive skills, merit and abilities with little to consider about disabilities and neurodiversity, fuels ableism and deems diversity policies as unessential (Cooper, 2015; Csillag *et al.*, 2022). Data and research on ableism within the Canadian tourism industry are scant and outdated with only demographic studies conducted in 2006, though the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) (2022) suggests the salience of ableism in the workforce in general. From 2018 to 2022, the CHRC (2022) received more workplace complaints by grounds of discrimination against disabled people (52%) than by racism (33%), sexism (19%), ageism (10%), religious status (11%) and gender identity (3%). There is plausibility for this to apply to tourism as well, as the industry's high-visibility, high-interaction design necessitates aesthetic labor, framing workers to project the idealized workplace physicality (Williams and Connell, 2010). Such results in the creation of (un)conscious bias to the detriment of disabled workers. Thus, tourism's meritocratic performativity perpetuates the myth that disabled folks are unable to work in tourism.

Systemic, built-in racial issues correspondingly plague the tourism industry from their subtle to salient dimensions (Alderman, 2013, p. 376) and are not merely associated as a travel issue but one that is evidenced in hotel, attraction and airline operations (Benjamin and Dillette, 2021, p. 3). Unpacking the unfair treatment of people and their classification based on physical, intellectual, linguistic, ethnic and citizenship status attributes reveal social constructions of inferior and superior divisions in society (Allahar and Côté, 1998, p. 72). Such racialization forms precepts of stereotyping, bias and stigmatization, which in turn justify the unequal lowering of wages and discriminatory hiring practices for Black and Indigenous folks, people of color, refugees and new immigrants among others (Allahar and Côté, 1998, p. 65; Shum *et al.*, 2019).

COVID-19 impacts to Canadian tourism and its workforce

The pandemic onslaught of 2020 have been the worst in tourism history (UNWTO, 2021), severely devastating tourism economic activity from local to global scales. The UNWTO (2021) reported a loss of US$1.3tn in global export revenues, approximately 11 times the loss of the global economic crisis of 2019. Such debilitation parallels the Canadian economic milieu, where the tourism industry's record breaking gross domestic product growth of 2.03% in the fourth quarter of 2019 suffered a record breaking plunge of 1.7% in just the first quarter of 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2020a; Tourism HR Canada, 2024). Unemployment within the sector was the highest of any industry in Canada, when at the peak of unemployment in May 2020, 29.7% of tourism industry employees were unemployed compared to 13.8% of the total labor force (Destination Canada, 2021).

While COVID-19 have been imperiling to the Canadian tourism industry, the impact of the pandemic, however, has endured unevenly across all races, genders and ages. Indigenous people, LGBTQ2 folks and racialized people have been severely affected, but in particular, women, immigrants and the youth were hardest hit and reported higher levels of unemployment from pandemic ramifications compared to the national labor force (Destination Canada, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2020a; Tourism HR Canada, 2024). This demographic group was prevalently employed in high-interaction, consumer-facing positions in tourism where exposure to the coronavirus were most pervasive. This contributed to higher infection rates, job losses and reduced work hours (Statistics Canada, 2020b; BC Federation of Labour, 2020). In this disparity, women's, youth's and immigrants' jobs were first to desist in times of major disruptions, such as the pandemic.

Because of their overrepresentation, constituting 70.7% of travel services, 60.3% of accommodations and 57.7% in food and beverage sectors, women particularly have been

most vulnerable and disproportionally impacted from reduced work hours to job losses (Destination Canada, 2021). Youth employment on the other hand, with 30.7 % of tourism jobs filled by those ages 15–24 years, compared to 12.7% spread across all economic sectors, have also been severely impacted because business closures, according to Destination Canada (2021). Newcomers and immigrants, who are crucial in refilling Canada's ageing workforce, were afflicted similarly because of their greater proportion of 26% working in tourism than 23.8% of the overall labor force (Destination Canada, 2021; Tourism HR Canada, 2024). Effective EDI policies would particularly benefit these highly impacted demographic groups identified by Destination Canada (2021) and Tourism HR Canada (2024), alongside other equity-seeking groups such as Black, Indigenous, people of color and those that identify as LGBTQ2.

Beyond job loss statistics, the precocity and disproportionate employment impacts are symptomatic of the deeper perpetuations of systemic racism, Indigenous discrimination, gender indignities, power struggles and other socioeconomic inequities in the Canadian tourism industry. These are workplace EDI issues that lack comprehensive research in the context of the Canadian tourism workforce, similar to race-based data deficiencies that resulted into health service inequities in racialized communities in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021). Tourism HR Canada (2024) acknowledged the need to adopt the Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) as a rigorous method of analyzing systemic inequalities in the delivery of programs and policies among diverse tourism worker population groups (Government of Canada, 2021).

The nexus of the pandemic and EDI issues within the Canadian tourism system is acutely understudied; at the time of writing, there have been no comprehensive statistical nor qualitative research about tourism's collusion with EDI problems in Canada, despite its known existence prior to lockdowns. This data vacuum should compel institutional and industrial decision-makers to create policy responses that incorporate raced-based and GBA+ approaches in data gathering. In addition, increased funding for more robust intersectional research as foundations for enabling systemic transformations are necessary for the tourism industry's rebound. Alongside filling data gaps, policies leverage the EDI dialogue into more tangible actions to foster a more just tourism workforce.

COVID-19 tourism recovery policies in the Canadian context

Experiencing and learning from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome epidemic in 2003 and H1N1 in 2009 readied Canada in managing and responding to future pandemics (Allin *et al.*, 2021). As expected in one of the most decentralized governments in the world (Centre for Constitutional Studies, 2019), policymaking for tourism response and recovery in Canada was mainly relegated to provincial and territorial levels (Destination Canada, 2020). In contrast, Destination Canada, the country's national tourism marketing organization, oversaw research, industry pulse checks and data analytics (Destination Canada, 2020). This fed provinces and territories much needed industry information to enable more contextualized policymaking.

Provincial and territorial governance autonomy resulted in variegated approaches in the creation of recovery policies. In most provinces, policymaking had multilevel particularities where the provincial government, ministry, Tourism Industry Association (TIA) and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) all produced their own individual recovery policies and recommendations. On the other hand, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and all three territories, centralized policy making only through their respective top-level territorial and provincial governments. In the ministry level, most provinces had either economic or tourism ministries or both create policies for recovery, though three

provinces like British Columbia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador have created specific pandemic recovery task force councils that led policy development. As tourism is part of the economic sector, it was unsurprising that most economic-related provincial and territorial ministries mainly led recovery efforts. Migone (2020, p. 383) asserts how this decentralized governance framework provided provinces and territories the individual liberty in relegating the creation of policies to enable "specific responses to local realities [. . .]" and, thus, tailoring recovery to individual jurisdictional needs more effectively.

However, many directives from the federal level that ought to encompass all economic sectors including tourism were instrumental in providing assistance for various tourism operations such as the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy, Canada Emergency Business Account, Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. There were also tourism-specific assistance such as the Tourism Relief Fund, Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, Major Festivals and Events Support Initiative and Regional Air Transportation Initiative. While these were more support measures (Migone, 2020), they ought to support territorially and provincially led recovery policies.

Theoretical framing

Tourism studies transcend from spatiality and mobility phenomena into studies about gender and social justice issues in policies as seen through lenses of critical policy studies (Xu, 2018). This paper uses such approach as policy extends beyond its normative function of rational instruction and direction but as an instrument informed by values, social interests and cultural symbols (Fischer *et al.*, 2016, p. 2). Thus, context is important in policy creation (Tamtik and Guenter, 2020, p. 44), where policies could not be blinded nor removed from assumptions of social injustices when analyzed (Fischer *et al.*, 2016, p. 15). The critique of tourism restart policies, therefore, questions not only how initiatives and directions would lead to expected economic recovery but also the policies' potential to enhance social recovery.

Fischer *et al.* (2016, p. 21) assert the epistemological orientations of policy and why positivist knowledge, or the conformity to objectivism and rationality, has led to the standardization of neutral and value-free policies that reject, or at least demote, EDI perspectives. Theoretical arguments in critical policy studies pay attention to whose interests policies truly serve and why economic interests often prevail (Fischer *et al.*, 2016, p. 1; Everingham and Chassagne, 2020, p. 557). This is especially common in policy narratives where neoliberalist agendas, identified as the common sense and rational approach, prioritize the economy over interests related to gender, race, equity and inclusion.

A critical approach in analyzing tourism revitalization policies would require recognizing policies not just as a mere set of texts and instructions associated with authority but as representations of values, social relationships, ideologies and power (Tamtik and Guenter, 2020, p. 44; Fischer *et al.*, 2016, p. 2; Fairclough, 2013, p. 178). Tourism recovery policies are, therefore, ripe subjects for critique in this approach because the industry's long history of systemic inequities driven by capitalist tendencies (Everingham and Chassagne, 2020). Because of the need to "rehumanize" tourism, it is imperative to examine where EDI is embedded and prioritized within tourism recovery policies.

In this regard, the critical paradigm of interrogating policy is vital to unravel the deep meanings, motivations and underlying ideologies behind the policy's texts and directives. Through critical theory, meanings would emerge from critiquing power structures and inequities entrenched in the definition, quantity and extensiveness of EDI as it is detailed in the policy. Moreso, how EDI terms are defined within the policy would also provide a conceptual understanding of how policymakers interpret EDI and recognize its role in restarting the tourism industry.

Methodology

This research investigated the presence and prioritization of EDI using systematic text analytics within the corpora of 38 publicly available restart plans and statements from 52 government and nongovernment agencies, as illustrated in Appendix Table A1. Specifically, the reviewed data included post-pandemic restart initiatives and plans that support tourism industry recovery. Data was sourced either as ratified policies by provinces and tourism ministries or corporate statements from DMOs and TIAs. These policies, plans, initiatives, strategies or declaratory statements, collectively termed as "policies," from each of the ten provinces and three territories in Canada were obtained from their respective websites. Public availability of the policies from provincial or territorial governments, ministries, DMOs and TIAs, collectively termed as "tourism agencies," was also gauged for understanding accountability, priority and intentions.

"Restart policy" definition differences, because policy-making nuances of the four tourism agencies, prompted the creation of data-gathering limiters and criteria, to which restart policies:

- were developed or updated following the March 11, 2021 World Health Organization pandemic declaration;
- were responsive to the economic downturns beset by the pandemic; and
- pertained to the general economy and its specific sector of the tourism industry.

Using web-based software Voyant Tools to assist in text analytics, a hybrid deductive-inductive coding approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) was conducted. As the first step using deductive coding, core categories of EDI were first predetermined as the study's anchoring themes. EDI definitions from the Canada Research Coordinating Committee (2021) were adopted.

Following this step, the inductive approach was undertaken, using open and axial coding (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109). During open coding, lower-order phrases (known as codes) associated under each anchoring theme were derived from all policies, tallied to count their recurrence and identified what province had used the same or similar code. In this process, a list of other open codes belonging under each anchoring theme emerged, which also revealed their frequency. For example, the code "addressing gender equality gaps" was mentioned twice in British Columbia's restart policy and once in the policies from Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Terms from anchoring themes such as "equity," "diversity," "inclusion," "EDI" or "DEI" were searched, along with similarly themed terms such as "fairness," "equality," "multiculturalism" and others within the corpus of obtained policies. Wildcard truncations, or using shortened terms following a syntax function to find other related terms, were also used. For instance, "inclu*" was used with a function to search full terms that matched the previous term, such as "inclusion," "inclusive," "inclusivity" and others.

In axial coding, connections between lower-order codes were drawn and grouped into categories (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108). These categories represent emergent meanings on how the anchoring themes were interpreted and related, according to Elo and Kyngäs (2008, p. 109). Some categories would assumably be related to the predetermined EDI definitions, while others would be represented differently. Those differences and what they mean become subjects for critique and further analysis. Categories as well as open codes were also summed up to determine frequency and compare which was used extensively by which province or territory.

Modelled after the research by Heres and Benschop (2010, p. 442), policies were also further evaluated on how extensive EDI was discussed and included using four levels – extensive, moderate, vague and inexistent. Policies were considered extensive when EDI stands as its own dedicated document or policy for restarting the tourism industry and has comprehensive descriptions of EDI initiatives, action plans and tasks. In moderate policies, EDI or at least one or two of either EDI only existed as a detailed section or short bullet point inclusion embedded within the greater recovery policy. When policies were labeled vague, one or two of the EDI themes were mentioned but unrelated to the restart plan or irrelevant to the defining parameters of this study. The inexistent level meant no EDI was ever indicated as part of restart initiatives.

The methodological discussion in critiquing the extensiveness of EDI in restart policies delves into the intertwining elements of rationale (why), context (where or when) and discourse of the text (how). This parallels Fairclough's (2013) critical discourse analysis, where macro-, meso- and microlevel viewpoints on discourse are used to interpret EDI texts in policies (micro), to understand policymaker intentions and logic (meso) and explain the broader agencies of the pandemic context and capitalist mentalities of tourism (macro). In contrast to discourse analysis, which examines how language and semiotic elements are operationalized, critical discourse analysis scrutinizes asymmetries of power, structural inequities, hegemonies and EDI (de)prioritization in policy (Fairclough, 2013, p. 178). Thus, this study not only extends beyond the examination of EDI rhetoric and interpretation in policies through deductive-inductive coding approaches but also seeks to understand how pandemic urgencies reveal true intentions of recovery and the unequal power relations in tourism that exacerbate inequities.

Research results

Open and axial coding in Table 1 revealed various categories that mostly refer to either economic or social interpretations of EDI. Considerable emphasis on the economy, through economic and product diversification, collectively demonstrate the w80 prioritization of recovery policies overall. Business-related equities and diversification were also themes synonymous with economic matters. While programs promoting EDI in organizations have also been well-identified and defined within the study context, such theme was overtaken by the more dominant economic categories. Especially prevalent among government bodies, EDI commitments pertained separately as strategies for the Public Service workforce rather than specifically to tourism restart plans.

Among the policies that identified EDI, many of them were disaggregated, undefined and irrelevant to the context of social justice and principled employee welfare. Most policies referred to "diversity" beyond context to describe economic and product diversification, suggesting that policies prioritized the variegation of the economy into different sectors upon restarting. Ontario's restart plan exemplifies this, where the province "[. . .] will also continue to regularly borrow in currencies other than the Canadian dollar to ensure the continued diversification of its investor base" (Government of Ontario, 2020, p. 207). Alberta's Recovery Plan on the other hand explicitly emphasizes policy reforms to "accelerate economic diversification in industries of the future" (Government of Alberta, 2020, p. 6). In New Brunswick's plan, diversification is related to product exports, stating "Together with increasing private sector investment, increasing productivity, diversifying and growing exports [. . .] New Brunswick will create the foundation for economic recovery and growth which will culminate in an increase in GDP" (Government of New Brunswick, 2020, p. 2). These are also consistent with the Federal Government's pandemic response plan of diversification for a more resilient economy (Department of Finance Canada, 2022).

Table 1.
Codes counted and categories revealed for each EDI theme per province and territory

Open codes	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	NU	ON	PE	QC	SK	YT	Open code total	Category	Category total
Equity (truncated search: equit, fair* and equa*)*																
Equally distributed economic growth		2			2	2	1		5					12	Economic fairness (macro)	12
Equity investment	2	1			9				1		2		1	16	Business-related equities (micro)	36
Fiscal equities					15				5					20		
Equitable workplaces		2	1		5				2					10	Equal opportunity in the workplace	10
Equitable opportunities / programs / services		3				3			2		2			10	Social programs without discrimination	10
Fairness for equity groups	7	5			2	3			1					18	Forwarding social equity	32
Fair society		1			4	1			3					9		
Address gender equality gaps		2			1		1					1		5		
Research on equality indicators												1		1	Equity as a research matter	1
Diversity (wildcard search: divers and multicultur*)*																
Diverse economy / industry / economic resources	16	6			6	12	1		1		4		16	62	Economic or business-related diversity	85
Diversified funding for investors	1				1				1		2		1	6		
Create diversified products		1		3	1				5		7			17		
Diverse workforce		2	1		4									7	Workplace diversity	7
Diverse voices and perspectives		7	4	1	6	1			8			1		28	Social diversity	41
Supporting diversity programs		6		1					3			3		13		
Energy diversification	2													2	Diversifying energy resources	2
Inclusion (truncated search: inclu, accessib* and belong*)*																
Inclusive society		3		1	3		2		2				2	13	Society that welcomes and respects all perspectives	13
Inclusive or accessible opportunities / programs	1	6			6	2			13			3		31	Ensuring programs are catered to and made available to everyone	34
Reducing barriers to social inclusivity		1			2									3		
Improving physical accessibility					3				5			4		12	Physical access	12
Inclusive workplace and representation			2	1	1				1					5	Welcoming workplace	5
Inclusive economy	1	1				1	3		1		1			8	Economy that benefits all	8
Inclusive marketing audit		2												2	Inclusive marketing	2

Notes: Two-letter abbreviations for Canadian provinces and territories: AB = Alberta, BC = British Columbia, MB = Manitoba, NB = New Brunswick, NL = Newfoundland and Labrador, NT = Northwest Territory, NS = Nova Scotia, NU = Nunavut, ON = Ontario, PE = Prince Edward Island, QC = Quebec, SK = Saskatchewan YT = Yukon Territory
Source: Table by authors

Similarly, "equity" related more to economic and business-related equities, where many policies used financial terminologies such as fiscal equities. This is similar to Yukon's resilience plan that indicates, "[. . .] by increasing access to equity financing and capacity development support for Yukon technology companies" (Government of Yukon Territory, 2021, p. 17). The Government of Quebec (2020, p. 42) also considers equities in a fiscal perspective, where government measures "[. . .] consists of liquidity support, including loans, guarantees and equity injections by the public sector." Newfoundland and Labrador's restart plan, on the other hand, relates equity to the energy sector, stating "Sell the Provincial Government's oil and gas equity interests when oil prices increase" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2021, p. 77).

"Inclusion," on the other hand, commonly pertained to programs that are to be made available for all or efforts to involve diverse people and communities. This is exemplified by Manitoba's DMO that describes initiatives to adopt "[. . .] recruitment practices that will address any shortcomings in the current scope of racial diversity and inclusiveness of Travel Manitoba's workforce" (Travel Manitoba, 2020, p. 1). Likewise, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2021, p. 183) details an action item that states "together with antiracism groups and advocates, develop an antiracism and inclusion action plan that contains a strong community education component."

Regarding the extensiveness of EDI in policies (Table 2), text analytics outcomes predominantly revealed scarce to no full and dedicated content on EDI as an initiative necessary for tourism industry relaunch, considering the extensiveness of some policies. Specifically, 12 restart policies had no indication of EDI for industry recovery at all, while 14 policies had stated either equity, diversity or inclusion but unassociated with terms to address the systemic social barriers in tourism. Ten policies had mentioned either or some of the three key themes but as minor sections or bullet point statements, while only three policies committed into EDI by having standalone content.

These three policies were BC's Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport and its *2021/22–2023/24 Service Plan*, where extensive content discussed strategies for equity, antiracism and the use of GBA+ lenses; and Destination BC and Travel Manitoba's full EDI commitments and action plans essential for pandemic recovery, as exhaustively detailed in their websites. These distinct plans were also specific down to its action initiatives, deliverables and some metrics.

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has ignited the tourism industry's powder keg of long-standing inequities and EDI problems. Even in more developed tourism industries like in Canada, pandemic repercussions further unmasked the industry's prevalent issues, power structures that perpetuated inequities and deepened realizations of EDI cracks in the tourism system.

Level of EDI extensiveness	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NT	NS	NU	ON	PE	QC	SK	YT	Total
Extensive		2	1											3
Moderate		2		1	1	1			2		1	1		9
Vague	3		4				1		2		2	1	1	14
Inexistent	3			2			5	1		1				12
Total number of policies investigated	6	4	5	3	1	1	6	1	4	1	3	2	1	38

Source: Table by authors

Table 2. Level of EDI extensiveness in provincial and territorial policies

The following analyses examine how elements of economic prioritization for pandemic recovery, tokenism in policies, data deficiencies and the romanticization of Canadian diversity reify and exacerbate inequity within the country's tourism industry.

Economic prioritization as the prerequisite for improving the tourism workforce

Tourism shifted to survival mode during the pandemic, resuscitating the industry under an ethical tradeoff premise where the end justifies the means. While economic regeneration and business resurgence make employment security possible, tourism recovery policies have been narrowly focused on these, giving less priority to pro-EDI worker empowerment. Everingham and Chassagne (2020, p. 557) affirm this that restarting requires economic intensification as a policy for revitalization, which is often short-term only. The tendency for such abrupt economic amplification leads to shock that is often at the expense of workplace well-being. Similar to the problems of ecological studies, long-term and sustainability thinking is shelved in favor for immediate outcomes and the quick resurrection of the tourism industry (Everingham and Chassagne, 2020).

The engrossed prioritization of economic recovery manifested in policies disavows the humanity in an industry that celebrates human potential and personalized service (Benjamin *et al.*, 2020, p. 3). Considering tourism's purpose to serve people and society with a talent pool of problem-solving expertise and workforce capital, the pandemic-distressed industry prioritized the system rather than its actors. Restart policies that center only on economic singularities are also devoid of multidimensional thinking, where tourism silos itself as a compartmentalized economic machine, inhibiting its humanity and demoting social needs. This perspective forgets that tourism's transcendence as a social phenomenon. Devine and Ojeda (2017, p. 606) also criticize this as tourism's unsustainable and dehumanizing form and a model of capitalist accumulation and exploitative capitalism in action.

The pandemic also revealed how governments locally and abroad privileged billion-dollar bailouts to airline companies despite prior years' record profits (Jones, 2021; Air Canada, 2021), over the need to redirect funds for social well-being and inclusion strategies. One example is the Canadian Government saving Air Canada from insolvency. Although intended to protect workers (Jones, 2021), the deal risked perpetuating the ills of the industry that needed fixing to begin with. Such decisions focus on economic revival rather than advancing social justice in the industry.

To assist corporate bailouts is more of an enterprise imperative rather than public service such as aiding the public commons through investing in universal basic income, ensuring living wages for tourism workers and operationalizing EDI initiatives. To reflect, stimulus funds that benefitted airline companies were ultimately sourced from Canadian taxpayers, including those disadvantaged and disproportionately prioritized. Having tax monies as the provided lifeline, Air Canada has a moral imperative to honor its social contract to Canadian taxpayers through accountability and commitment to EDI.

Economic ideologies that upend social collective interests exacerbate radical individualism, thus deteriorating working conditions and perpetuating the widened canyons of inequity (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 613). The CEOs and C-suites of the tourism industry were not the ones severely affected by the pandemic but rather frontline industry staff, many of which are BIPOC, women and youth (Tourism HR Canada, 2024). In this economy-first structure, it is worth considering whether the policies designed to restart tourism are genuinely geared toward safeguarding and promoting the interests of larger corporate entities alone or whether they are inclusive of the interests of grassroots frontline workers. Even if women are making waves in corporate leadership in the industry (Baum,

2013, p. 60), much work still remains in evening out the playing field. Neoliberal thrusts place economic convenience over the commitment to people (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 613), as suggested by the dominant economic agenda as the blueprint for restarting tourism, highlighted in the policies in all provinces and territories.

Policies and their tokenist reflections

In contrast to some restart initiatives that detail EDI action plans, others' indication of "inclusive growth" or "strengthening diversity" or other equality advocacies are vague and have missing or sparse KPI metrics, action items and operationalization details. A declaration in Nova Scotia's policy is an example of an obscure and ambiguous statement that describes inclusive economic growth, where the province's arguably named Department of Inclusive Economic Growth and crown corporations are:

> [. . .] committed to addressing environmental, economic and equity challenges to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Part of this work necessitates all the resources of a community working together in a place-specific, horizontal approach. Through collaboration with partners across our organization and communities we will focus on placemaking and the creation of shared value (Government of Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 9).

Much contention also exists in juxtaposing voluminous sections of comprehensive plans that detail step-by-step economic and financial reboot processes with very minor and inadequately expounded sections on EDI prerogatives.

Policies can become avenues for superficial EDI commitments. Sparse details suggest the ineptitude to operationalize EDI in the tourism workplace, the fear of receiving criticism and discomfort in engaging in EDI organizational reforms. In a world full of turbulent disruptions like the pandemic, half-baked EDI commitments in policies are evident in organizations resisting change.

Higgins-Desbiolles (2020, p. 612) implies how heightened tendencies to tokenize EDI in pandemic recovery policies occur during pivotal moments such as the murder of George Floyd and its ensuing social upheavals. These events are springboard junctures that pressure agencies to jump into the bandwagon of popular movements by mentioning EDI in policies but with hollow intentions and commitments to genuine solidarity and change (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, p. 613).

Overall, most restart strategies' lack of focus and absence of detail on how to protect and empower people engaged in tourism work reveals anxieties in engaging with EDI work. It is important to recall the role of policies as a reflection of governments' social contract to protect its citizens from inequities. With hollow intentions, advancing EDI is merely a sugarcoated objective for social and political approval. Tokenized EDI statements in policies are ultimately misrepresentations of segmented priorities and the blueprint for reinforcing inequitable structures.

Data vacuum

Lack of robust research leads to the lack of information that further leads to the lack of political impetus. The invisibility and omission of EDI in policies also partly take root from concurrent data-gathering design flaws, where results are deficient and inaccurate in providing clear indications of real, on-ground and contextualized conditions (Cheung, 2020; Grant and Balkissoon, 2019; Waite and Denier, 2019, p. 94). Calver *et al.* (2023, p. 18) further assert how EDI data that is often "peripheral at best and almost invisible at worst" in policies may be excused as someone else's concern and, therefore, inappropriate for a pandemic reset. This suggests that policymakers may also play it safe to discount and

exclude EDI, where it is debated as an unrelated and standalone matter (Calver *et al.*, 2023, p. 18).

The vacuum of accurate data is traced from the lack of data segmentation that provides granular inspection of the nuances and contexts of varying issues of Black and people of color, Indigenous people, newcomers, youth, women, the disabled and gender-diverse people (Grant and Balkissoon, 2019; Waite and Denier, 2019, p. 95). The one-size-fits-all data-gathering approach is not robust research, inevitably creating deficient data that does not create enough leverage for policymakers to justify and use as a foundation for change; data absence does not enable conditions for justifying the inclusion of EDI in restart policies.

In light of Statistics Canada (2020c) acknowledgment for more appropriate data disaggregation for the diverse population, Xu (2018, p. 721) divulges how research in the nexus of tourism and gender issues is limited and more so in the Canadian context (Waite and Denier, 2019). Outcomes from this research reveal how EDI data that further intersect on issues of race, ethnicity, immigration status and other variabilities is virtually inexistent in the context of the Canadian tourism industry, which further trickles down into recovery policies; there is currently a void in race-, Indigenous- and GBA plus-based data that is specific to the tourism sector. Such data vacuum inhibits opportunities for properly identifying distinct EDI issues within the industry, creating improved universal standards for monitoring and measuring diversity initiatives and formulating policies for the industry's more just and inclusive recovery.

The mirage of romanticizing Canadian diversity

Retrospectively in the Canadian sociopolitical context, diversity has become a diffused, postmaterialist concept stemming from past multiculturalist policies that sought the idealized definition of Canadian identity (Von Heyking and Ray, 2010). Multiculturalism have been Canada's success story, as the world's first country to adopt multiculturalism as a federal mandate during former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's 1968 administration (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010, p. 43; Jedwab, 2020).

The Canadian aspiration for a multiculturally diverse society forged romanticisms, ideologies and a normative of a utopian harmonious society, which consequently became complacent to the existence of discrimination and inequities (Banting and Kymlicka, 2010, p. 45). From shallow diversity hid deeper, more covert enclaves of an exclusionary society. This is not to say, however, that the agenda of Canadian multiculturalism did not do good, though Banting and Kymlicka (2010, p. 52) claim that it did not remain uncontested.

The underestimation of multiculturalist policy success, under the mirage that everyone will get along well, effected the relegation and irrelevance of disaggregated data gathering. This subsequently paved the way for systemic statistical data-gathering flaws that further problematized policymaking. Even as more contemporary data gathering acknowledges the salience of variegated demographic groups, the understanding of diversity is lacking and superficial.

Census data gathering reflected the notion of diversity merely as the assortment and differences within the population. Yet, this has not probed deep enough to uncover complex, systemic and multifaceted equity and inclusion issues that are contextually distinct for each population group (McKenzie, 2020). Since multiculturalism's formative decade in the late '60s and '70s (Jedwab, 2020), it took over 40 years in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to realize the need for more proactively disaggregated data to further understand the roots of systemic inequity problems.

Critical turns

Formulating policies that champions EDI as key for pandemic recovery and resiliency should not be construed as an antimanagement agenda but as a radical means to empower tourism workers as the main actors of resiliency. Policies produced in the same recipe of siloing sectors rather than integrating essential approaches like EDI is myopic and is a mere rerun of antiquated systems that will only sustain injustices. Beyond rebounding from the pandemic, the tourism industry faces a highly disruptive future where change is the only constant and will, thus, rely on EDI-prioritized policies that honor the humanity of the workforce, decolonize oppressive legacies and uphold social justice. Rather than solely meriting worker capital, policies to restart the tourism industry must prioritize upholding the dignity of tourism workers and emancipating them from all forms of disenfranchisement, injustice and inequity. To do this, policymakers should not just center EDI commitment as an explicit statement in policies but advocate for a whole-of-organization change and commitment that is complete with accountability measures, EDI action committees and plans and constant learning and mentoring initiatives.

No silver bullet solution in quelling tourism inequity problems exists because their expansive scales that embody theoretical, ideological, practical and operational dimensions. The systemic EDI problems of tourism transcend the borders of policy and will comparably require broad systemic solutions. Crenshaw (1991, p. 1242) also reminds us that the inequities in tourism are not isolated as a race problem only or simply a gender issue or just an ability conundrum but as deeply coalesced intersections of social identities. Designing policies must, therefore, be cognizant to worker intersectionalities, lived experiences and positionalities and avoid biased and gendered language, tokenism and other systemic barriers. Other than the already copious remedies for tourism inequities divulged in academic literature, this report articulates recommendatory critical turns exclusively from the key analyses highlighted in the study.

The pandemic presented an opportunity to unlearn traditions of inequities normalized by capitalist voracities caused by focusing on economic revitalization and light concern for EDI work in provincial and territorial policies. Transforming, liberating and emancipating from economy-first, capitalist hegemonies reified in policy blindspots are critical turns that move away from economy-first, capitalist hegemonies that have been reinforced in policy blindspots. It is important to note that this ideal is not antieconomic progress but rather a call for economic and corporate corrections to redirect and center tourism recovery on new humanisms, where EDI become policy directives as a model and long-term investment to a more reformed industry.

Tourism enterprises that will thrive after the pandemic will be those that care for their employees (Dube *et al.*, 2020) through privileging and empowering EDI-forward policies. Enterprises that are more diverse in terms of ethnicity, race and gender, for instance, outperform other companies financially (Destinations International, 2020). Dixon-Fyle *et al.* (2020) in a McKinsey and Company report highlighted corporations with higher women leadership representation were better capable of recovering from the 2008 global financial crises. Resiliency and better recovery is also demonstrated through inclusively diverse companies with greater tendencies to become more innovative and creative by infusing lived experiences, perspectives and nuanced approaches in organizational problem solving (Destinations International, 2020). Policies endeavored in either public or private sector allow these realizations to be both operationalized and authorized. Exemplary recovery policies should, therefore, prioritize hiring a large diversity of workers at all levels in the organization and strategically hire underrepresented population groups among qualified candidates.

EDI exists as a mutual principle and action. Expressing solidarity and alliance to the EDI cause in policies is only half the battle, as articulation requires actualization. Before considering EDI in policies, much care and introspection are required to avoid tokenism. Announcing EDI initiatives in policies require accountability to walk the talk, where principles will be demonstrated through specific and measurable quanta and action details. However, EDI work extends beyond the mere achievement of corporate targets but on transforming tourism organizations to become genuinely caring, welcoming and concerned with everyone's welfare. For instance, EDI-detailed restart policies like those from BC and Manitoba will require EDI audits not just on compliance to committed metrics but to the more overt and long-term outcomes of inclusion and equity among a diverse group of tourism workers. Similarly, corporate diversification policies need not only diversify the tourism workplace but also ensure their operationalized and appraised inclusion. In this way, *de facto* diversities and apolitical workspaces could be de-established.

The evolution of mandates to diversify and create a fair and inclusive Canadian society from the '60s to today will require continuity and constant reform to adapt with the ever-changing social landscape. Ideologically, such reforms must be responsive, require greater cognizance and understanding of social dynamics in policymaking and place safeguards against utopian predispositions of a diverse yet discretely exclusive society. Pragmatically, reforms can be reflected through inclusive policymaking leveraged and informed by more disaggregated data collection practices, race-based and GBA+ approaches specific to the tourism workforce. The problematic deficiency of intersectional and nuanced data reminds us of the pressing need for more robust research on the inequities of the Canadian tourism industry. Through these means, policies become both principled and practical, rationalized by credible and relevant information.

Finally, the Build Back Better narrative in tourism policies requires decolonization lenses to unlearn savior mentalities of reset initiatives that trigger colonial hegemony over Indigenous people. While EDI fosters inclusive participation and addresses inequities, EDI lenses require decolonized reframing to reject the dominant narrative that Indigenous people are merely aid-receivers (Tamtik, 2020, p. 67) because persistent stereotyping and romanticizing of tourism's benevolent and savior roles. Contrarily, the tourism industry has much to learn (but not to appropriate) from Indigenous paradigms, stories and traditions of relationship building, collective community well-being and resilience.

Achieving Indigenous EDI within the Canadian tourism industry means advancing decolonizing practices and initiatives that encourages Indigenous self-governance and policy-making that best understands Indigenous workers' needs and desires. Whether it be bolstering access to tourism opportunities, protection from discrimination and marginalization or participation in decision-making, decolonized EDI policies should acknowledge and make space for Indigenous relevance and reconciliation.

To operationalize, policymakers would require complete EDI training rooted in antiracism that includes combatting prejudicial biases against Indigenous tourism workers, identifying systemic barriers they face and learning about traumatic triggers from residential school experience. Additional policy reforms related to hiring Indigenous workers in tourism include challenging the westernized hiring evaluation of meritocratic benchmarking and considering evaluations based on Indigenous ways of knowing and learning skills.

Conclusion

Policy shortcomings drawn from this paper are the result of faulty systems deeply rooted in capitalist predilections and unconscious biases for racial homogeneity and gender cis-

normativities. Cloaked in its hubris of self-professed diversity, the Canadian tourism workplace suffers from inequitable, precarious and exclusive workplace practices, left unmitigated and perpetuated because the lack of policies to protect workers. Corporate leadership *vis-à-vis* frontline positions have widening polarizing rifts, where the less affected former is privileged, in contrast with the imperiled latter. This inequity demands mitigation and prevention leveraged by policy. Tourism industry practices would prolong injustices and inequities when policies fail to become responsive to these enduring problems.

The inevitability of tourism resurrecting under a new normal has opportunities, if not a necessity, to focus on EDI (Benjamin *et al.*, 2020). Restarting a just tourism industry involves the departure from revenue regeneration and market demand dependencies. A truly reclaimed industry is guided by EDI canons of ethical operations, racial justice, gender-safe work spaces, women empowerment and Indigenous reconciliation. The restart also offers opportunity to transform tourism into a high-value, people-first, antihyper consumerism that is less taxing to natural resources and human well-being. This prioritizes an enhanced quality of life rather than the business-as-usual quantity of consumption. Overall, this research contributes to the corpus of knowledge by understanding how people-first EDI initiatives, when committed in restart policies, become opportune social investments that guarantees a more effective and empowering recovery. Policy improvements that integrate and place heightened attention to EDI as key to equitable recovery are especially necessary in future policymaking as provinces and territories move beyond the recovery period from the pandemic.

Whether provinces and territories have already experienced a rushed or unhurried tourism restart, copious lessons could be learned to prevent inheriting the ills of EDI-relegated policymaking. Takeaways from this research emphasize how recovery is all-encompassing, where policymakers are reminded that diverse groups of people are not just behind the tourism industry, but in front of it – tourism during and beyond the pandemic will always need to be equitable, visibly and inclusively represented and ethical toward the workers it needs to thrive. EDI should not only exist as reactionary measures to faulty restart plans but also must be progressively sustained beyond the pandemic, where EDI should always be instilled in future plans and policies for tourism.

Still, the lack and omission of EDI endorsement in policies in an age when it is so needed is symptomatic of systemic problems that will only exacerbate after the pandemic. Systemic solutions that are both ideological and pragmatic will be key, which can be promulgated through implementable policies spearheaded by provincial and territorial governments and trickled down to their respective tourism ministries, DMOs and TIAs. While the tourism industry in each territory and province differ contextually, they all share a common and rare opportunity to do things differently and, as Everingham and Chassagne (2020, p. 562) state, more "rightsizing" than supersizing the restart. Guiding tourism recovery requires out-of-box thinking imbibed through policies that are presided on EDI values rather than economic efficiency. In moving forward, there can never be a better tourism industry by trying to be like it before the pandemic began.

Note

1. While other attached terms and nuances in EDI such as Justice (hence, JEDI), Accessibility (EDIA) and Decolonization (DEDI) are not evident in the acronym we use, EDI is used in this paper for the purpose of simplicity. We assert that EDI also encompasses and captures the essences of other nuances and is not literally limited to three themes.

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Appendix

Table A1. Tourism restart policies sourced from provincial and territorial governments, tourism ministries, DMOs and TIAs per province and territory

Province/ Territory	Policy	Government: Provincial / territorial government	Government: Ministry	Government: Crown corporation	Non-government: Appointed organizations
British Columbia	Stronger BC for Everyone: BC's Economic Recovery Plan	●			
	2021/22 – 2023/24 Service Plan		●		
	The Future of Travel: Positioning B.C. to Accelerate Recovery and Growth				●
	Destination BC's Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion			●	
Alberta	Alberta's Recovery Plan	●			
	Ministry Business Plan: Jobs, Economy and Innovation		●		
	2020-22 Alberta (Re)Bound Strategy: Respond, Restart and Rebuild			●	
	Respond Phase – Travel Alberta			●	
	Restart Phase – Travel Alberta			●	
	Rebuild Phase – Travel Alberta			●	
Saskatchewan	Re-Open Saskatchewan: A Plan to Re-Open the Provincial Economy	●			
	Ministry of Parks, Culture, and Sport: Plan for 2021–2022		●		
Manitoba	Restoring Safe Services: Manitoba's Pandemic and Economic Roadmap for Recovery (Phases 1 to 4)	●			
	Travel Manitoba Diversity, Inclusiveness and Anti-Racism Plan			●	
Ontario	Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support and Recover		●		
	Reconnecting Ontarians: Re-Emerging as a Global Leader		●		
	Final Report of the Tourism Economic Recovery Ministerial Task Force		●		
	Destination Ontario Business Plan 2020–2021			●	
Quebec	Update on Québec's Economic and Financial Situation		●		
	Agir Aujourd'hui. Transformer Demain: Cadre d'Intervention Touristique 2021–2025		●		
	Penser le Tourisme Différemment: Plan d'Action Pour un Tourisme Responsable et Durable 2020–2025		●		
New Brunswick	Economic Recovery and Growth Action Plan: Closing the Gap in One Direction	●			
	RSVP: A Plan for Renewal. A Path to Recovery		●		
	New Brunswick Tourism Workforce Development Plan: Updated in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic				●
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Reopening Plan (Phases 1 to 5)	●			

(*continued*)

Table A1.

Province/ Territory	Policy	Government			Non-government
		Provincial / territorial government	Ministry	Crown corporation	Appointed organizations
Prince Edward Island	Business Plan 2021–2022 COVID-19 in PEI: Moving Forward (Planning for Public Health Measures – Summer/Fall 2021)	●	●		
Newfoundland and Labrador	The Big Reset: The Report of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team				●
Yukon Territory	Economic Resilience Plan: Building Yukon's COVID-19 Economic Resiliency		●		
Northwest Territory	Emerging Stronger: Planning the NWT's Social and Economic Recovery Together	●			
Nunavut	Nunavut's Path: Moving Forward During COVID-19	●			

Note: Please note that the ministry can be other ministries that are not necessarily tourism related
Source: Table by authors