Employment Equity Partnership

PARTNERS' ROUNDTABLE

MOVING WITH THE DATA

MARCH 29-31, 2021

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Introduction

The Employment Equity Partners' Roundtable, co-hosted by The Inclusion Project (TIP) and Excellence Canada, with support from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, brought together over 250 key stakeholders and leaders across academia, business, civil society and government in a strategic dialogue on Racial Equity Diversity & Inclusion (REDI) imperatives for employment equity. Roundtable discussions focused on gaps exacerbated by the pandemic and the increased urgency for institutional change in policy, process and practice, with a key focus on data-driven solutions to longstanding inequalities across public and private sectors.

Data matters. Data, in all its qualitative and quantitative forms, is how we make meaning. It is the unit by which we can understand experiences, capture nuances, and identify patterns and trends hidden in plain sight. It is an effective way of constructing and deconstructing meaning, to guide action. Data can help shine a spotlight on the truth. It can inform policy, process and practice within organizations, and chart the pathway for true inclusion. Among employers, commitment to systemic or structural change is not enough; there is a need for tangible metrics for tracking organizational progress, in the short and long-term.
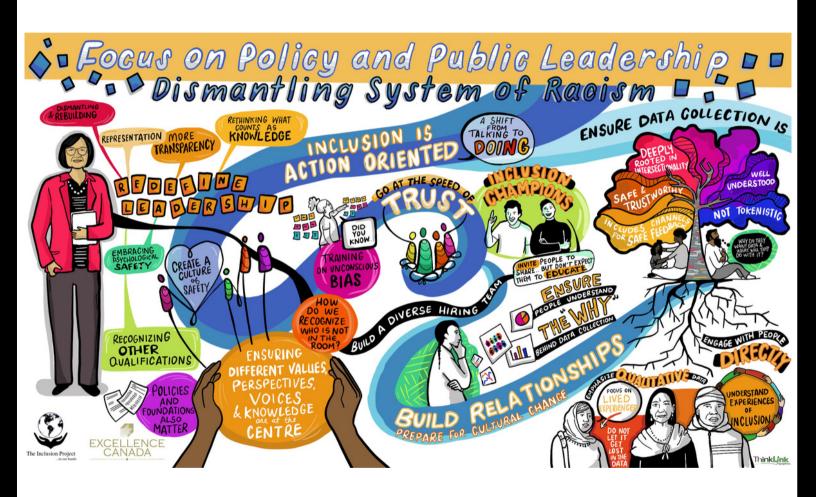
WHAT IS NOT MEASURED DOES NOT COUNT.

The Partners' Roundtable focused on the theme, "**Moving with the Data**". Through keynote presentations, panel discussions and roundtable conversations, the three-day virtual discussions explored the importance of capturing nuanced, disaggregated information, and the implications of data, especially for equity-deserving groups in the workplace. Discussions focused on best practices for employment equity, eliminating racial discrimination and biases as well as pathways for accountability for inclusion in the workplace. More broadly, the Roundtable focused on data transparency, governance, and building an equitable data culture.

This kinship communiqué outlines pathways for action on best practices and culture for advancing employment equity through accountability.

Ruth Mojeed Ramirez
CEO, The Inclusion Project

POLICY & PUBLIC LEADERSHIP: DISMANTLING SYSTEMS OF RACISM

"FIRST, LOOK FOR THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH STARTS WITH DATA."
SENATOR RATNA OMIDVAR

"We know that this COVID crisis has touched us all. But it has touched us very differently. We like to say we are all in the same boat together, but the data tells us differently, we may all be in the same ocean together. But clearly, some of us are in luxury yachts and some of us are in lifejackets, who are struggling to keep their heads afloat."

Senator Ratna Omidvar

The coronavirus pandemic has shown the need to take account of the disproportionate inequalities experienced by equity-deserving groups, including Indigenous and Black people. Systemic barriers faced by racialized and marginalized populations have been further exacerbated by the pandemic and intensified public attention to their unequal vulnerabilities.

Public leaders and policymakers discussed the need to address the underlying issues and create a framework to prevent the unequal distribution of the pandemic's socio-economic burden on equity-deserving groups.

Conversations on systemic racism in Canada, recently revitalized by incidents in the United States, have created the urgency for embarking on inclusion as a societal project for change and progress. While the pandemic has presented some tough challenges, it has also created opportunity for impacting change through robust data collection for government and business planning, through legislation, policies, and regulations. The pandemic has both exposed and intensified existing social inequities - the more information we have about these inequalities, the better we can seek to address them.

"If we can't see the inequities in our workforces, not just the lack of representation in certain positions, but the scope of inequality from the disproportionate distribution of well-paid skilled work to pay equity and inequity issues, then we won't be able to adequately address these problems."

Kasari Govender,
BC Human Rights Commissioner

"Findings from the report, **Unfunded,** indicate that despite accounting for 3.5% of Canada's population, Black communities receive a marginal amount of support from Canadian foundations, specifically, Black-led groups received only 0.03% of funds in 2017 and 2018 fiscal years and Black-serving organizations received only 0.15% of funds in that same timeframe."

Andrea Dicks,
Community Foundations of Canada

•   Close to 23% of Canadians are racial minorities, more than half of the Canadian population are women; 22% are immigrants, 5% are indigenous 3% are Black, according to the 2017 Canadian survey conducted by Stats Canada*.

•   A Statistics Canada crowd-sourced survey of non-profit boards found that among participating board members, 14% identified as being immigrants to Canada; 11% identified as belonging to a visible minority group; 8% identified as LGBTQ2+ individuals; 6% identified as First Nations, Metis or Inuit**.

Data, both qualitative and quantitative, can help to identify pressing areas for policy and other changes that impact equity-deserving groups. It is imperative for organizations to understand the need for disaggregating data. The concept of disaggregating data suggests that the true value of data is beyond numbers and the implication of such numbers at face value. Disaggregated data helps policymakers and business leaders make clearer decisions and better judgements about what resources need to be allocated to particular groups, and often, why particular groups are lagging behind others, in the workplace and other spaces.

"The challenges we face are systemic and will require systemic societal responses. The solutions will not be simple or immediate, they will involve sacrifice and compromise from many from people like me, and a shared commitment to constructive transitions."

The Honourable Janet Austin,
Lt. Governor of British Columbia

Intersectionality plays a huge role in data analysis for systems change. Intersectionality refers to the inter-related or interconnected aspects of a person's characteristics or categorizations within a societal and systemic context. Intersectional data are the units of measurement that account for different and overlapping dimensions of a person. Carefully curated and disaggregated data can provide clear insight on robust organizational characteristics, workplace dynamics and perception among diverse stakeholders, beyond what would often be deduced from stereotypical assumptions.

It is time to embed diversity data in all aspects of our life, from government legislation to the boardrooms of corporations, across public and private institutions and the vibrant charitable sector. Inclusion is no longer a choice; it is a necessity rooted in human rights.

- Traditional equity-deserving groups such as women, youth and racialized workers have been particularly impacted by the pandemic and have recorded higher levels of unemployment[**].

- South Asian and Chinese women have experienced higher unemployment rates during the pandemic than other groups[**].

- One study found that visible minorities (such as Black Canadians and Filipinos) formed a larger proportion of front-line workers, suggesting that some groups of Canadians may have been at greater risk of exposure to the virus than others[***].

"There is a consensus among Canada's leaders across all sectors on the need to "build back better", but we will not build back better by building back the same."

Yasir Naqvi,
Institute for Canadian Citizenship

*Statistics Canada. 2017. *Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census.*
** Diversity of charity and non-profit boards of directors. Overview of the Canadian non-profit sector. Feb, 2021.
***Statistics Canada. 2020. *Economic impact of COVID-19 among visible minority groups.*
https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00042-eng.htm
**Statistics Canada. Report on experiences of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic.*
https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200917/dq200917a-eng.htm

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYMENT EQUITY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUITY & INCLUSION

"DIVERSITY IS ABOUT NUMBERS AND REPRESENTATION, INCLUSION IS A CULTURE AND A CHOICE."

LESLIE WOO

CIVICACTION

There appears to be a gradual shift in Canadian organizations from a compliance-driven focus to a business-driven focus on workplace diversity. However, the data is clear on employment equity for Indigenous, Black and other racialized groups. Leadership in most Canadian organizations does not reflect the diversity of the Canadian population. There is an untapped potential for organizations to tap into the strategic advantage in the competition for talent from an increasingly diverse labour market.

- ·According to the Employment Equity Report for 2019, the representation for designated groups within the federally regulated private sector were as follows: women 39.4%, members of visible minorities 22.8%, persons with disabilities 3.3%, and Indigenous peoples 2.3%[*].

- ·A higher proportion of Indigenous peoples (14.2%) earned a salary below $40,000, compared to 13.6% of women, 10.6% of non-Indigenous peoples, 8.9% of men, or any other groups of employees[*].

- Racialized immigrant women earned 79 cents for every dollar that non-racialized immigrant women earned[*].

We cannot build a resilient economy without prioritizing inclusion. An inclusive economy is one where everyone has appropriate access and a fair opportunity to participate. The current narrative on COVID economic recovery is focused on going back to normal. "Normal", as we have known it, excludes certain groups, with racialized people being more exposed and less protected both from the virus and the resultant inequalities. It is time for a new "normal" that includes the voices, perspectives and lived experiences of diverse groups of people.

Disaggregating data by different groups and focus areas can reveal inequalities that are typically masked through aggregated data collection, which tends to perpetuate inequities against equity-deserving groups. To include diverse perspectives, we need disaggregated data – data that has been collected from multiple sources and on multiple measures, variables, or individuals, to build shared understanding, and respect for alternative and comprehensive narratives that will lead to different outcomes for an inclusive future.

"The lack of indigenous-led research is deepened by the digital divide, excluding Indigenous people from the connectivity and analytics tools necessary to collect and analyze data."
Tabatha Bull,
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

Government and business leaders must work collectively to address inequities perpetuated through unemployment, underemployment and other forms of employment inequities, as a key imperative for attracting and retaining diverse talent. If Canada's economy is to emerge as competitive economy, post-pandemic, not just within Canada but globally - we need to support the existing talent pool and be innovative in building back in areas where people have fallen behind, due to historical inequalities that leave them behind on the socio-economic spectrum.

Among racialized people and others who have been historically excluded at the leadership or decision-making tables, it is most pertinent to have difficult and often uncomfortable conversations about power, privilege and different forms of inequalities. To develop a sustainable systems change process, leaders must embrace the uncomfortable and be ready have difficult conversations, both at the individual and organizational levels.

"We need to move the conversation on data from safe spaces to brave spaces."
Meredith Preston McGhie,
Global Centre for Pluralism

Employers and organizational stakeholders must acknowledge that the process towards change will be difficult, but with the right strategies and collaborators, the long-term benefits of investing in systems change far outweigh the short-term cost. The shift from a performative stance on inclusion to results-oriented commitment must begin with leaders and permeate organizational culture.

"80% of the labor market is unregulated; many immigrants only need a hiring manager to believe in their abilities, in order to access the right opportunities."
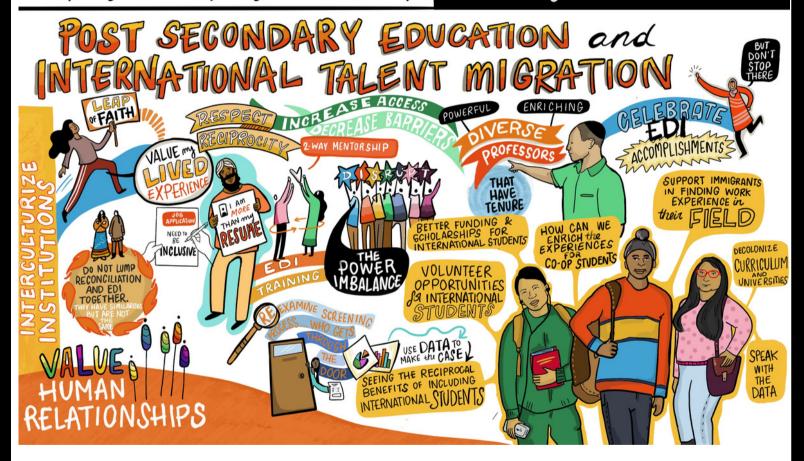Patrick MacKenzie,
Immigrant Employment Council of BC

The business imperative for inclusion depends on defining measures and consequences for not achieving the targets identified through metrics development. It is important to integrate metrics in incentives in order to boost performance among organizational stakeholders, with clear accountability measures for key stakeholders. It is important for employers to shift from a credentials-based (academic qualification) to competencies-based (education plus experience) focus on talent.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL TALENT MIGRATION

"THE BIGGEST CONTRIBUTION WE CAN MAKE AS PEOPLE IN THE EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM IS TO NOT JUST MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AS TALENTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS BUT TO ACTUALLY DEMONSTRATE HOW TO PRACTISE INCLUSION"

SOBHANA JAYA-MADHAVAN

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Canadian society is undergoing a fundamental demographic transformation. Despite decades of talking about equity, diversity, and inclusion in society, significant disparities persist in academia, most notably in the composition of faculty and leadership, which remain overwhelmingly White, and primarily male.

With international students hail mostly from Asia and Africa, there is an increasing talent pool for Canada - as future permanent residents and citizens - academics and educators need to better understand the needs of this growing population, and equip themselves to better support diverse student population for their eventual introduction to Canada's growing labour market.

- According to Statistics Canada, the number of international student graduates more than tripled from 101, 304 in 2008/2009 to 318,153 in 2018/2019*.

- A large percentage of international students have plans to apply for permanent residency (50.6%) and to work in Canada after graduation (61.0%). These percentages are slightly lower than those reported by prospective international students, perhaps due to experiences once in Canada**.

"We need to understand the manifold challenges that international students face: issues related to the uncertainty of their migration status, being 10s of 1000s of kilometers away from their families, and with the pandemic, these challenges have exponentially increased."
Prof Anna Triandaflyllidou,
Ryerson University

International students in Canadian institutions have doubled in number over the last 10 to 15 years, and Canada is at the forefront internationally as a magnet for global talent. In many ways, the international student body has been seen a little bit like a business case. However, the pandemic has revealed that we have more responsibilities, beyond academic obligations, towards international students. This responsibility goes beyond perfunctory, and often impractical support ; it is about also supporting international students as new members of our communities.

Employers, industry associations and academic institutions must act now to build intentional systems to eliminate systemic racism that creates multiple barriers for students and employers alike. Embracing practical, empowering, data-driven models of inclusion such as broad-reaching professional mentorship communities that help international students successfully navigate Canadian workplaces and business culture is another area action is needed now.

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"While 60% of senior leaders across universities identify as belonging to one of the designated groups, racialized people represent only 8% of senior leadership in universities."

Wendy Therrien,
Universities Canada

Post-secondary institutions in Canada exist in two different worlds, based on geography. In the southern half, which consists mostly of urban areas, most universities reflect a growing diversity. In the northern half which tend to be rural, however, this is not always the case and there is a growing desire to engage a more diverse student population where international students can find a sense of belonging. Otherwise, post-secondary institutions, larger or small, stand the risk of losing touch with their student population and further widening the equity divides in academia. International need to have a sense of belonging to make meaningful contributions to their adopted communities and the Canadian workforce.

*Statistics Canada. *International students accounted for all of the growth in postsecondary enrolments in 2018/2019 https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201125/dq201125e-eng.htm*
**CIC News. Canada now ranks third globally in foreign student attraction.
https://www.cicnews.com/2020/02/642000-international-students-canada-now-ranks-3rd-globally-in-foreign-student-attraction-0213763.html#gs.0wlyye

Calls to Action

- Data is not the end goal; Equity is.

  - Re-think "Inclusion" within institutions.

- Embed social justice and equity in employment.

  - Address power imbalances within institutions.

- Address reconciliation and racial equity through accountability.

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Data is not the end goal; Equity is

"Data alone never started a revolution, and neither does it ever end one; it is a means to an end. Data must be followed by thoughtful and intentional actions, with a focus on transparency and accountability."

Senator Ratna Omidvar

Leaders, institutions and community members need to understand the data behind racism and inequality and that embracing data as a powerful tool for building inclusive cultures. Data gathering can only happen by moving at the speed of trust and making sure that the data being gathered as well as the methods being used are rooted in intersectionality and includes channels for feedback for every participant in the process.

The rationale and underlying framework for data collection must always be to address systemic inequalities, rather than just for the sake of monitoring citizens. It must always be collected in the context of relationship to community - relationship building must always come first. Often, data and statistics are not representative of the needs of respective equity-deserving groups within communities.

"Disaggregated data is important because when policy, practice and law are predicated on statistics, silences and omissions in that data can cost human wellness and human rights. On the other hand, data that reveals the impacts of sexism, racism, ableism and other forms of discrimination can act as the tipping point for decision makers and policymakers to take action."

Kasari Govender,
BC Human Rights Commissioner

Exclusion has a cost, both in economic and human terms. We need to make the costs of exclusion clearer and central to the argument for inclusion. Strategies such as integrating inclusion metrics into performance measurement and creating a culture where senior leaders within an organization are appraised on the degree to which they are modelling and celebrating a culture of inclusivity within their teams, should be regarded as the new norm for organizations looking to be at the forefront of change.

"Knowledge confers power. When it comes to data collection, we should be asking the question, 'who is holding the power to translate data into action?'"

Nadia Theodore,
Maple Leaf Foods

- ·The Vancouver Police Department revealed a nearly 900% increase in reported anti-Asian hate crimes in the first nine months of 2020 compared to that same period of the year before[*].
- ·The impacts on gender equality have also been stark, anti-violence services in Vancouver reported a 300% increase in just the first few weeks into the pandemic shutdown[**].
- ·At least one and a half million Canadian women lost their jobs in the first two months of the pandemic, in what analysts have called a 'she-cession'[**].

*CTV News. 2020. *StatCan survey shows new evidence of increase in anti-Asian sentiment, attacks.*
**Statistics Canada. *Economic impact of COVID-!9 on visible minorities.*

Re-think "Inclusion" within institutions

"Engaging constructively on issues of race, injustice, and inequality can be hard, messy and confusing. We all need guidance and support."
The Honourable Janet Austin,
Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia

At its root, inclusion needs to be about undoing patriarchal relationships and social structures, pursuing truth, reconciliation, and decolonization, while intentionally elevating new voices in leadership across all sectors. There can be no meaningful conversation about institutional change without addressing power dynamics, questioning and shifting the traditional power structures that exist within organizations. The process of creating and attaining equity requires a shift from an incremental transactional approach to interconnected transformational approaches for lasting change, through partnership and collaboration.

The burden for change should not be left to marginalized groups within organization, particularly when they are already over-asked and over-tasked; equity begins with shared responsibility for change. There should to be a place for dialogue, authentic conversations and a lot of room for listening, learning and unlearning within organizations.

"In order to create structural change, we need to assess our policies and practices and lived experiences, including those of the most marginalized among us."
Kasari Govender,
BC Human Rights Commissioner

This needs to be followed up with an action plan focused on transformational change that cuts across all levels and departments of an organization. Employment equity is not simply an HR function, or the singular responsibility of an "EDI Task Force". Effective change must be driven across all levels within institutions. Organizational leaders need to be at the forefront of institutional change, and modelling inclusive cultures.

"We can no longer be hostage to processes that have been going on forever, often unquestioned. People often say, 'that's the way we do it here and we ran the process', and I think there's genuine surprise that the same outcome occurs from unchanging systems. The issues are fundamentally systemic"
Dr. Mike DeGagne,
Indspire

Embed social justice and equity in employment practices

"When it comes to getting jobs, 70 to 85% of open positions are filled through networking and relationships. A recent survey revealed that only 56% of black Canadians had company contacts versus 65% of white Canadians."

Leslie Woo,
CivicAction

Indigenous, Black and other racialized people in leadership positions within organizations and communities carry an emotional burden of having to explain their lived experiences of oppression and inequities, often in the face of skepticism, if not open hostility. There can also be a culture that dismisses these experiences because, after all, they have made it to the leadership table.

Many racialized and Indigenous peoples have had to learn not to react (aggressively) when faced with inequities or being ignored - others have had the privilege of not having to use that muscle. The possibility of repercussions or retaliatory actions, in the form of micro-aggressions and discrimination can be damning for racialized people.

"Having regulations and policies on inclusion, or just having some things on paper within an organization is simply not enough to build truly inclusive and equitable workplaces. These have to be underpinned by social and cultural attitudes, actions and beliefs that make it make it real and applicable."

Meredith Preston McGhie,
Global Centre for Pluralism

In centering conversations about employment equity and efforts towards inclusion, we need to pay attention to intersectionality, to avoid lateral discrimination or perpetuating other forms of inequities. Recognition that gains made by women, which is often limited to women of one demographic, leads one to conclude that a rising tide does not lift all boats. While data disaggregation can be complex and sometimes complicated, it is imperative to have the process be driven by the unique and differential needs of groups and sub-groups within equity-deserving communities.

There also needs to be on-going conversations about shifting power structures and leading change innovatively and differently from age-old thinking. To support racialized people and share the burden for change, allies can use mentorship as a way of centering equity and racial inclusion in the workplace. The prevalent notion is that someone with power (the mentor) has something to teach someone with less power or agency (the mentee/protégé). True mentorship is inclusive, where the mentor has a lot to teach, a lot to learn, and a lot to unlearn. As with the mentee. Until we create spaces for these bold notions of power and agency within organizations, we may be reinforcing age-old patterns.

Address power imbalances within institutions

"Most people think that, inequitable behavior or institutional racism is like other people's problems. 'I know other people engage in microaggression but not me, not my organization, not us'. But in fact, if we put the spotlight on ourselves for a second, and reflect deeply, our conclusions might be different."

Nezihe Aquino,
Vancity

As with any change, systemic change does not come easy. Systems, as we know them, can be very resistant to change; without adequate support, even the most motivated advocates or equity champions will lose momentum. A lot of resistance can be attributed to fear of loss of power by traditional power holders, or the privileged. Organizations and individuals embarking on the process for systemic or structural change therefore need to plan for pushback and how they will be countered.

"The conversation about data is not as important as who is collecting the data, and who is leading the change."

Nadia Theodore,
Maple Leaf Foods

To make meaningful progress towards employment equity, organizational stakeholders need to work together with clear goals and set criteria that include the lived perspectives and experiences of those who are often not included.

There is a critical need for Indigenous, Black and racialized people to step into decision making roles. Racialized people are often underrepresented or unrepresented because organizations often have wrong, inaccurate or uninformed criteria for success. Often, the criteria that candidates are being assessed on, including job descriptions, are exclusionary or rooted in colonial culture. Hiring managers and other power holders in the talent management cycle need to understand their biases - implicit, conscious or unconscious - and its impact on diverse people in the talent pool, and ultimately the organization.

"Collecting disaggregated data is about unpacking the impacts of racism, rather than measuring race itself."

Kasari Govender,
BC Human Rights Commissioner

Lack of organizational accountability is why as a society, we tend to be very comfortable having conversations about systemic racism and incidents in other countries, without taking a deeper look into domestic issues, and the structures and systems, that exacerbate existing issues for equity-deserving groups in Canada. To have the necessary change begin from home, we need to look inwards and seek help from the people who are the most impacted by everyday actions, policies and practices. Therein lies the power to create real change.

Achieve reconciliation and racial equity through accountability

"My story is the only thing of value that I have, and I give it away for free over and over again, and I never get anything back."
Participant

Recent killings of Black people as well as the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in Canada, United States, and other parts of the world, have brought a lot more attention to the need for racial equity and inclusion. The reckoning and re-awakened consciousness towards racial inclusion have also led to solidarity among equity-deserving groups, including Black and Indigenous peoples as well as Asian and other groups at the forefront of efforts towards true inclusion. While the details may differ, the issues remain closely related for people fighting anti-Indigenous, anti-Black or anti-Asian behaviours and cultures in the workplace.

Organizations have various tools and methods for measuring performance and key indicators for success in the workplace. Many of these measures and indicators do not include details around the causes and long-time impacts of racism on racialized people. There needs to be a review and audit of the review process, to include people who continue to be left behind within organizations, particularly at the decision-making tables. Accountability should begin with seeking to know and understand history – good and bad – and efforts to mitigate possibilities of perpetuating such inequities.

There is often a tension between an organization's goals for reconciliation, as stipulated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the goals for racial inclusion, as founded in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedom, and multiculturalism goals. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission really helped Canadians focus their attention on the need for reconciliation; however, it did not give people a sense of the scope and the breadth of actions that true reconciliation will require.

"The 94 recommendations from TRC can be distilled down to four essential action items: ceremonies, how we work with Indigenous people, structures and policies.
Dr. Mike DeGagne, Indspire

These four elements - ceremonies, Indigenous relations, structures and policies - are relevant in different settings such as communities, academia or in the workplace; and they can also be used to advance Racial Equity Diversity & Inclusion (REDI). It is important for newcomers to develop a good understanding of Canada's history – good and bad. There is also a need to ground the work on reconciliation and racial equity and inclusion, in human relationships, and intentionally create opportunities to foster dialogue among new and existing Canadians, international students, and newcomers (temporary and permanent) and the local indigenous peoples on whose lands the newcomers have settled.

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Stay Connected!

Join us next year for the Employment Equity Partners' Roundtable. Join our kinship network of organizations, communities and institutions engaged in knowledge development and practice to further Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI).

- Become a TIP member
- Host a REDI workshop or training
- Join our Employment Equity Network
- Sign up for a consultation on our REDI+ audit
- Attend our monthly/quarterly workshops and events

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