

diversity is working

SPARC BC's *Diversity is Working* project provides seventeen (17) case studies of Lower Mainland organizations that have taken steps to make their workplaces more welcoming and inclusive for employees with diverse backgrounds. The purpose of the case studies is to celebrate successes in workplace diversity by highlighting best practices.

The set of case studies includes examples from organizations with small Human Resources departments to larger organizations with large Human Resources departments and designated diversity managers. The case studies are also drawn from a range of different sectors including businesses, non-profit organizations and government institutions. Some of the organizations being profiled have been implementing diversity and employment equity initiatives for decades while others have started to look at diversity in recent years.

Because of the diverse range of organizations being profiled, there are relevant best practices for any organization that is working to make their workplace more welcoming and inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds. Refer to the adjacent diagram for a list of participating organizations.

The following pieces of information are provided in each organization's case study:

- diversity business case or mandate for diversity;
- diversity initiatives and results; and,
- advice for other organizations considering undertaking similar work.



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About ICBC

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) is a provincial crown corporation established in 1973 to provide universal auto insurance to B.C. motorists. ICBC is also responsible for driver licensing, vehicle licensing, and registration. ICBC is the second largest property and casualty insurance company in Canada, and serves over 3 million drivers and insureds in British Columbia. ICBC has over 5,000 employees in about 100 locations across the province. ICBC deals with 900 independent brokers and 700 firms in the collision repair industry across the province.

ICBC's Diversity Business Case

BC is known for its rich diversity. This openness to all cultures and newcomers has made our province an innovative and progressive place to live. Because of the diversity that exists in BC, ICBC has recognized that it must build stronger relationships with all communities in order to be regarded as BC's preferred auto insurer. An ICBC workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves will allow ICBC to build the necessary long-term relationships with communities across the province.

As part of ICBC's 2014 Strategy, ICBC is building a more customer-centric business model. ICBC's goal is to improve customers' experiences through listening, better meeting their needs, and earning their trust. ICBC's customer strategy is premised on the notion that greater trust leads to loyalty and long-term business relationships. By developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of diversity, ICBC gains valuable insights that helps the organization design an enhanced customer and employee experience. This also helps ICBC understand how well its business practices and services support the goal of creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all.

A large portion of ICBC's mature workforce will be eligible to retire over the next few years. While not all roles are being backfilled, ICBC is in competition with other employers for skilled talent in this tightening labour market. The very best people in this diverse talent pool will have a choice, and ICBC wants them to choose to work at ICBC.

ICBC had a robust diversity program in place in the mid 1990's; however, the Diversity Office was eliminated during a time of cost-constraints. Diversity and inclusion have recently re-emerged as a business fundamental within ICBC in response to the needs of its customers and employees. The VP of Human Resources developed a business case for a diversity and inclusion strategy, linking it to two key business objectives: (1) Improving the customer experience; and (2) Improving the employee experience.

In summary, the key reasons why "Diversity Matters" to ICBC are:

- Building a diverse workforce can help ICBC understand and meet the needs of its diverse clientele, enabling ICBC to be more "customer-centric,"
- Building a welcoming and inclusive workplace will help ICBC attract and retain the best talent;
- Fostering a welcoming and inclusive culture improves employee engagement and productivity; and,
- Making a commitment to diversity and inclusion meets ICBC's social responsibility and helps ICBC act on its values of "care" towards each other, its customers and BC's diverse communities.

In February 2011, ICBC's Board of Directors approved a proposal for a diversity and inclusion strategy, and granted the HR department the ability to create a new position within HR, the Manager of Diversity and Inclusion, which leads the development and implementation of this strategy.

ICBC's Recent Diversity Initiatives

Diversity and inclusion is not a legislative requirement for ICBC. Rather it is a business necessity. ICBC's collective focus is on creating a more inclusive environment and seizing the opportunity that diversity presents.

ICBC's commitment to diversity and inclusion is built around five (5) main principles:

- Look for opportunities to improve customer service and the employee experience;
- Embed diversity and inclusion in the way that ICBC does business, in existing measurement mechanisms, business practices and policies;
- Better reflect the diversity of the people and communities where ICBC operates;
- Demonstrate modelling of diversity and inclusion by company leaders; and,
- Ensure that ICBC employees have the understanding, knowledge and skills to foster a respectful workplace, and better meet the needs of diverse people and communities.

These goals are being achieved through both short and long-term strategies, which are based on an "inside-out" approach.

Awareness campaign

Last summer, ICBC launched an awareness campaign targeted at leaders and a subsequent awareness campaign targeted at employees. The purpose was to increase awareness of the value of a diverse workforce and get buy-in from leaders and staff across the organization. This involved making presentations to leadership teams, sending out supporting tools to managers, and developing communications for employees about the business case for diversity and inclusion. As a result of these efforts, 79% of employees said that they were "really supportive of the fact that the organization is paying more attention to diversity and inclusion, and that they were glad that ICBC was moving in this direction."

Workforce demographic survey

The second step that ICBC took was to conduct a confidential and voluntary workforce survey to develop an understanding of the current demographics of the company. ICBC hired Global Learning Inc. to develop a secure survey tool. ICBC's 5,000+ employees were invited to participate in this online, confidential workplace demographic survey. More than 3,000 people took part, giving ICBC an accurate snapshot about what makes its workforce diverse.

This survey not only gathered information on representation across various employment equity groups (i.e. women, visible minorities, aboriginal persons and people with disabilities), but also it collected additional diversity-related information on: age, languages spoken, dependent care responsibilities (e.g., children or elders), marital status, sexual orientation, and levels of educational attainment. After ICBC received the summary report from Global Learning Inc. which compared ICBC's statistics to 2006 census data, the findings were shared with employees through an infographic poster. This poster was posted in all work locations, in an effort to spark discussion among employees about diversity, potential gaps and opportunities. Results have also been shared with leaders on survey findings, to make them more aware of ICBC's demographics.

The findings also helped ICBC to prioritize and target key aspects of the *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. The top priority areas identified were: General awareness through communications and education; identification of barriers in ICBC's recruitment and selection practices; and outreach to under-represented communities.

Communications and education

The renewed focus on diversity and inclusion is a cultural change for ICBC. In order to get the commitment of leaders and employees, ICBC recognized that it needs to continue to build understanding about what it means to have a diverse and inclusive workforce and why it is important.

Through increasing awareness, encouraging discussion and partnering with leading organizations, ICBC is working to provide employees with resources to ensure that everyone: works in an environment where they are welcome and included; has the necessary tools to perform at their best and serve the needs of our diverse customers.

ICBC uses multi-faceted internal communication channels to engage employees. A communications strategy was developed to encourage dialogue about diversity and inclusion initiatives using the following communication tools:

- ICBC's manager of diversity and inclusion speaks to the importance of the strategy during new employee orientation;
- There is a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion site hosted on the company's intranet;
- There are regular announcements and feature articles highlighting initiatives, events and programs related to diversity and inclusion. The feature articles also include a commenting section where employees can post feedback, questions and provide additional context to issues;
- There is an Executive blog, which engages employees in online dialogue. For example, in November 2011, the Vice-President of HR posted a blog about the importance of recognizing diversity and inclusion at ICBC; and,
- Posters profiling employees who embrace diversity and inclusion and informational posters highlighting workforce demographic survey results are posted in ICBC workplaces throughout BC.

Recruitment and selection review

In addition, the Manager of Diversity and Inclusion is currently working with the Manager of Recruitment to review the recruitment and selection process in an effort to identify any systemic barriers which may unintentionally limit the hiring of diverse candidates. Some questions that they are currently looking into are:

- Are we casting the net wide enough? Are applicants to ICBC representative of the BC?

- Are we attracting diversity? Is our website reflective of our commitment to diversity?
- Are our requirements valid, bias free and solid predictors of success?
- Are our assessment practices bias-free and focused on identifying the best talent?
- From screening, to shortlisting, to testing, and interviewing, are our practices barrier-free?

As part of the communications/education process, ICBC has also been taking steps to make it clear that the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is not about lowering ICBC's standards for under-represented groups. Rather it is about making the hiring process fair for everyone, advertising the job postings as broadly as possible in order to attract new talent, and avoiding inadvertent barriers/obstacles to employment.

Outreach and Cultural Diversity Initiatives

ICBC is also starting to do outreach to groups that are underrepresented (e.g., immigrants, Aboriginal persons, etc.) ICBC has committed to placing job postings on ethno-cultural "diversity" websites using the Equitek recruitment service. ICBC also participates in diversity-based job fairs such as Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) job fair which links the organization to various groups. Recently, ICBC has begun advertising jobs with a particular language preference in work locations where ICBC needs to enhance its cultural understanding of the customer population.

Diversity training is offered to leaders through DIVERSEcity Community Resource Society's programs and through UBC's Centre for Intercultural Communication. ICBC also provides employees with information about multicultural events and celebrations, which can encourage dialogue in the workplace and help staff to better understand the people they work with and serve. For instance, staff are provided with links to a multicultural calendar, and information on cultural events such as the Lunar New Year, and the Persian New Year and Spring.

External Cultural Diversity Initiatives

In conjunction with its internal diversity and inclusion strategies, ICBC also has a corporate Multicultural Customer Strategy which focusses on ways to best serve its increasingly diverse clientele. Some examples of recent activities include:

- Developing radio, online and print advertisements in Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi;
- Providing pre and post arrival communications to help newcomers to BC learn how to obtain and/or transfer their driver's license and car insurance from their country of origin;
- Preparing to introduce a telephone translation service for all twenty (20) driver licensing offices by Fall 2012. The translation service is already in place through dial-a-claim (our Claims call centre) and at six (6) pilot sites;
- Providing Chinese and Punjabi versions of the the ICBC.com website; and,
- Supporting a Multicultural Customer Strategy Steering Committee with representation from all business areas to review current practices and identify diversity-related opportunities for future development.

Gender Diversity Initiatives

ICBC is also committed to ensuring that its people practices are inclusive and free of gender bias. ICBC's 2011 workforce demographic survey found that women at ICBC make up 44% of management and executive positions. Despite the fact that ICBC is a leader in the insurance industry with regards to the representation of women in leadership, ICBC is still aiming for full and equal representation of women.

To support the development and advancement of women in leadership, ICBC has partnered with Catalyst, a leading research organization, which gives ICBC access to an extensive information centre, webinars and resources about best practices to strengthen diversity initiatives. For several years, ICBC has held several memberships for WGN, the Women's Executive Network, aimed at female leaders in senior positions. This will actively prepare female employees for senior leadership and Board positions. ICBC also actively sponsors two (2) female managers every year in the Minerva Foundation's leadership program for women entitled the Women Leading the Way Program. In addition, ICBC is in the process of developing a mentorship and sponsorship program to support high-potential diverse employees.

Other initiatives

In addition, ICBC has also recently become involved in some other initiatives in order to make ICBC a more diverse and inclusive work environment. In particular, ICBC:

- Offers staff information about generational differences, retirement and wellness (because 61% of ICBC's employees have dependent care responsibilities, ICBC also offers resources related to child, family and elder care);
- Has started to look into weaving more diversity training back into employee orientation, the leadership development program, and the customer experience learning program;
- Signed up for Kids in Company, a company that will help to secure day care spaces for employees and provide emergency backup child care; and,
- Partners with Pride at Work Canada, which works to improve the climate of inclusiveness for LGBT employees through research, training and events.

The Results

Because ICBC is in the early phase of its newest diversity initiatives, it is too early to measure results in terms of changes in representation/employment across different groups. Moreover, ICBC currently has an employee turnover rate of two percent. With such a low employee turnover rate, it is difficult to show a lot of change in the workforce over a short period of time. ICBC plans to follow up on the 2011 workforce demographic survey by conducting another voluntary workplace survey in 2014.

However, ICBC has already noticed that diversity and inclusion has become a regular topic of conversation on ICBC staff blogs. There is also a lot more discussion across the organization about how diversity relates to their work with more departments starting to look at their operations through a diversity lens.



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ICBC's Advice for Other Organizations

When asked if ICBC has any advice for other organizations that are considering implementing a diversity and inclusion strategy, the following advice was offered:

- It is important to have someone who is fairly influential to champion or lead the initiative and convince his/her peers.
- You can get really creative in this area and you do not necessarily have to replicate what other organizations have done. You have to look at what is important within your own organization and what you can accomplish rather than adopting someone else's strategy.
- If you can tailor your diversity initiatives to your business and have it make sense that is all you need. It doesn't have to be huge.

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