CANADIAN RACE RELATIONS FOUNDATION

CRRF FCRR

FONDATION CANADIENNE DES RELATIONS RACIALES

The Challenges of Employment Equity in Canada: A Tale of Two Sectors

Introduction

- Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. It encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, culture, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background, and sexual orientation.
- Some corporate cultures and society at large often deny this diversity by recognizing and valuing only a narrow range of differences.
- While these differences have often been ignored or devalued in the past, awareness of the role they play in organizational effectiveness has more recently put the spotlight on diversity.

The Diversity Imperative

- Diversity is not just the right thing to do—it is a moral, economic and social imperative if Canada is to maintain its competitive advantage—domestically and internationally.

- Valuing diversity means acknowledging that other people, other races, other voices, and other cultures have as much integrity and as much claim on the world as you do. It is the recognition that there are other ways of seeing the world, solving problems, and working together.

- As noted in the *Report on Canada in 2017*, "Diversity is at the centre of the anticipated transformation of Canadian society. Canada has witnessed a steady increase in the number of its visible minorities, who accounted for approximately 6% of the population in 1986. By 2017, visible minorities will account for approximately 20% of the population.
- This change has significant ramifications on all facets of our society and institutions.

Why Diversity?

- **Increased adaptability**
  Organizations employing a diverse workforce can supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, and allocation of resources. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands.
- **Broader service range**
  A diverse collection of skills and experiences (e.g. languages, cultural understanding) allows a company to provide service to customers on a global basis.

- **Variety of viewpoints**
  A diverse workforce that feels comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences. The organization can draw from that pool to meet business strategy needs and the needs of customers more effectively.

- **More effective execution**
  Companies that encourage diversity in the workplace inspire all of their employees to perform to their highest ability. Company-wide strategies can then be executed; resulting in higher productivity, profit, and return on investment.

Resistance to Institutional Change

- The culture of some organizations is based on “a system for differentiating between in-group and out-group people.”
- Legislative frameworks are necessary, but not adequate to fight workplace discrimination.
- We need to change the culture of barriers.
- Changing the culture of “barriers” towards members of racialized communities in the Public Service requires fresh perspectives and determination.
- It requires the promotion of a culture of social inclusion and diversity.
- Some individuals in the organization consider themselves as the gate keepers. They will persist in applying old strategies to new problems, or changes, blaming external factors or other individuals for their failure or problems, rather than adapt to change.

Making a Difference?

In order to initiate change, we need to have:

- Mission clarity and commitment to social inclusion.
- Employee commitment, high integrity workplace, strong trust relationships, highly effective leadership, effective communications, and emphasis on recruiting, retaining, and promoting employees of racialized backgrounds.
- Equally important—there is a need for high degree of accountability standards, and demonstrated commitment from all managerial levels.

How to inspire culture change

- We can not change the organizational culture without knowing where the organization wants to be or what elements of the current organizational culture need to change.
- Organizations must create plans, and monitor the implementation, to ensure that the desired organizational culture becomes a reality. Commitment of leadership and accountability are necessary elements for success.
- Culture change depends on behavior change. Members of the organization must clearly understand what is expected of them, and must know how to actually do the new behaviors, once they have been defined. Training can be very useful in both communicating expectations and teaching new behaviors.

Role of Leaders?

Successful leaders overcome the resistance to change by :

- Identifying their vision of change.
- Committing the necessary resources to ensure effective change.
- As the change progresses the leader mobilizes commitment to the change by maintaining the necessary accountability measures.

The Leader needs to involve all levels of the organization in the design and implementation of change:

- Involve the staff in the development of change strategies.
- Demonstrate how the new vision will benefit the organization.
- Use early successes in some parts of the organization to reinforce further changes.
- The change is institutionalized by building it into the processes, structures and reward/accountability systems of the organization.
- The organizational context must be examined to see if visible minorities feel welcome. Many organizations are recruiting visible minorities, but not retaining them. Line managers must be trained to understand differences, and to recognize their own biases.
- More racialized managers should be appointed in order to send a positive message to the labour force and to “create a brand.”
- Finally, accountability is vital; encouraging diversity should be part of the performance management system.

Some Best Practices

- A best practice is a “technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result.”

BMO-Financial Group

- In 1990, BMO's president took an industry leadership role in sponsoring the Task Force on the Advancement of Women. The Task Force indicated that work need to be done in the advancement of four groups: women, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities, and visible minorities. The Task Force produced its report, which laid the groundwork for addressing barriers to employment. The report marked a turning point in BMO's history towards achieving an equitable workplace, a diverse workforce, and meeting the needs of a culturally and geographically varied customer base.

SaskTel

- In 2004, SaskTel developed a comprehensive Representative Workforce Strategy (RWS) by building upon and expanding its existing diversity initiatives, such as its Aboriginal Participation Initiative, which was developed in 1999. The overall goal of the strategy is to increase representation while addressing workplace readiness that supports and inclusive work environment.

- SaskTel strategy embraced business development, employment, education, marketing, and corporate citizenship initiatives through partnerships with the Aboriginal community.
- SaskTel's Aboriginal Recruitment Strategy increased the hiring of permanent full-time Aboriginal employees by thirty one percent over the previous four years (representing 11% of total permanent hires).
- In order to reduce organizational resistance to change, SaskTel's initiatives were phased in slowly and comprised education components relaying the importance of a diverse work force; this strategy resulted in a smooth transition.
- Best practices: commitment, policy, managing diversity and implementation.

Canadian Pacific (CP)

- Canadian Pacific (CP)'s diversity strategy focused on providing Aboriginal and Chinese Canadians equal employment opportunities. CP launched a number of initiatives acknowledging and commemorating Chinese Canadian culture and their contributions towards Canadian history, highlighting those made during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

- CP contributed to the production of a documentary entitled “Chinese Grit”, released a two coin commemorative set to recognize the 120th anniv3resary of the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.
- It took various measures to reach out to the 107 First Nations reserves that neighbour the CP railway in an effort to develop solid, collaborative relationships with those First Nations. Since 1999, CP negotiated property tax jurisdiction agreements with B.C. First Nations, using an interest-based approach to resolving jurisdictional uncertainty. The property tax agreements recognize the First nations’ property taxation jurisdiction over portions of the CP railway running through their reserves.

- Generated awareness and acknowledgement of the contributions which Chinese Canadians made towards the building and development of Canada.
- Effectively negotiated agreements and settlements with First Nations communities over land and property taxation claims.
- In November 2007, the official signing of an agreement that proposes a new Canadian solution to CP's need for disposing of scrap railway cross ties took place between CP and leaders of the Aboriginal Cogeneration Corporation.
- Working with First Nations and the Government of Canada to address historic claims related to railways.

CMARD

- The Canadian Commission for UNESCO, along with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and a number of provincial human rights commissions across the country, joined forces in 2005 to establish the Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism (CMARD).
- The objective of CMARD is the elimination of racism and racial discrimination.

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Local communities function at the most practical level and are most involved in the lives their residents. They are an ideal place to develop policies, programs and strategies, and take meaningful action toward eliminating racism and discrimination.

The Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination promotes human rights through coordination and shared responsibility among local governments, civil society organizations and other democratic institutions.

By taking action to combat racism and multiple forms of discrimination, municipalities are able to build respectful, inclusive and safe societies where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural, recreational and political life of the community.

The Canadian Bar Association

- The CBA implemented several changes within its political and administrative systems and structures to both advance racial equality within the legal profession (legal education and practice as well as within the judiciary), and within Canadian law and society. These changes were reflected in by-law amendments, committee structures, and allocation of resources.

- Consistent with changes to legislation, the increasing recognition of the rights to self-determination of Aboriginal peoples, and the increasing racialization of Canadian society, the CBA initiated several changes such as the establishment of CBA/s committee and section structure to address equality issues impacting on Aboriginal people and subordinate racialized groups—the Aboriginal Law section, the Citizenship and Immigration section, the Standing Committee on Equality, and the Racial Equality Implementation Committee

- The CBA adopted numerous resolutions, presented briefs to governments, and convened many educational sessions on equality issues.
- The CBA faced numerous challenges in addressing issues of racial equality:
- Members of the legal profession have a strong belief in the objectivity of the “rule o f law” and, as such, do not generally adhere to notions that the law is inherently flawed, betraying biases that have negative impact on socially subordinate groups. The CBA addressed this issue within its governing structure and membership as well as in taking on its advocacy and public education work.
- Best practices: introducing a new institutional culture; adopting governance strategy of diversity; adopting a new committee structure.

Common Elements in the Best Practices

- Currently there is no generic resource books that can be used throughout diverse communities as a framework for developing long-term anti-racism strategies or best practices.

- One size does not fit all.

  Regardless of the differences, the various best practices share the following characteristics:

  - Knowing the community

  Each of the above organizations understood the specificity of their community. Each organization identified the needs, deficiencies and problems of he community, and assessed the strengths, resources and abilities.

- Education/information sharing

  A key piece to the development of long term anti-racism strategy, which is found in the various best practices, is the ability to develop education initiatives, and to share information about the issues. By sharing information, all the stakeholders will have a better understanding of the issues and can begin to develop a common language to express their concerns. Workshops may include diversity, stereotypes, racism, homophobia, sexism,
- The visioning and Action Plan

  The above examples developed and promoted not only new linkages and relationships among individuals, agencies, associations and institutions, but also a vision of the type of society that each organization aspired to achieve. Each organization identified its goals, objectives, implementation components and activities, and provided realistic timelines.

- In conclusion, it is essential to note that one size does not fit all. From the community's perspective, employment equity means respect and survival. It is also finding an opportunity to contribute to society.
- The problem is exclusion. The solution is promoting equal access to and inclusion in the dominant culture.