



DIVERSECITY COUNTS

A SNAPSHOT OF DIVERSITY IN
LEADERSHIP IN METRO VANCOUVER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY 2011

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: MARK MCHOLM

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Project Overview

This research study reports on the number of visible minorities¹ in senior leadership and executive positions in Metro Vancouver in the following sectors: elected offices, school districts, post-secondary institutions, government agencies, non-profit organizations, local government, police detachments and the corporate sector.

The research method is modeled after a study produced by Ryerson University's Diversity Institute titled *DiverseCity Counts: A Snapshot of Diversity in the Greater Toronto Area*.

For the purposes of this study, we focus primarily on those cities in Metro Vancouver with the highest percentage and number of visible minorities, namely: Richmond, Burnaby, Vancouver, Surrey and Coquitlam. Together these municipalities account for close to 1.5 million people or almost 70% of Metro Vancouver's population. The visible minority population accounts for over half (51%) of the total population within these five (5) municipalities. There are many local success stories of visible minorities who hold senior leadership positions within their field. As part of this project, our research team met with some of our region's local leaders and asked them to share keys to success and advice for aspiring leaders. The research report shares their success stories.

Within the Metro Vancouver region, there are many organizations that have made supporting diversity an organizational objective and a few have been recognized as Canada's Best Diversity Employers through an annual competition. Included in the report are case studies of local organizations and businesses that are undertaking steps to make their workplaces and governance structures more welcoming and inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds. This report also includes a summary of best practices that have been drawn from emerging trends within the field of diversity management.

¹ The Canadian Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2011). Examples include: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, mixed and other visible minority.

Visible Minorities in Senior Leadership Positions in Metro Vancouver

Sector	# of Individuals Analyzed	# of Visible Minority Leaders	% of Visible Minority Leaders	% Average of visible minorities in sector
Elected Officials				26%
School Board Trustees	33	10	30%	
Municipal Councillors	46	10	22%	
Members of Legislative Assembly	40	10	25%	
Members of Parliament	19	6	32%	
Public Sector Executives				7%
Municipal and Regional Executives	29	2	7%	
Senior Police Leaders	25	2	8%	
Corporate Sector				10%
Boards of Directors	372	30	8%	
Senior Executives	537	59	11%	
Voluntary Sector (Non-profits)				13%
Boards of Directors	275	28	10%	
Senior Executives	134	27	20%	
Education				12%
School Districts				
Superintendents	3	0	0%	
Principals and Vice Principals	485	53	11%	
Colleges				
Boards of Governors	41	8	20%	
Executives	20	2	10%	
Universities				
Board of Governors	73	12	16%	
Senior Executives	28	2	7%	
Government Agencies				11%
Province of BC Agencies & Boards	114	13	11%	
Total Leaders Analyzed	2274	274	12%	12%

A Missed Opportunity: The Under-representation of Visible Minorities in Leadership

Visible minorities are under-represented across senior leadership positions in Metro Vancouver. As seen in the table on the previous page, of the 2274 leaders studied in this project, 12% come from a visible minority background.

The sector with the highest level of representation of visible minorities is the elected officials sector where visible minorities comprise 26% of elected leaders. The sector with the next highest level of representation was the voluntary sector, where 13% of senior leaders came from a visible minority background.

Within the elected officials sector, the highest level of representation is among federal Members of Parliament (MPs) where 32% came from a visible minority background, relative to 30% of School Board Trustees, 25% of provincial Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), and 22% of municipal councillors.

Among the public service sector leaders examined, 7% of senior leaders came from a visible minority background. Across the local and regional governments included in this study, 7% of senior municipal and regional leaders came from a visible minority background. Across the police detachments examined in this study, 8% came from a visible minority background.

Of the largest corporations examined in this project, visible minorities comprised 10% of senior leadership positions. There was a slightly higher level of representation among senior management executives where 11% came from a visible minority background compared to 8% for board members.

Among the largest voluntary sector organizations (e.g., non profits, charities and foundations) studied in this project, visible minorities comprised 13% of all senior leadership positions. Levels of representation were higher among senior executives (20%), compared to boards of directors (10%).

The overall level of representation of visible minorities within the education sector was 12%. Across the colleges included in this study, 20% of the boards of governors and 10% of senior management executives came from a visible minority background. Within Metro Vancouver universities, 16% of the boards of governors and 7% of senior management executives came from a visible minority background. Within the School Districts examined in this project, 11% of principals and vice principals were members of a visible minority.

This project also examined public appointments to the largest provincial government boards and agencies. Of the appointed members examined in this study, 11% came from a visible minority background.

Benefits of Diverse Leadership and Ideas for Positive Change

Diversity in leadership helps to bring forward a variety of perspectives to discussions affecting the political, economic, and social lives of Canadians. Current research suggests that organizations with diversity in their leadership and their workforce have a competitive advantage over organizations which lack diversity. Diversity in leadership and employment:

- Helps organizations attract and retain the best talent;
- Provides stronger connections to clients and new markets;
- Encourages critical thinking and innovation; and
- May result in improved overall financial and organizational performance.

Through our review of best practices, this project has identified some actions that organizations can undertake to create more welcoming and inclusive workplaces and governance structures that attract and retain the best talent. Some key actions include:

- Establish an organizational commitment to diversity;
- Establish the organizational business case for diversity;
- Review recruitment, selection processes for conscious or unconscious bias;
- Provide diversity awareness training to staff and managers;
- Support leadership development and succession planning; and
- Track progress and change.



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