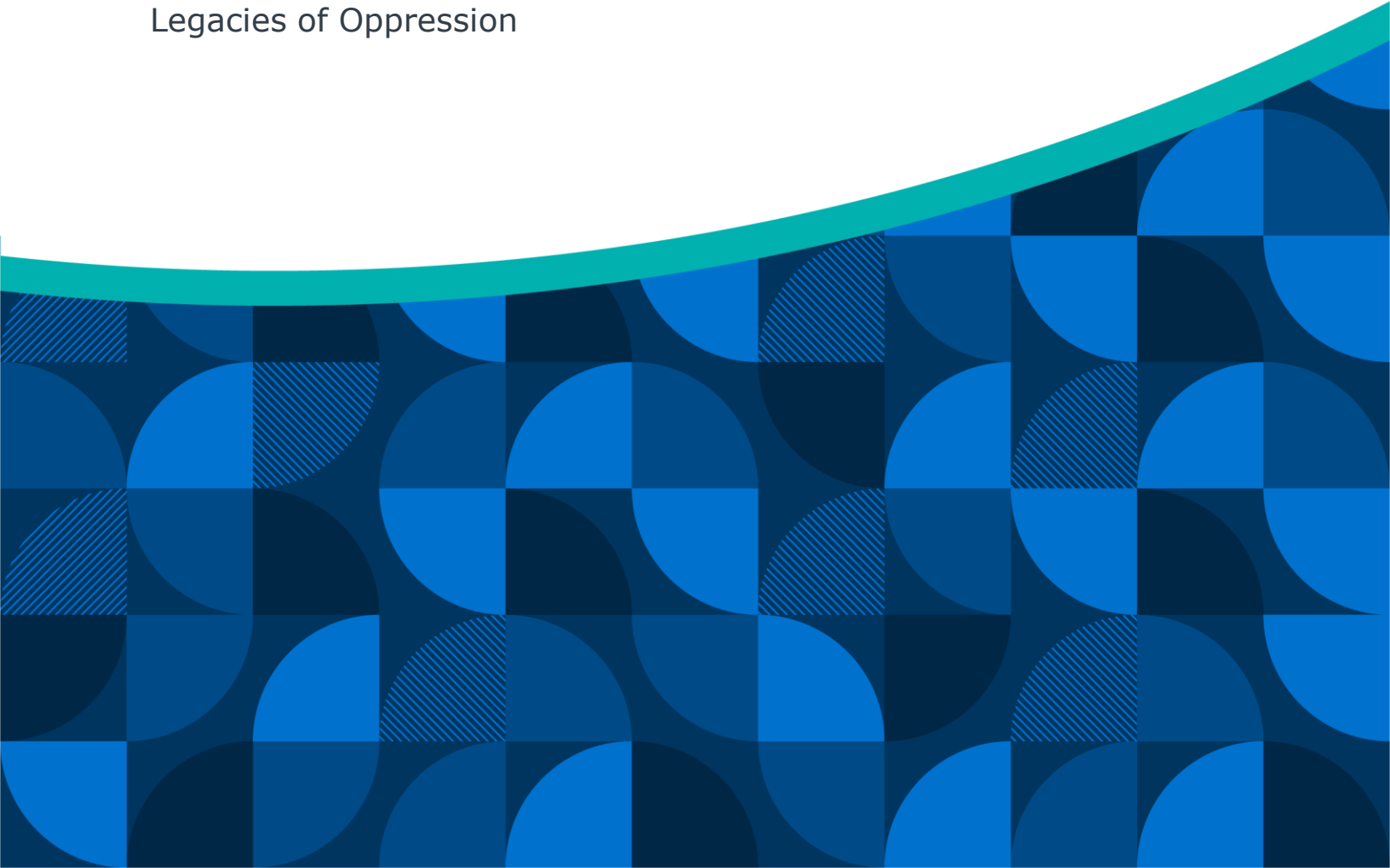




DEIJ TOOLKIT

The Right Way to Engage with Your Institutional Heritage

Everything You Need to Know to Avoid the
Perceived Perils of Navigating Historical
Legacies of Oppression



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Introduction

Pressure from students, faculty, staff and alumni on U.S. and Canadian institutions to address their historical ties to discrimination and oppression have intensified in recent years. However, many college and university leaders find their actions constrained to symbolic efforts that fail to address underlying context and ultimately contribute to repeated cycles of frustration and flashpoints on campus.

To make meaningful progress, institutions must fully engage with their institutional heritage, a process through which colleges and universities acknowledge and redress their role in historical and ongoing oppression of certain populations. In addition to redressing past harms, confronting historical legacies of oppression builds a stronger foundation for all diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice efforts moving forward.

Despite a [foundation of work](#), however, there is no clear roadmap to contextualizing and implementing change based on historical legacies. To help, EAB has developed this guide to assist colleges and universities in their efforts toward institutional reckoning and healing.



Table of Contents

The following sections describe EAB's framework for institutional heritage work and provide step-by-step guidance on its key components:

- 1 Gaining buy-in for institutional heritage efforts and effectively managing change on campus
- 2 Understanding and engaging with the institution's legacies of harm through historical storytelling and collective memory projects
- 3 Strengthening relationships between the institution and harmed communities
- 4 Setting a long-term strategy for engaging in institutional heritage work and taking action

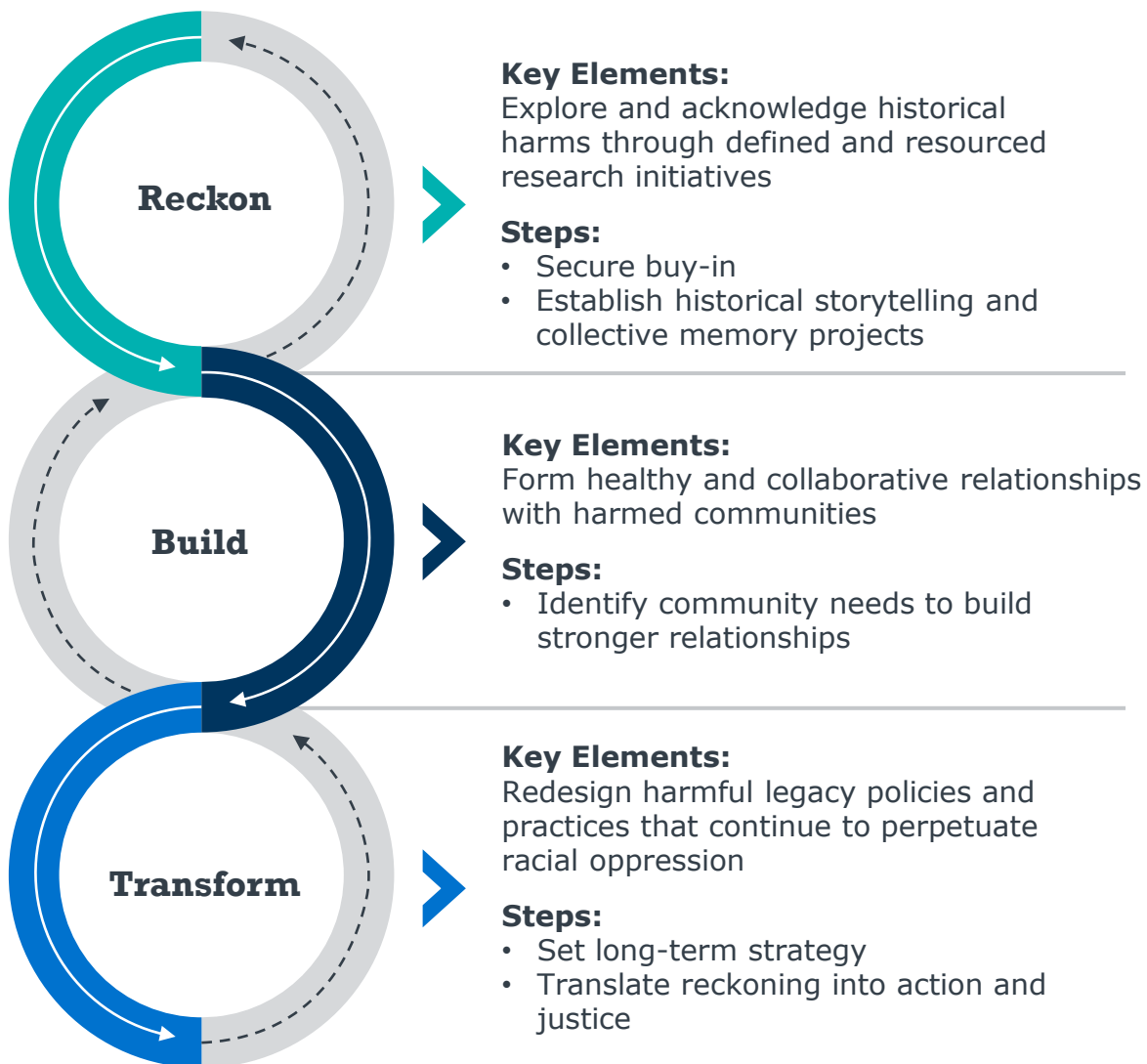
Due to the number of links included, this resource is best accessed and used online

Engaging with Your Institutional Heritage

EAB's Framework for Getting It Right

Much of higher education's engagement with historical legacies to date has focused on the visible components of the past: histories, traditions, art, and celebrations. Many of the larger systemic issues have remained unaddressed, like trust, sense of belonging, and justice. While all are important actions and issues, lasting change requires a deeper, ongoing approach.

Through extensive research and conversations with dozens of university leaders, faculty, and DEI experts, EAB has organized this approach into three main categories: reckoning, building, and transforming, each of which are required to sustain lasting change and healing within campus communities.



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

How to Use the Guide

Engaging with institutional heritage is non-linear process. Consider the questions below as you decide where to begin or to go next. Based on how many times you say “no” for each section and the needs of your institution, select an area to begin working on. Then click on the corresponding link to the right to continue to a detailed step-by-step guide and suggested resources to apply this framework on your campus.

Reckon

- Does your campus understand the importance of engaging with institutional heritage?
 - Are there key stakeholders on campus who present roadblocks to change or resist institutional heritage and DEIJ work?
 - Do campus leaders feel comfortable holding conversations about institutional heritage or other DEIJ efforts?
-
- Has your institution documented its involvement in historic systems of oppression?
 - Is the history of harm and its continued impact widely discussed and understood on campus

If no, review:
[Securing Buy-In](#)
(page 8)

If no, review:
[Historical Storytelling and Collective Memory Projects](#) (page 9)

Build

- Have you identified specific harmed communities?
- Do you understand the needs of those harmed communities?
- Does your institution have existing partnerships with those communities?

If no, review:
[Building Healthy Relationships with Harmed Communities](#)
(page 11)

Transform

- Is engaging in institutional heritage work part of your broader, long-term strategy?
- Does your campus have a formal plan outlining actionable next steps?
- Are there accountability mechanisms to ensure institutional heritage work is being accomplished and achieving the intended result?

If no, review:
[Setting Long-term Strategy and Taking Action](#) (pages 13-14)



Reckon

Explore and acknowledge historical harms through defined and resourced research initiatives

SECTION

1

Preparing Your Campus Community for Change

A Guide to Securing Buy-In

Exploring the procedures, beliefs, and systems that are built into the very fabric and nature of higher education is a challenging exercise. Even leaders committed to systemic change often struggle to truly grapple with legacies of injustice. Additionally, concerns about impact on donor relations and the potential for increased activism, tension with the local community, and negative media attention often prevent institutions from making meaningful progress.

Strategically assessing and preparing for risks better equips institutional leaders to manage their campus through the process. Follow these steps to:

- Assess current attitudes toward and understanding of institutional heritage
- Manage pushback from resistant stakeholders
- Manage uncomfortable emotions and dialogue

1. Assess your institution's readiness.

- Consider [these guiding questions](#) to gauge leadership support, alignment with strategic goals, and infrastructure to measure the appetite and capacity for institutional heritage work.
- Use [EAB's tool](#) to assess key stakeholders' (e.g., the cabinet, students, alumni) readiness for institutional heritage work by examining how they relate to and are impacted by this work. Based on this assessment, identify specific individuals to target for further intervention or communication.

2. Identify the reasons influential stakeholders may resist change.

- Learn about the procedural, institutional, and interpersonal risks of engaging with your institution's heritage to better understand the [barriers to progress](#)
- Analyze the barriers to change with EAB's [Risk Scoring Framework](#) to prioritize those that pose the biggest obstacles.

3. Mitigate pushback from resistant stakeholder with a robust action and communication plan for addressing barriers.

- Create a [Treatment Plan](#) outlining action steps and resources needed to prevent or mitigate the top risks and barriers to change on your campus.
- Use Seramount's [Guide to Essential Conversations](#) for a framework to lead productive discussions about sensitive topics.

Acknowledging Past Harms

A Guide to Historical Storytelling & Collective Memory Projects

When grappling with legacies of historical harms, most institutions focus on visible, short-term solutions to present-day problems without investing resources to explore their root causes. As a result, the lingering effects—and even the harms themselves—remain largely undocumented and unknown on individual campuses. When institutions deprioritize the exploration of their own histories and instead fast-track short-term solutions, they leave themselves vulnerable to ongoing criticism and flashpoints.

A complete and collective understanding of harmful past events is a fundamental element of any successful effort to reckon or heal because it builds credibility, creates understanding, and informs actions going forward. Follow these steps to:

- Detail your institution’s specific historical connections to oppression (racial, gender-based, ableist, etc.)
- Surface and understand enduring legacies and impacts
- Disseminate and engage stakeholders in findings

1. Gauge the current understanding of your institutional history and identify critical gaps.

Consider the following questions:

- Has my institution detailed our specific historical connections to oppression?
- Has my institution surfaced the enduring impacts of our historical legacy?
- Has my institution planned for widespread and sustained engagement with the details of our historical legacy?

2. Commission an archival project to detail your institution’s historical connections to oppression.

Archival projects explore and document historical records to create a publicly accessible narrative of an institution’s past and connects that past to present inequities.

- Ensure your archival project is centrally commissioned, led by scholars, engages the community and focuses on action. See [EAB's guidance on this topic](#) for more details and institutional examples.

3. Develop a collective memory project to begin embedding this history into your institution’s culture and educate the broader community.

Distinct from archival projects, collective memory projects seek to integrate histories into the university through many forms including physical memorials (e.g., statues and building names), academic courses, and immersive digital experiences.

- Ensure your collective memory project prioritizes education, is available and actively presented through different media, and is widely disseminated. See [EAB’s guidance on this topic](#) for more details and specific institutional examples.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.



Build

Form healthy and collaborative relationships with harmed communities

SECTION

2

Rebuilding Community and Trust

A Guide to Building Healthy Relationships with Harmed Communities

Institutions often have limited relationships with harmed communities and do not fully understand their lived experiences. As a result, institutions fail to explicitly name the populations and communities they are trying to serve—let alone accurately identify their needs and priorities.

Putting the perspective of harmed communities at the center and building mechanisms for ongoing collaboration is critical to developing targeted solutions. Follow these steps to:

- Identify harmed communities
- Understand the needs, wants, and experiences of those communities
- Repair frayed relationships and trust

1. Identify how systemic racism manifests among your campus community to accurately target specific populations.

- Schedule a presentation of EAB's workshop [Creating a Shared Understanding of Institutional Racism](#) to better understand systemic racism and why institution's efforts often do not achieve the desired outcome.

2. Conduct a community needs assessment (CNA) to incorporate the voices of harmed communities and inform future action.

A CNA is a mechanism to understand a population's needs, identify both the strengths and gaps of existing programming within a defined community, and create or enhance equitable programming.

- Follow EAB's [guide to creating a community needs assessment](#) to define your plan's parameters, identify a diverse team and assign responsibilities, create a data collection plan, secure funding, and determine a timeline for implementation.

3. Analyze the root cause of flashpoints on your campus to avoid repeating mistakes that contribute to trust gaps among the campus community.

- Use [EAB's Flashpoint Post-Mortem Analysis Tool](#) to understand how racial flashpoints connect to your institutional history so you can address the broader context rather than the symptoms and restore trust with harmed communities.



Transform

Redesign harmful legacy policies and practices that continue to perpetuate racial oppression

SECTION

3

Taking Action to Redress Historical Harms

A Guide to Setting Long-Term Strategy and Taking Action

When engaging with their institutional heritage, colleges and universities all too often focus on quick-fixes and largely symbolic solutions that only serve to further exacerbate trust gaps. Understanding the implications of different potential solutions and creating clear guidelines for prioritization, implementation, and evaluation will enable you to work toward long-term transformation. Follow these steps to:

- Articulate the scope and desired outcomes with an action plan
- Create accountability measures
- Measure the effectiveness of the plan and surface new areas for action
- Establish funding mechanisms to support strategic priorities

1. Define the desired outcome of successfully engaging with your institutional heritage.

- [Workshop a vision statement](#) that clearly establishes a long-term vision of what campus will look like if you successfully address historical harms.

2. Create an action plan to establish a coherent and central strategy.

Use EAB's [Institutional DEIJ Plan Starter Kit](#) as a framework for creating an effective action plan.

- [Initiate the planning process](#) by choosing your time planning horizon, organizing your planning team, and grounding your plan with an organizational framework.
- [Develop your plan](#) by assessing the current state of institutional heritage work at your institution, collecting stakeholder feedback (e.g., the results of a [community needs assessment](#)), and engaging in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis.
- Use [EAB's guidance](#) to develop actionable goals and objectives based on your review of your current status.
- [Define metrics](#) that measure success and impact, instill accountability, and inform future work.

3. Conduct a premortem exercise to anticipate the barriers to new strategic initiatives.

- [Identify potential barriers](#) to your strategy with [EAB's tool for analyzing stakeholder experiences](#) with similar initiatives attempted by the institution in the past.

Taking Action to Redress Historical Harms (cont'd)

A Guide to Setting Long-Term Strategy and Taking Action

4. Implement your institutional heritage plan.

- [Operationalize strategic initiatives](#) by assigning project owners for goals and establishing concrete deadlines.
- [Establish an ongoing communications process](#) to encourage accountability, begin to establish trust with groups that have previously been disappointed by institutional efforts, and to share wins and celebrate successes.

5. Establish funding streams to support long-term institutional heritage work.

- Craft [a business case](#) to allocate funding toward initiatives.
- Incorporate strategic goals, like institutional heritage work, [into the budget model](#).
- Develop a cohesive [fundraising strategy](#) for institutional heritage work and other DEIJ initiatives.



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