



DIVERSITY INSIGHTS

2021-2022

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This eBook is a Report on the Proceeding of the First WCT National Town Hall Meeting on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. To navigate, you can click on the back and next arrows at the bottom right of each page, or click on the tabs at the top to jump to one of three parts.



WCT gratefully acknowledges the support of Cisco Canada (including the use of Webex) in the production of our national town hall meeting and the preparation of this report.

WCT acknowledges with thanks the support of Women and Gender Equity Canada in the production of this report.

INTRODUCTION

For 30 years, Women in Communications and Technology (WCT) has stood for greater gender diversity and inclusion in the Canadian economy, particularly in its future-forward, digital components — media, telecommunications, and technology.

Like many organizations, WCT felt the seismic force of the murder of George Floyd in the spring of 2020. And we have shared the national sorrow and reflection following the ongoing revelations about residential schools and unfulfilled Truth and Reconciliation commitments. We recognized that our mandate to advocate for women was imperfect unless it more actively embraced the commitment to strive for diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

We pledged to do a better job of listening to and understanding the experiences and specific challenges facing the people in our community who are under-represented in economic life and leadership not only by virtue of their gender, but because of their race, ethnicity, sexual identity, and physical abilities.

Since then, this commitment has materialized as a major change in the way we evaluate the effectiveness of our programming and our organization itself. We consulted widely with many of our community members who are racialized or, for other reasons, are under-represented in the workforce. They were insightful, patient, and generous with us. To make our new commitments a permanent feature of our core business, we enshrined them in our governance by creating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee of our board of directors to help us chart a path toward effectiveness in our pursuit of this broader vision.

One pervasive message emerged from these consultations: Doing better begins with listening better. To create an opportunity for better listening, we began our diversity, equity, and inclusion journey with a national town hall meeting. *Diversity Insights* gave us an opportunity to hear from some of the leading voices within the WCT community about the measures we need to take to do better. It was insightful, inspiring and, frankly, too good to keep to ourselves. We prepared this report to share some of the key concepts with all who believe that a more fully diverse, equitable and inclusive future is in sight.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Stanley".

Joanne Stanley
Executive Director, WCT

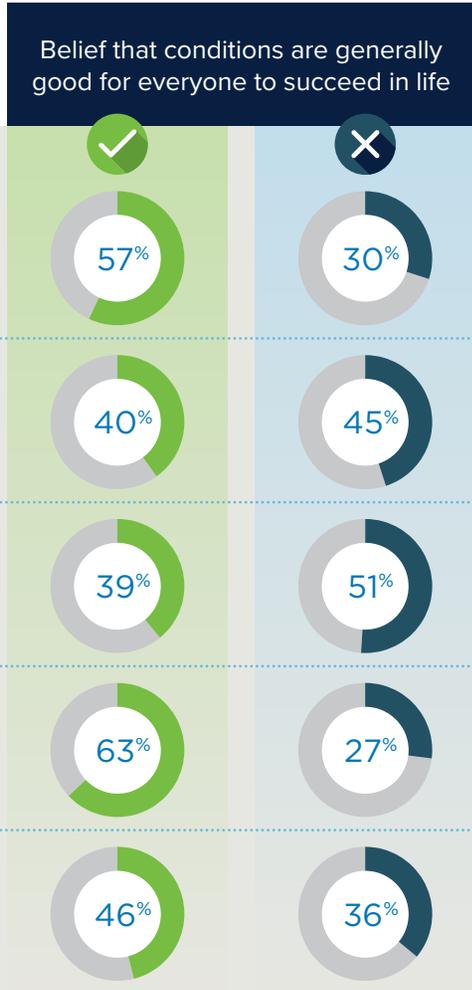
PART 1

Facing the Facts

Racism is pervasive in Canada in thousands of small moments of condescension, presumption and micro-aggression.

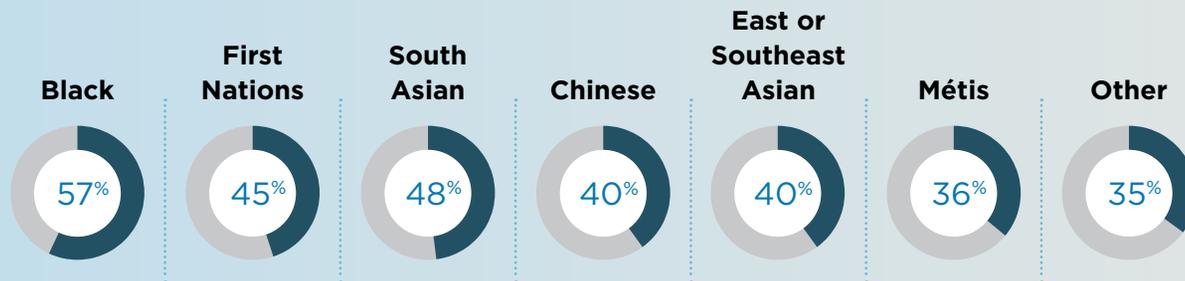
According to [Race relations in Canada 2021](#) conducted by Environics and Canadian Race Relations Foundation¹:

White Canadians are the most likely to believe that conditions are generally good for everyone to succeed in life (57%, versus 30% generally bad), while this view is least apt to be shared among those who are Black (40% generally good, versus 45% generally bad) or First Nations (39%, versus 51%). A large discrepancy now appears between men (63% good, versus 27% bad) and women (46%, versus 36%).



1. https://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/images/Environics_Study_2021/Race_Relations_in_Canada_2021_Survey_-_FINAL_REPORT_ENG.pdf – Race relations in Canada 2021

The survey shows that discrimination and mistreatment because of one's race is a common experience, with **one in five Canadians** reporting this happens to them regularly or from time to time. Not surprisingly, such experiences are most widely reported by those who are **Black (57%)** or **First Nations (45%)**, but also among those who are **South Asian (48%)**, **Chinese (40%)**, **East or Southeast Asian (40%)**, **Métis (36%)**, or those with **other racialized backgrounds (35%)**.



“It’s a lot of small moments that get brushed off. I can think throughout my career the number of times, I would laugh something off and shrug something off, let it pass and go what did that mean, and just keep it moving. Cause you have to. You can’t call it out in every moment that it happens, but it builds up. And it feels like death by a thousand paper cuts. And it’s those little moments that often are the ones that are dismissed.”

GINELLA MASSA, CBC



Ensure that when hiring racialized minorities that there is a focus on retention by making them an equal part of the conversation, including their points of views and suggestions throughout.

According to Black Canadian National Survey Interim Report by York University²:

Forty-seven (47%) of the Black Canadians indicated that they have been treated unfairly by an employer in hiring, pay or promotion in the last 12 months.



Twenty-eight percent (26%) of non-white and **twenty-four percent (24%) of Indigenous** people across Canada indicate they have been treated unfairly by an employer.



Forty-five percent (45%) of the Black female respondents indicated that they have been treated unfairly by an employer in hiring, pay or promotion in the last 12 months.



Twenty-four percent (24%) of non-white and **twenty-five percent (25%) of Indigenous women** indicate they have been treated unfairly by an employer.



2. https://blacknessincanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/0_Black-Canadian-National-Survey-Interim-Report-2021.2.pdf – Black Canadian National Survey Interim Report 2021

Generally, across racial categories, respondents are more likely to indicate they have been treated unfairly in the workplace than in criminal justice (e.g. policing), education, and child services sectors.

Ginella Massa's "three-pronged" approach to personally combatting racism:

- 1** **Check** your own assumptions about all people.
- 2** **Recognize** your privilege and use it to advance equity and inclusion.
- 3** **Examine** your behaviour and conversations in situations where racialized people aren't present.



"Often we talk about diversity efforts, whether that's bringing more women into tech or bringing in more people of colour. But we don't talk about retention. What are we doing to make sure that they're staying? How do we create a culture that they're going to feel safe and they're going to thrive."

GINELLA MASSA, CBC

OPENING KEYNOTE

Ginella Massa in conversation with Willa Black

Willa Black



Ginella Massa is a trailblazer. An Afro-Latina Muslim, she is a Canadian Screen Award-winner best known as Canada’s first hijab-wearing television news reporter, local anchor, and national host.

Ginella made history in 2015 when she became the first television news reporter in North America to wear a hijab on-air as a video journalist for CTV News in Kitchener, Ontario. She made international headlines again after anchoring the evening newscast at CityNews Toronto in 2016. She joined CBC on 2020 and is currently the host of **Canada Tonight With Ginella Massa**, airing weeknights on CBC News Network.

Willa Black, Vice-president, Corporate Affairs, Cisco: Let’s start with your career journey. You interned at CTV in Toronto and then got a job as an editorial assistant. And at the same time, you were working as a volunteer for Rogers in Mississauga. Can you tell us about those early days in your career and how you navigated them?

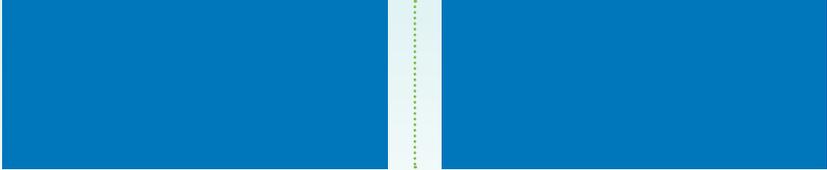
Ginella Massa: I wanted to do something that was in the spotlight. What I really loved about journalism was that it is storytelling at its heart. I knew that I wanted to be on air. I was always that really talkative kid in school who just wouldn’t shut up. So, I played to my strengths. It was really exciting to be in a newsroom, but there was always that little voice in the back of my head because I’d never seen anyone who looked like me doing that [on-camera] job. But, no one ever said to my face, “Oh, no one’s going to hire you. You’re not going to get a job like this.”

I really had to silence the voices in my [own] head. When I went to Rogers, they didn’t blink an eye and they put me on TV. Rogers Mississauga is very diverse. It has a lot of Muslims, a lot of south

Asian population. They didn’t think that their viewers would think anything of it, and it was volunteer position. I learned so much there and I really gained a lot of skills there. That’s how I cut my teeth.

I learned a lot and built up my demo reel. I applied three times to CTV Kitchener. Because I already worked at CTV, it kind of gave me an in... There was an obligation to at least respond to my application. At the very least, they said, “Well, thank you very much for your application.” And I always asked anytime I would get rejected, “Is there anything that I could do better for next time?” The first time they said, “You just don’t have enough videography experience.”

I went back to Rogers and said I need shooting experience. And they let me do that. Built up my reel again. Applied again. And then by the third time... maybe they got tired of saying no to me, or they saw that I had improved, and so they gave me a chance. I was really excited and really scared. Obviously, any person who’s going to be on TV for the first time is going to feel nervous about making sure they don’t mess up and making sure they don’t feel like they made a mistake



by hiring me. But for me, I had the added layer of not knowing what the response was going to be like from viewers and nervous about what was going to happen.

And I was pleasantly surprised by how overwhelmingly positive the response was... People would come up to me while I was out shooting and say, "Hey, you're the new girl on CTV? Oh, we love watching you. You're doing such a great job." And that was really heartening that people could judge me for my work and not for how I had chosen to dress. And that gave me a lot of confidence.

Willa: [A study by York University³ in May found that 78% of Black Canadians consider racism in Canada a severe problem. Clearly, we need change. So, where do we start? What's it going to take?](https://blacknessincanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/0_Black-Canadian-National-Survey-Interim-Report-2021.2.pdf)

Ginella: When we talk about things like the Quebec mosque shooting or the London attack on a Muslim family these are the instances of racism that are horrifying, that shake us to our core. No one can look at this situation and make any excuse for it. But what happens to people of colour, Muslims, black people, and others every day aren't those big, obvious moments that you can point to and say, "That's racist. You are a racist. This is racism." It's a lot of small moments that get brushed off.

I can think of the number of times I would laugh something off and just keep it moving because you have to. You can't call it out in every moment that it happens. But it builds up and it feels like death by a thousand paper cuts. And it's those little moments that often are the ones that are dismissed and they happen so often. It might be one moment that suddenly you snap... and you call it out and they say, "Oh, that was just a joke." And it's because it's the thousandth one.

I think that often when we talk about racism, we think about it in these big grand ways. And so, it's difficult for us to think about what role we might play in changing things... But racism is pervasive in these small ways every day and [it's] perpetuated and allowed to happen to a point where it's so casual that we don't recognize how harmful it is.

Willa: People say, "What can I do as an individual? What is my role in trying to move this country forward?" What would you say to those people who want to take action and be more inclusive?

Ginella: Number one, I think, **is checking our own assumptions about people.**

I give this example. I was renting out my basement recently. And as soon as people show up, you immediately make a judgment call about them. You look at how they're dressed. You look at their age, you look at their race, you look at lots of different things, and you think, "Oh this guy's going to be a troublemaker. He's going to make lots of noise. Oh, this one's going to be really high maintenance and is going to be complaining all the time. Oh, this one is probably going to have his friends smoking."

Where was I drawing those conclusions from? From my own assumptions about what I know about the world [and] the experiences that I've had. And I had to check myself. Here's me, a person of colour who deals with other people's assumptions all the time, having those thoughts. So, we all do it. That's human nature. We have to think about what is it that has coloured and informed our opinions of people and who they are and make those assumptions about them. And how does that impact our decisions about who gets to be and do what and have access to certain spaces.

3. https://blacknessincanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/0_Black-Canadian-National-Survey-Interim-Report-2021.2.pdf – Black Canadian National Survey Interim Report 2021

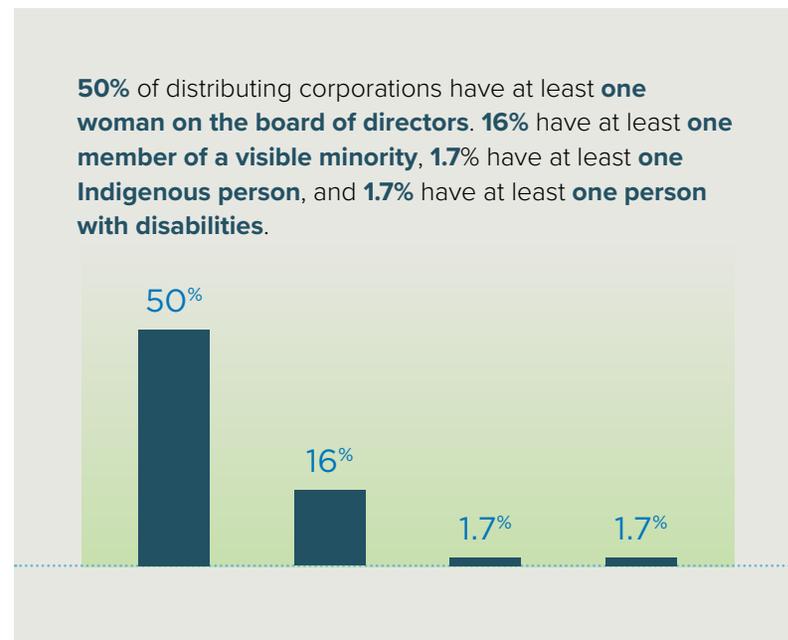
The other thing I think about is **recognizing our own privilege**. I know lots of people talk about white privilege, but the reality is that everybody has privilege. I have privilege as someone who speaks fluent English, as someone who is university educated. I own a home, so I have privilege in lots of different ways. I don't have an accent. My name is racially ambiguous. And that was a privilege. So how do you use that privilege to open the door, to allow other people to have a seat at the table who are in a different position from you, or how do you step back and see things from another perspective?

Racism isn't just my problem, it's a problem for all of us. We all need to ask, what are we doing about racism? How are we talking to the people around us? What conversations are we having at our dinner table with our kids or our uncles, or our grandparents? And what are we allowing that's acceptable in spaces when people of colour aren't there? What conversations are we having? So that's my three-pronged approach to solving racism. **We need to take accountability in our own ecosystem.**

Willa: What does a truly equitable Canada look like? If you had to imagine an authentically diverse, inclusive future what would it look like?

Ginella: We have to think beyond just race, gender. [We also have to think about physical ability](#)⁴. We have to think about age. We have to think about socioeconomic status. Often that is a big divide between people and their experiences and how they see the world and what they think is important.

So how do we ensure that when we look around the table that [folks are represented](#)⁵ and that we actually think about how the decisions we're making impact them? The more people that we can have around the table contributing to what's important to them and what they need to be able to succeed, and to hear from them and to actually listen, I think that's what's going to help us create a more equitable world.



4. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/211201/dq211201c-eng.pdf?st=_czK-LMG – Profile of workers with disabilities receiving payments from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit program, 2020

5. <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cd-dgc.nsf/eng/cs08998.html#s1>

PART 2

Strategic Intent

Achieving diversity, equity and inclusion in organizations requires **strategic intent**. It does not occur organically or by accident.

Internal mentorship programs are effective tools to foster the engagement and advancement of people from equity-seeking groups.

All Black Canadians surveyed (96 per cent) say that racism is a problem on the job, with 78 per cent believing that it is a severe problem. In contrast, **less than one in five** White Canadians are of the same belief.⁶



6. <https://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/en/component/flexicontent/item/27387-blackness-in-canada-report-reveals-78-per-cent-of-black-people-believe-racism-is-a-severe-problem-in-canada> – ‘Blackness in Canada’ report reveals 78 per cent of Black people believe racism is a ‘severe’ problem in Canada



“Sycor is roughly 2,000 people, 50% men [and] 50% women. Our executive team is 60% women. That’s a top tier of the company. Our board of directors is 45% women, and we’re also 45% otherwise diverse... We weren’t always like this. Over the last decade we’ve continued to move in that direction. That was very deliberate, very thoughtful, very strategic with KPIs and measures that made sure that we were staying on track, what I call walking the talk... I would say it cannot happen if left on its own. And it has to be very deliberate.”

CHAMELI NARAIN, SYCOR

“Interrupting” established recruitment practices to access and advance the careers of under-represented groups is a key step toward greater diversity and inclusion.

Creating a safe space for conversations for employees from under-represented groups is vital for establishing trust and addressing the specific issues and aspirations of these employees.

Message from our Mentor and Mentee

Shann McGrail, Executive Director at Haltech Regional Innovation Centre, is a former WCT Mentor. She was matched up with Kendall Bancroft, now SVP Sales, Home Division at Rogers Communications during WCT's Mentorship Program.

Here's what they have to say about the experience:

Shann MacGrail: You realize the power of figuring out how to transfer what you have learned to someone else going through similar situations. At the same time you learn from the mentee about different contexts and leadership styles. One of the best ways to keep your skills sharp is by helping someone else realize their goals.

Kendall Bancroft: The gift of being able to talk through current day to day challenges as well as longer term aspirations with someone who understands the environment you are navigating without being part of your day to day is invaluable. Creating a safe space to ask “silly” questions and building a relationship where you can truly be yourself while figuring things out about yourself and your leadership style is one of the best parts of the program.



“Sometimes you have to change your way of thinking. If you do see that that person has potential but doesn't have that degree, sometimes it's worthwhile to change the job description to make sure that it still fits what we're looking for, but to help the person to succeed within that position? Sometimes it's just a question of changing your mindset and thinking differently.”

MONIKA ILLE, APTN

Shannon Leininger



Monika Ille and Chameli Naraine in conversation with Shannon Leininger

WCT conducts an annual awards program that recognizes outstanding individual champions of gender diversity. Its highest award is reserved for the “Employer of the Year” and showcases an organization demonstrating extraordinary commitment to and outcomes in achieving gender equity. It is not an easy award to win. Nominated companies must demonstrate a clear strategic focus on diversity and inclusion and demonstrate results and metrics well beyond industry norms.

APTN was recognized as Employer of the Year in 2019 and Symcor won the award in 2020. It’s not surprising that leaders who care about equity are also generous in sharing their experiences in the quest for it. Monika Ille, CEO of APTN, and Chameli Naraine, CEO of Symcor, discussed the practices that helped them succeed with Cisco Canada President Shannon Leininger.

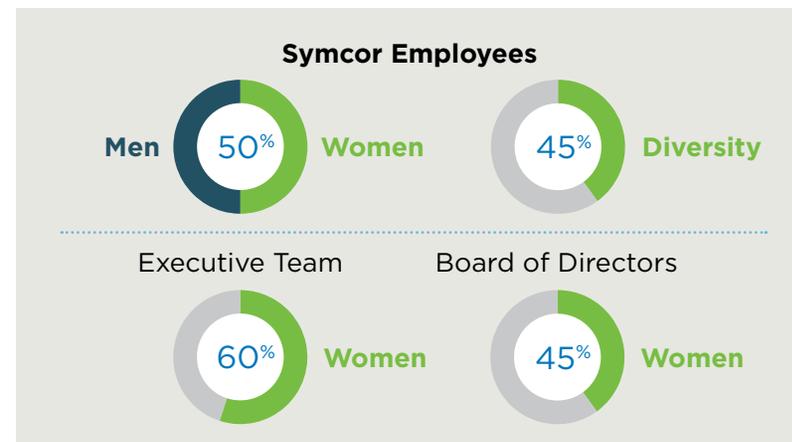
Shannon Leininger: My first question to you both is, can we expect to build diverse and equitable organizations without strategic intent? Does diversity ever happen by accident?

Chameli Naraine: [The] short answer is no. It doesn’t happen by accident at all.

But let me explain how we frame this up. Diversity is the natural order or configuration on earth, right? Over 190 countries, eight billion people, 7,000 languages spoken, 50% men, 50% women.

[As companies] if we don’t embrace that, we’re going against the natural order of the configuration of our customer base and the marketplace. We’ve gotten a little off track and sort of broke that natural order but now the efforts that we’re all embarking on are trying to move more towards that natural order of diversity and equity and inclusion. I’m pretty optimistic we’re heading in that direction.

Symcor is roughly 2,000 people, 50% men [and] 50% women. Our executive team is 60% women. That’s a top tier of the company. Our board of directors is 45% women, and we’re also 45% otherwise diverse. It always helps with me being part of the board and part of the leadership group, but that is sort of how we’re stacked in our company.



We weren't always like this. Over the last decade we've continued to move in that direction. That was very deliberate, very thoughtful, very strategic with KPIs and measures that made sure that we were staying on track, what I call walking the talk... I would say it cannot happen if left on its own. And it has to be very deliberate. But it's not a hard thing for it to be deliberate because it's just a natural order of earth.

Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations found that mentoring programs boosted minority representation at the management level by **9% to 24%** (compared to -2% to 18% with other diversity initiatives).

The same study found that mentoring programs also dramatically improved promotion and retention rates for minorities and women — **15% to 38%** as compared to non-mentored employees.⁷



According to an in-depth study conducted by Sun Microsystems, a technology company based in Santa Clara, California:⁸

Employees who participated in the program were

five times

more likely to advance in pay grade, and mentors made even more progress. Mentees were promoted five times more than those not in the program, and mentors six times more.

Retention rates were significantly higher

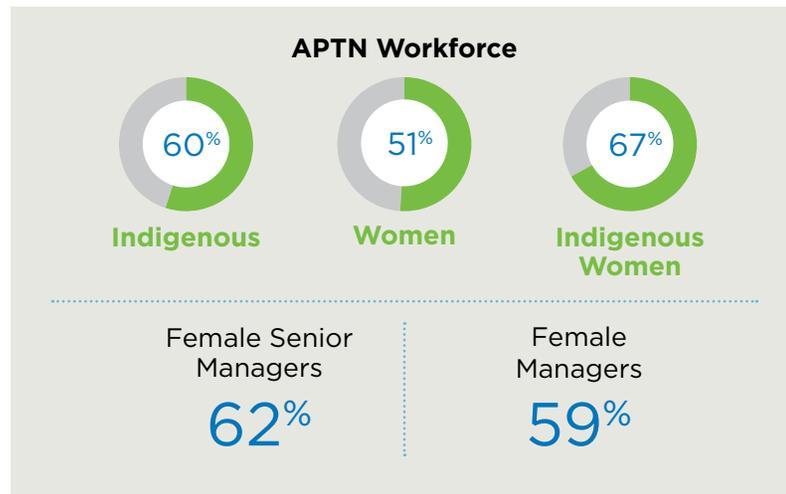


7. https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/74541/What_Evidence_is_There_That_Mentoring_Works_to_Retain_and_Promote_Employees.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

8. <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/workplace-loyalties-change-but-the-value-of-mentoring-doesnt/>

Shannon: Monika, can you share APTN’s metrics for gender and full spectrum diversity in your workforce and in your senior leadership?

Monika Ille: At APTN, we focus heavily on hiring and retaining Indigenous employees. So right now, about 60% of APTN employees are Indigenous. We work hard to attract them, but it has to be planned. When APTN started [in 1992] there was a handful of Indigenous producers. Now there’s more than a hundred producers, creators, writers. In the workforce 51% are female and 67% of that group are Indigenous women. Sixty-two per cent of senior managers are female and 59% of the managers are female.



You definitely have to plan for this, and you need to have a strategy in place. You need to work together as a team and have this be part of your mandate. APTN sat down and said, “How do we give these opportunities to Indigenous people to hire them, for them to be able to access higher level of management?” So, [we put in place mentorship programs](#).⁹ I personally was part of a mentorship program. I’ve been at APTN for 18 years and I’ve been CEO for the past two years almost, but I went through a formal internal mentorship program to help me get the knowledge, the experience.

Shannon: I love that. We started to make some really simple steps [forward at Cisco](#)¹⁰. We began by saying, “Every time we’re going through the recruiting process, you have to have a diverse interview panel.” And then I thought to myself, “But what I really need is a diverse candidate slate.” So, then every candidate slate needed to be diverse in order to kind of drive the changes that we wanted to see. We have to be intentional. We also have to hold people accountable. And I think you both kind of alluded to the fact that there needs to be that accountability piece as well.

Chameli: We really strive and believe in performance at all levels, including profitability, balance sheet and so on. But one of the things we have done is that we strive for 50/50 gender-balanced team. That’s pretty easy to do – it’s called counting. So, we count the number of men and the number of women at all levels. We strive for that and that’s not just a policy statement or a policy directive, but it’s actually at an accountability level with the executive team.

9. <https://www.wct-fct.com/en/programs/mentorship> – WCT Mentorship Program

10. <https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/about/careers/communities/students-and-new-graduates/human-resources.html> – CISCO Careers

We also created our EMERGE group to start exposing some of the younger members of our team to opportunity and give them the ability to empower and to grow and to develop. It has resulted in some promotions into the executive level. It also provides learning about unconscious bias and how things really work. The EMERG activity was started by women and has now spread to the whole company.

[Pay and compensation equity](#)¹¹ has been an important and big task for us over the last decade. We fixed that a while ago, and that was something that, like many companies, is an issue that needs to be dealt with, but we have figured that out.

And I think that the last dimension we measure and as a company hold ourselves accountable to is innovation. We put a direct correlation between innovation and equity and collaboration. We measure innovation. That's actually one of the things on our scorecard. You've got to measure these things in order for it to really get done.

EMERGE: Resource group called EMERGE whose mandate is to be an inclusive forum to Empower, Motivate, Encourage, Recognize, Grow and Educate Symcor employees on their leadership journey by reviewing gender demographics (including a focus on women in technology), hosting networking events and releasing leadership “HACKS”.

Shannon: What is your perspective on what employers need to do, not only to attract and retain talent, but also to advance diverse employees?

Monika: APTN gives priority to Indigenous candidates, everything being equal, and that's a small pool of people. They don't necessarily have the skills we're looking for. So we rely on internships. We get people that are fresh out of school with some workplace environment experience and get them to come to APTN. Sometimes we keep them because we see that they have the skills and the potential but maybe not the credentials.

Sometimes you have to change your way of thinking. If you do see that that person has potential but doesn't have that degree, sometimes it's worthwhile to [change the job description](#)¹² to make sure that it still fits what we're looking for, but to help the person to succeed within that position? Sometimes it's just a question of changing your mindset and thinking differently.

Shannon: I couldn't agree with you more. And once you get that talent in, we need to help them get to the next level. We've practiced a couple of different things that I love. One is called the Multiplier Effect¹³. It is a requirement for every leader within Cisco to mentor and sponsor our diverse candidates. We all take a pledge and make a commitment to do that. Again, it gets back to that accountability piece. And then the second thing that we practice is proximity – getting proximate with our marginalized community and really understanding their perspective and understanding what their work experience is like.

11. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2021-161/page-1.html> – Pay Equity Regulations Canada 2021

12. <https://www.gem.com/blog/creating-an-inclusive-job-description> – Creating an Inclusive Job Description

13. <https://blogs.cisco.com/tag/multiplier-effect> – Multiplier Effect

This helps us start to build the relationships to develop not only that individual talent, but potentially whole communities within the organization as well.

How do we know that a company is genuine when it comes to DEI commitments and what can leaders do to demonstrate their commitment to advancing DEI initiatives?

Monika: It's not checking off a box. It's something you want to do because you believe in it. You have to live it. You have to walk the talk. It has to be part of your mission. It has to be part of your strategies and your practices. You have to be sure that the whole company knows why. It's not just this separate thing you're doing on the side. It's part of your way of doing things. It's a part of your thinking, part of the DNA of your organization. It doesn't happen in one day. It takes time, and you need to be sure that you have champions within your organization that believe in this as well.

At APTN, it's very important for us celebrate our Indigenous cultures, our Indigenous values, and we put a lot of emphasis within our everyday work, within APTN itself. Celebrating our Indigenous cultures is extremely important to our people. So, we make sure that that is at the forefront of our work, because it definitely grounds us.

Chameli: I'm not sure that I'm a believer in a dedicated leader in a company waking up and saying, "I am a DEI leader." We don't work like that. **Everyone in the executive role is accountable**, measured, and must perform embracing our values including equity and diversity. I think that it's very important that we don't just put it on HR

or on this new DEI role we're creating, but that it must be owned. It's owned by the board. It's owned by me. It's owned by the executive team. It's owned by all employees. That's how we think about it. Plus, we are very performance oriented, so we're measured on that. We keep our measurements in front of us to see how we're doing as we move forward. We keep it in front of the board too.

Shannon: I'd love to hear from you on your final thoughts on key takeaways or actions to leave the audience with today.

Monika: We talk a lot about reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It's important that we walk together, that we work together. It doesn't happen only by one side. Indigenous people are more and more getting an education. We're taking our place. Indigenous women are taking their place also in society. And as we move forward and we take higher-level positions – not only in Indigenous organizations – so that what we have a say, we create a presence [and a space] for our voices [and] our history to be heard. And that is going to slowly start to change, but it's just starting.

Chameli: I think the time is now. So, I would encourage you all who are leaders – and if you aren't a leader by title, you are a leader somewhere – to take the ownership of being a leader and go have some courage and start moving that dial. Don't get into fights and arguments, but sometimes it's worth it, depending on where you are in taking on this topic. It's time for change and you've got to lead it.

PART 3

Diversity Delivers Business Results

Representation in leadership is a key factor in establishing employee trust.

Senior leadership sponsorship is key to advancing employees from under-represented groups.

Organizational leaders from under-represented groups **have a responsibility** to take action to improve broader diversity.

Sponsorship: Championing individuals from under-represented groups to create opportunities visibility and to maximize an individual's career growth and potential.



“When you build the right DEI, it becomes generational. The impact of having people that they belong in a conversation that matters, transcends into the next generation.”

MINELLI CLEMENTS, LORCAN TECHNOLOGIES



Trust built on transparency is vital to employee self-identification disclosure. Explaining how the data will be collected and stored and ensuring it will only be used to identify and respond to employee concerns and suggestions is a critical step.

Establish trust is an ongoing process that requires consistency and commitment.

For competitive, innovation-driven companies, **a diverse employee base** equipped with ideas from all around the world is critical to success.

Beyond the
business case for
diversity, it is the
right thing to do.



“Without immigration in this country and without leveraging diversity, we are never going to move to GDP growth. GDP in this country cannot grow unless we grow immigration and therefore, we have to embrace diversity, inclusion and equity. It’s really our survival.”

CHAMELI NARAINÉ, SYMCOR



Saba Shariff



PANEL

Making it Real. Keeping it Real.

The organizers of WCT's town hall meeting on diversity felt it was essential to capture the views of some of the dynamic young leaders in its community in the program. This panel discussed their own personal experiences as members of equity-seeking groups and as leaders for change in their own organizations. Moderated by Saba Shariff, Head, New Product Development and Corporate Strategy and Chair of WCT's DEI Committee.



Pelra Azondekon, Director, Corporate
Venture Capital, Quebecor

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY IN BUILDING INNOVATION

Through my role at Quebecor, I conduct venture capital activities. We invest in innovative start-ups. Diversity, inclusion, is particularly important when you think of the gap that still exists in terms of representation, representativeness and financing for companies, for start-ups, that are led and founded by entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds. Processes and investment are still often marked

by unconscious bias and I think it is important to be aware of this. Representativeness is all the more important because having diversity on the investor's side has an impact on increased access to financing opportunities for diverse entrepreneurs, but it also has an impact on the quality of the investment decisions that are made. So, this is what drives me on a daily basis in my work.

- We know that only **15%** of partners in venture capital funds are female and that only **2%** of angel investors in Canada are female and female founders receive only **3%** of VC dollars.¹⁴
- Women of colour receive just **0.2%** of funding, and there are no stats available for Indigenous women, LGBTQ women and/or women with disabilities, likely because the numbers are so small.

14. <https://techcouver.com/2022/01/05/how-women-in-venture-capital-will-win-in-2022/> – How Women in Venture Capital Will Win in 2022

- According to Boston Consulting Group, female-owned start-ups generated **\$0.78** revenue per dollar invested, compared to male-only start-ups who generated **\$0.31** revenue per dollar invested.
- And First Round Capital tells us that female-founded companies perform **63%** better than all-male founded companies.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SPONSORSHIP

Emphasis should be placed on accelerating career paths to leadership for promising [under-represented junior talent](#)¹⁵ within an organization, providing them with increased opportunities for growth and exposure to certain challenges and influential individuals within the organization. Sponsorship is one way to champion diversity more sustainably because yes, on one hand you want to increase representation at the decision-making level, but I think that on the other hand, you really also want to make sure that these up-and-coming diverse leaders have the right set of tools to really thrive once they access this new position.

I used to work in a big four management firm. I had one partner that I worked with. He didn't know that he was sponsoring me, but he was. He was a white man that had a lot of credibility because of his position within the firm. But whenever we were either in front of clients or even within the organization, he would pass on his credibility to me. It was systematic. At once the room was more

attentive to what I had to say. He wanted people to understand, she's the one that knows what she's talking about, that worked on this file so listen to everything that she has to say. That's really something that helped me gain confidence but also helped me evolve within the firm almost to the partner level.



Sky Bridges, CEO,
The Winnipeg Foundation

ON WHY IT IS DIFFICULT TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACIALIZATION AND CAREERS

Depending on the environment that someone finds themselves in, in order to discuss this issue, they have to feel that they're in a safe environment, that they are welcome to do so, that they will be received in the right way. And for many people who are challenged in this area of feeling included in terms of feeling racialized, how do they come forward to talk about it if it isn't invited? So, it's all about creating a culture where people feel comfortable in knowing that they can be supported in talking about how they're feeling if they find themselves in those situations. I think that part of what every culture should do in terms of developing that [psychological safety is create space for talking about these important issues](#).¹⁶

15. <https://www.wct-fct.com/en/programs/protégé-projet> – WCT Career Sponsorship

16. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/what-are-employee-resource-groups-ergs> – What Are Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)?

I think that the ultimate goalpost on this is how do we celebrate culture? I think that the greatest beacon of culture is a place where we celebrate our cultures. However, the pragmatist in me recognizes that we're not there yet and it's important that we spend time as leaders to have these conversations around the board table on culture. Do we have a place of psychological safety? Do we have surveys that ask that question to get their own identity information out? That's how you create a framework so that we can get over that challenge and bring these things out to the open to really understand what kind of workplace we really have here.

ON THE RIGHT THING TO DO

We live in a multicultural society and yes, there are all kinds of studies out there that can show how diversity, equity and inclusion is great [for your bottom line](#).¹⁷ But, also, it is the right thing to do in terms of building a healthy community, a healthy society. And I would say that for any organization who's maybe having trouble in terms of accessing and onboarding diversity, equity, and inclusion candidates, you may have to look at [redesigning your entry-level positions](#).¹⁸ Are you building relationships with this group while they're still in university or in college? I think organizations have got to push themselves to look beyond your normal practices to really move the needle in this area.



**Stephanie Byard, Director,
Media Sales and Agency Business,
Rogers Communications**

ON WHY DEI CONVERSATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL

Why is this important to me? Because we're still talking about it. We're still strategizing around it. We're still having to put goals and percentages around it and there's still a need for groups to drive awareness around representation. What I'm saying is we're still fighting for equality. We have something that we really need to fix. When we have the representation and when we have equality in place, we will behave differently, we will make different decisions and as a result, we will help every person and every employee show up each day without the fear of being true to their selves. And I think that this is the key to a healthy culture as well as to engagement, innovation, and productivity.

17. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/why-diversity-and-inclusion-matter-financial-performance/> – Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter: Financial Performance (Appendix)

18. <https://www.gem.com/blog/creating-an-inclusive-job-description> – Creating an Inclusive Job Description

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION AND EDUCATION

I've been experiencing race all my life. Probably before I even knew how to name it. So, it's a real aspect of my identity and my lived experience. When I was growing up and throughout my career I'd look around and there was a lack of representation for people like me, especially around my race, in the workplace. And also, in leadership. I really felt like I was missing the support and the different perspective of those who have had a similar lived experience. Their voices weren't at the table with me, so it's been quite an isolating experience.

And until about a year and a half ago unless you were really studying or working [in diversity] the knowledge out there was quite limited. [So, how do you have a meaningful conversation about racism or how that's impacting you in the workplace?](#)¹⁹ It's really quite challenging to have that conversation when you may be sitting across from the table with someone who might not be really well versed in diversity and inclusion. So, for a really long time I really chose to stay quiet, and I changed and adapted.

Today I would happily say I don't shy away from this conversation. But I think that no matter how much progress we have made, I would still be cautious and probably very strategic in how I approached the conversation and who I approached it with.

"I really felt like I was missing the support and the different perspective of those who have had a similar lived experience. Their voices weren't at the table with me, so it's been quite an isolating experience."

STEPHANIE BYARD, DIRECTOR, MEDIA SALES AND AGENCY BUSINESS, ROGERS COMMUNICATIONS



**Minelli Clements, Founder and CEO,
LorCan Technologies**

ON ACHIEVING AUTHENTICITY

In enviro tech, we have this term called greenwashing and that's basically asking, "Is your impact actually what you're presenting?" Are you presenting a story that says that you have a larger impact than you're capable of having? I think that's what happens a lot. A company will present a metric indicating it's the greatest company ever. But then when you look at employee engagement and their scores in DEI, they are very low.

19. <https://hbr.org/2019/04/make-your-meetings-a-safe-space-for-honest-conversation> – Harvard Business Review

What organizations don't realize is that when you build the right DEI, it becomes generational. The impact of having people feel like they belong and their conversation matters, transcends into the next generation. The conversation that my father had with me as an immigrant in his workspace is very different than what I would have with my child, because I would say, "Oh, the opportunities are boundless."

Whereas my father would've said, "Just be careful, not everyone's going to be on your side for things." So, the more inclusive your environment becomes, the more you actually impact generations to follow. I think that's why people have to take responsibility to create those environments, because then it becomes very real. It becomes something that doesn't just stop at your corporation. It starts to follow into home life and all those things. So how do you create an authentic environment? You have to have these conversations with your employees. It all comes down to the discussions you're having.

ON BUILDING DIVERSITY INTO ORGANIZATIONAL DNA

When you build [DEI] into your DNA you build it as a corporate goal, [as a strategy](#).²⁰ This is what I envisioned for my company. Then you're encouraging those environments to take form organically. You really have to start building DEI into your processes so it they can't be taken away if the budget changes. It's vital to the development of your company. In innovation and technology, my greatest asset is a diverse group of individuals. They're bringing ideas from all over the world and things that aren't really in the Canadian landscape, but then we can figure ways around it to develop and build that technology. Encouraging that diverse thought should be really the ultimate goal of DEI.



Fiona Gao, Senior Director, Marketing and Partnerships, Moneris

ON REMOVING BARRIERS FOR EMPLOYEES FROM UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

For me, the truly inclusive and diverse and equitable corporate workplace is one where everyone's encouraged to bring their whole self to the table and feel that there's a sense of genuine belonging, connection, and community. And you can't do that by just simply saying we're going to increase a quota of number of female or underrepresented executives. There needs to be a larger conversation, focus groups for example, making sure that leadership actually hears the voices that are underrepresented. I'm a marketer so naturally I think, how do I actually make this topic more relevant? How do I help people to come out of their shy shell and be comfortable embracing this idea and take part in the conversation and the process?

There are great examples of this. One organization gave a fancy name to the campaign. They invited guest speakers. There were after parties. There's a hashtag for it. There's even employee-driven resource groups created for counseling like this. That, for me, is a great example for creating the appropriate energy level and relevance. Something employees can truly participate in versus being counted as a number.

20. https://www.michamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/DEI_Metrics_Inventory.pdf – The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Metrics Inventory

ON PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

I'm originally from China. I've traveled and worked on numerous continents and had all kinds of amazing experiences. Whenever I walk into the room with strangers, people look at my face and try to put a label on me. But I always try to step up and just show who I am. I always say, "Hey, I'm Fiona. English is not my first language, but marketing is." That instantly gets people laughing and that instantly helps people recognize what I have in common with them. That's step one of actually getting involved and making efforts to push for the agenda of DEI. You can't just be a bystander. You have to make an effort to let people realize how much you bring to the table coming from that background. So is advocating for your fellow colleagues and people from the community. So, I ask everyone on this panel, as well as our audience, be involved. Don't wait for the organization to do it. You need to demand DEI. You need to take initiatives and truly be a voice for your community.

"Hey, I'm Fiona. English is not my first language, but marketing is."

**FIONA GAO, SENIOR DIRECTOR, MARKETING
AND PARTNERSHIPS, MONERIS**

PANEL

DEI Best Practice Swap Meet

WCT is in a more-or-less continuous conversation with its members and their employers about the strategies, practices, and programs that work to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion. An important part of WCT's mission is to widely share information about best practices to encourage effectiveness among all employers, regardless of where they are in their journeys toward true equity.

The “Swap Meet” panel was designed to continue this tradition of sharing knowledge and expertise. Panel participants representing leaders in diversity, equity and inclusion shared a trunkful of great ideas for fostering stronger workplace cultures for all organizations. Moderated by Cheryl Fullerton, EVP People and Communications at Corus Entertainment and WCT Chair.



ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN COLLECTING SELF-IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION

Trust is so important. We are asking employees to disclose what they are comfortable sharing with us and that includes race, identity, pronouns. The way that we're centering on trust is to be transparent

in the why and the how this [self-identification] information is being collected and stored. When we asked employees to volunteer this information to us, we told them why. First, we want to better understand who's part of the Cisco Canada community. Second, so that we can better support everyone. We asked employees, “What are the benefits that you want to prioritize, that you would like to see more of?”

Last year, in light of the pandemic [we changed the benefits packages to offer unlimited mental health resources for employees](#)²¹, because we knew the mental toll that it was taking on employees. So, the advice here is to just be upfront and explain to employees at every step of the way your intentions and purposes. You build that trust through saying, “We're using the information for this purpose. We're collecting it for this purpose, and this is also how

21. <https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/about/careers/we-are-cisco/benefits-and-perks.html> – CISCO Benefits and Perks

we're going to be storing it, and who's going to have visibility and access to it." That way, employees can trust that it's only being used for good.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE²²

When you think of the LGBTQ+ community, there's a lot of identities and orientations that are included within literally the rainbow that is our community. Having representatives from our communities in positions of leadership really allows for important nuances in our conversations about our communities. It's not uncommon for people who mean well to accidentally be exclusionary when they need to be inclusive. You think of the language around pride in June. A lot of people will say this event is open to women and female-identifying persons without realizing that actually creates a caste system that puts cis-gendered women above women with a trans history. Really, they're all just women, we're all just women. So, understanding the nuances of language and when you're being inclusive and when you're accidentally being exclusive is a privilege we have when we have leaders that are from our communities and positions of power. So, for me, that is incredibly important.



Jeremy Holland, Employer Services
Manager, Prospect Human Services

ON INCLUDING THOSE WHO WORK WITH DISABILITIES

I think one of the biggest challenges that a lot of organizations have when it comes to representation is the idea of disclosure. Within a lot of organizations when people think [of] people with disabilities, immediately what they're thinking is someone who's using a wheelchair or someone with a disability of a sensory nature. The truth of the matter is when we're working with individuals with disabilities, the vast majority of the people with disabilities that we support have anxiety conditions, depression, mental health-related conditions, or things that if it's physical, it's invisible.

A lot of the time you've got individuals that do have disabilities within workplaces that never disclose it. There's no clear messaging that goes out to people with disabilities within organizations to say, "We actually do mean it when we say that we're inclusive of people with disabilities."

22. <https://ccdi.ca/media/3150/ccdi-glossary-of-terms-eng.pdf> – Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

There's two different ways to address that. One is visibility. If there are individuals in senior leadership positions that do have disabilities, I've seen that get a lot of momentum in terms of disclosure. Because they have one or two senior leaders who say, "Hey, I actually was diagnosed with depression" or "You know what, I have OCD," or something of that nature. And by having that admission at a senior level, it's giving an implicit message to people within the organization that this isn't going to limit your progress within the organization. The other piece is just the time that it takes to build trust within a lot of organizations.

[\[Health status\]](#)²³ is something that's asked of individuals often when they're newly onboarded into an organization. And a lot of people aren't necessarily going to be comfortable sharing that kind of information when they don't really know the organization that well yet and they don't know if they can really trust the organization with that information. There is often stigma that's attached to disability.

One of the things that I recommend to organizations that are wanting to be inclusive is make it easy to disclose and make sure that there are opportunities to disclose at regular periods. Ideally, you're asking if people need accommodations, not just when they join the organization, but as part of annual reviews. Are there internal processes where health is regularly brought forward as just part of the general discussion?

23. <https://letstalk.bell.ca/en/get-help> – Bell Let's Talk



Starrlee DeGrace, Certified Digital Sales Professional, IBM Canada

ON THE VALUE OF CREATING SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYEES

I am co-chair of IBM's Indigenous People's network group. ERGs (employee resource groups) must be intentional. They are a place to share freely and create a safe space for people to share freely. I get questions like "What if I am only 8% Indigenous? Can I still join your group?" I think it is important [to] be open and to be clear that we are not measuring or testing you. You are welcome to be included. And we encourage allies. I am making sure that clients and colleagues are able to locate information and learn about the Indigenous experience in Canada.

Every Canadian should care about the Indigenous experience. What's really important to me is to have a safe space to really understand the Indigenous experience and that Indigenous history is Canada's history. They are one and the same.

My goal is to make people feel safe. And so, I authentically share a lot of my life, and that is because I want people to feel safe. My goal as co-chair is to live that experience and to share authentically with colleagues so that they can then feel comfortable sharing that information. And I want to ensure that there are opportunities for IBMers across Canada to get involved.

So, one example is [mentorship opportunities](#)²⁴ in schools across Canada where people can go on site or virtually to teach technology components. And by engaging in those communities, whether they are Indigenous by heritage or allies, the learning opportunities there are just continuous and abundant. Starting or participating in a group like this is rewarding because you get to see other people grow and share their journey along the way.



Liette Vigneault, Vice-president, Talent Employee Services, Cogeco

ON DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

The recruitment process is the cornerstone. We are making sure to be very crisp, very precise on the way we describe the career opportunities at Cogeco. What we wanted to stay away from was all of the in generic type of requirements that often will create barriers for some groups.

All of the HR business partners have the mandate to question systematically when we have a pool of candidates or when we have a team and we have an open position, they have to question how

balanced the team is. We systematically challenge the balance that we have in terms of gender diversity and other type of balance that we want to have within our team.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL-RUN AND FUNDED EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

We set up the Cogeco Women's Network 8 or 9 years ago. It was a way to allow women to connect with each other and to talk about the different problems that women were facing, but also about possible solutions. The goal really was in the last five years, this network has really become more structured. We have created four pillars.

The first pillar is Professional Development, the second is the Support Network, the third promotes the external visibility of our resources, and the fourth is diversity and inclusion, globally. For each of these pillars, there is a team of women who work hard, who put in place communication plans, but above all a range of activities and initiatives that aim to address each of these pillars.

When we talk about initiatives, we are talking about speakers, conferences, book clubs, education, training to develop management skills, leadership skills, but also technology training. We have also set up an internal mentoring program where not only women, but even men, participate. We also have recurring activities, like (the celebration of) International Women's Day. This group has a budget and goals; [it produces reports and communicates results](#).²⁵

24. <https://www.ibm.com/ibm/responsibility/downloads/initiatives/MentorPlace.pdf> – MentorPlace IBM

25. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5edaee2030bfe75bcae4635e/t/61b21486eefc5913a872da95/1639060632373/RJ_2021_ERG_Report_R8.pdf – 2021 State of the Employee Resource Group Report

MOVING FORWARD...

While we work diligently and actively to ensure that current and future workplaces are equitable, diverse and inclusive, we acknowledge that the journey is still long ahead of us.

We hope that through this report and the generous time of our speakers, panelists and sponsors, you find this resource as a guide in the right direction.

WCT's efforts towards Diversity, Inclusion and Equity are not limited to this report and we invite to further explore our resource page on our website, apply to our Protege Program, become a mentor or a mentee and continue this journey with us to a achieving an equitable, diverse and inclusive digital economy.

STEPS WE COULD ALL TAKE

For employers

Create a safe space for conversations for employees from underrepresented groups in order to build trust and address the issues and aspirations of these employees.

Ensure that when hiring racialized minorities that there is a focus on retention by making them an equal part of the conversation.

Establish internal mentorship programs to foster the engagement and advancement of people from equity-seeking groups.

For leaders

To achieve competitive, innovation-driven companies, a diverse employee base equipped with ideas from all around the world is critical to success.

Address diversity, equity and inclusion as a corporate goal by tracking performance and metrics.

Further recognize employees from under-represented groups to improve broader diversity.

For individuals

Check your own assumptions about all people.

Recognize your privilege and use it to advance equity and inclusion.

Examine your behaviour and conversations in situations where racialized people aren't present.

Remember that establishing trust is ongoing process that requires consistency and commitment.



For more information, please visit
our website at wct-fct.com

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