

# 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.



The City of Vancouver's Mission Statement is:

"To create a great city of communities that cares about its people, its environment, and the opportunities to live, work and prosper."



# City of Vancouver

## About the City of Vancouver

According to recently released 2011 census data, the City of Vancouver had a total population of 603,502 in 2011, which is a 4.4% increase from the population in 2006.<sup>1</sup> The most recent available data on diversity in the City of Vancouver is drawn from the 2006 census. According to this data:

- 295,285 (51.1%) of the City's residents were female;
- 291,740 (51.0%) of the City's residents were visible minorities;
- 260,760 (45.6%) of the City's residents were immigrants;<sup>2</sup>
- 114,710 (19.8%) the City's residents were people with disabilities;<sup>3</sup> and,
- 11,145 (1.9%) of the City's residents were Aboriginal.<sup>4</sup>

It is noteworthy that in 2006, Vancouver had 14% of BC's population but roughly a quarter of BC's total immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

## The City of Vancouver's Diversity Mandate

The Mission Statement of the City of Vancouver is to create a great city of communities that cares about its people, its environment, and the opportunities to live, work, and prosper. In addition, one of the stated objectives includes providing quality services equitably.<sup>6</sup> The City of Vancouver values diversity, and considers it to be a source of its strength, vitality, and prosperity. The City also believes that the City's diversity, be it gender identity, disability, race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, culture or ethnicity, helps to create a rich and vibrant community in which all individuals live in mutual respect, dignity and harmony.<sup>7</sup>

1 Statistics Canada, *2011 Census Profile*, Accessed at <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915022&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=5915022>

2 Statistics Canada, *2006 Census Profile*, Accessed at <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915022&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>

3 Community Social Data Strategy, Statistics Canada, *2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey Data*, Table E01213-2006-TGp-2A-CanProv

4 Statistics Canada, *2006 Census Profile*, Accessed at <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915022&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=vancouver&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>

5 City of Vancouver (2011). *Vancouver's Diverse Population*. Accessed at <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/multicult/index.htm>

6 City of Vancouver (2009). *Mission, Values, and Objectives*. Accessed April 29, 2012 from <http://vancouver.ca/values.htm>

7 City of Vancouver (1988). *Civic Policy on Multicultural Relations*. Accessed April 29th, 2012 at <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/multicult/civicpolicy.htm>

In recognition of Vancouver's diversity, the City is striving to provide services and programming that are inclusive of, and appropriate to, the needs and aspirations of its diverse residents. Through fostering a diverse workforce that reflects Vancouver's residents, the City is building its capacity to relate to, and meet the diverse service needs of the community.

The City made a formal commitment to employment equity in 1977 when it established the *City of Vancouver Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program*, and reaffirmed the *Equal Employment Opportunity Policy* in 1986. The aim of this policy is to create a workforce which reflects the composition of the qualified labour pool available in the community, and to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect among employees in the workplace and in the community at large.<sup>8</sup> At first this policy was focused on the representation of the four (4) employment equity groups that have traditionally been under-represented in the Canadian workforce (women, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and Aboriginal people). Over time, the concept of diversity and employment equity has been expanded, and the City now considers other aspects of diversity such as sexual orientation, gender identity, age, culture, ethnicity and immigrant status. The EEO program provides education and training programs to all City staff, which builds awareness of employment and service equity, systemic discrimination, harassment, cross-cultural relations and the City's long-term goal of creating a workforce that is representative of all parts of the community.

The City made another formal commitment to multiculturalism and diversity in 1988 when it established the *Civic Policy on Multicultural Relations* that recognized that:

- diversity is a source of enrichment and strength for the City;
- all residents should be free from prejudice; and,
- all residents of Vancouver should be able to access civic services regardless of their background or language barriers.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> City of Vancouver (2011). *Equal Employment Opportunity Policy*. Accessed April 29, 2012 at <http://vancouver.ca/eeo/policy.htm>

<sup>9</sup> City of Vancouver (1988). *Civic Policy on Multicultural Relations*. Accessed April 29th, 2012 at <http://>



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The City further cemented its commitment to diversity and inclusion in 1989 when it established The Hastings Institute in collaboration with the provincial and federal governments. The Hastings Institute is a not-for-profit organization wholly owned by the City of Vancouver that is dedicated to providing external leadership in the areas of diversity, equity, literacy and respectful workplaces. The mandate of The Hastings Institute is to provide multicultural and employment equity training and organizational development to governments, the non-profit sector and private corporations.

As a result of these innovative policy directions, the City established itself as an early leader in employment equity despite the fact that the City is not federally regulated under employment equity legislation. The City has built upon this solid foundation by continuing to innovate and expand on its employment equity initiatives over time.

## The City of Vancouver's Diversity Initiatives

### *The City of Vancouver's Equal Employment Opportunity Program*

The City of Vancouver's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program supports departments in recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce that reflects the rich diversity of the community. EEO also supports and contributes to City initiatives that enhance the accessibility and inclusiveness of City facilities, resources and processes. In addition, EEO is an impartial and a confidential resource, providing assistance to City departments and staff on issues related to human rights and harassment prevention. EEO's goal is to create workplaces that reflect the diversity of the communities the City serves, and to continue to support diversity by ensuring welcoming, respectful, harassment-free workplaces.

Rather than being a "policer" within the City, the Equal Employment Opportunity Program is a "supporter" and "influencer," working in collaboration with all City departments to ensure that equity, inclusion and diversity are interwoven into all of the City's values and practices. This includes everything from initiatives focused on attracting and retaining a diverse workforce to ensuring that City services and public engagement processes are inclusive of the whole community.

[vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/multicult/civicpolicy.htm](http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/multicult/civicpolicy.htm)

The EEO program provides many services within the City, including:

- community outreach and presentations to enhance access to employment opportunities;
- providing information and advice on City practices related to equity, inclusion and diversity;
- coordinating work experience placements with community agencies and educational institutions;
- collaborating with City departments to remove systemic barriers and reach a wider and more diverse applicant pool;
- consulting with departments on initiatives related to the EEO's mandate;
- providing training on harassment prevention, diversity, human rights and building respectful workplaces;
- providing assistance to resolve harassment and discrimination issues as defined under City policy;
- providing information about the City's policies and human rights legislation, including rights and responsibilities as employees or managers;
- collaborating with departments to enhance the accessibility and inclusiveness of City facilities, resources and processes; and,
- providing a supportive resource to all departments, to promote "best practices" in areas related to human rights.



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## The City of Vancouver's Hastings Institute

Many of the services that are made available within Vancouver's municipal government through the EEO program are also available to external organizations through EEO's non-profit arm, The Hastings Institute. As part of the City's commitment to excellence in the workplace, the Hastings Institute offers training and consulting services to external organizations in the areas of equity, human rights and diversity.

The Hastings Institute works with a variety of clients from different sectors, including municipalities, provincial ministries, not-for-profit organizations and private companies.

The Hastings Institute's consulting services include the following:

- Mediation;
- Coaching;
- Conflict resolution;
- Policy design and implementation;
- Human rights harassment complaint investigation;
- Workplace accommodation; and,
- Training workshops.

The co-housing of the EEO program and The Hastings Institute benefits both the City of Vancouver and the surrounding region. For example, there are times when initiatives or training opportunities are piloted within the City and shared elsewhere and vice versa. This means that lessons learned through the City's EEO program are shared with other organizations undertaking similar work, and that the experience that the Hastings Institute acquires through its consulting work can inform future diversity initiatives within the City.

## Barrier Identification and Removal

As part of the EEO program's mandate, it regularly works in collaboration with other departments to ensure excellence, equity and diversity by identifying systemic barriers, which may unintentionally limit the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups across the City.

Examples of some recent barrier identification and removal initiatives include the following:

- In late 2010, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services hosted and facilitated a firefighter workshop for women in the fire service throughout the Metro Vancouver region to look at barriers for women and share best practices to recruit and retain more women fire fighters.
- In August 2010, two (2) meetings were held with the existing female trades staff of Engineering Operations to solicit feedback on existing work culture, career opportunities and identifying barriers to increasing representation of women in trades. The feedback obtained was very informative with regard to strategies for increasing the recruitment and retention of women in trades.
- The City's recruitment website was recently reviewed by Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) to ensure that it was accessible for people with limited vision.

The City of Vancouver EEO program and various City departments are also able to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of various City Council Advisory Committees that have been created to enhance full access to City services for various communities including the:

- LGBTQ Advisory Committee;
- Multicultural Advisory Committee;
- Seniors' Advisory Committee;
- Women's Advisory Committee; and,
- Persons with Disabilities' Advisory Community.

While all of these committees were created to provide citizens' perspectives on how to enhance City services, or to help identify gaps and barriers that prevent or reduce public participation, they also can be a resource for identifying and reducing common barriers to employment, inclusion and accessibility for various groups.

## Recruitment and Outreach

The EEO program also works in collaboration with City departments to develop targeted outreach strategies to under-represented groups. The intention is not to encourage "token" hiring from designated groups or to lower job requirements for under-represented groups, but rather to encourage a broader range of applicants to apply. This provides the City with an increased number of qualified, skilled applicants from diverse backgrounds and supports the city in fostering diverse teams that reflect the City's diversity. Some recent examples of targeted recruitment/outreach strategies include the following:

- In 2010, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (YF&RS) actively looked at increasing recruitment and retention of individuals who have traditionally been under-represented to better serve Vancouver's diverse community. It created a Diversity Committee to build understanding, commitment, confidence and momentum. It has conducted public outreach to career fairs at high schools, colleges and universities, and partnered with women's groups, sports teams, societies, school/career counselors, and held fire hall open houses.
- The City advertises job postings in ethno-cultural media.
- The EEO office partners with community agencies serving under-represented groups (e.g. MOSAIC, S.U.C.C.E.S.S., Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network, ACCESS, Coast Mental Health Foundation, Immigrant Services Society of BC) to assist with pre-employment programs, mock interviews and work placements for their clients.
- The City participates in a variety of career fairs and employment panels.
- The City offers employment opportunities to people with employment barriers through the Clean Streets Project, and the Great Beginnings Program.

The EEO program has also been working to provide diversity training to frontline managers involved in the hiring process in order to educate them on the value of a diverse workplace. This is an essential part of the recruitment piece, since a large percentage of the City's hiring each year happens for auxiliary/seasonal positions. These positions can often be a stepping stone to regular part time or full time employment. Recruitment is decentralized, and often led by branch managers, or foremen at job sites. The EEO program has developed training modules targeted at frontline managers, which focus on recruiting and retaining: Aboriginal people; people with disabilities; women in non-traditional work areas; new immigrants/new Canadians.

The EEO program also serves as an information conduit regarding job opportunities available at the City and delivers presentations to employment and diversity counselors of community organizations and service providers to familiarize them with the hiring and application process. The City of Vancouver is a large organization that offers employment opportunities in Parks and Recreation, Engineering Service Yards, Permits and Licenses, Information Technology, etc. It also includes Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver Police Department who conduct their own hiring, as does Fire & Rescue Services. The existence of multiple recruitment avenues can often cause confusion for individuals applying for work at the City. There has been a concerted effort to make the recruitment website comprehensive, consistent and user friendly, providing links to all available opportunities. It now includes seasonal/auxiliary positions in addition to regular part time and full time employment opportunities.

### Workplace Diversity Training

As a result of the EEO Program/Hastings Institute, City departments and staff have access to a range of diversity training opportunities which build awareness of employment and service equity, systemic discrimination, harassment, and cross-cultural relations. Some examples of workshops offered through the EEO Program/Hastings Institute include:



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- Creating an inclusive culture;
- Communicating across cultures;
- Workplace accommodation: Overview and best practices;
- Workplace harassment awareness;
- Workplace harassment prevention and intervention skills;
- Team building for a respectful workplace; and,
- Investigation and resolution of workplace harassment complaints.

In addition, the EEO program works to imbed diversity training as part of the orientation process, management training and within the broader CityLearn program. The CityLearn program provides ongoing professional development opportunities to City staff on topics such as: business essentials; communication skills; developing yourself; instructor development; leading, managing and supervising; the City Management Program; diversity and respectful workplaces; health and safety; etc.

The EEO program also looks for opportunities to partner with other groups to bring new training opportunities to staff. For instance, they have partnered with the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre to provide urban Aboriginal training for staff. Within the organization, the EEO program has also regularly partnered with the unions to do 2-3 hour modules on respectful workplaces for various City departments.

The City also promotes diversity and inclusion among City staff and throughout the community by acknowledging and celebrating important community events and festivals that are coordinated by a City-wide Events Planning Committee. City Council has approved a broad range of annual celebrations, such as International Women's Day, International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, National Aboriginal Day, Pride Week, Diwali, and International Day for Disabled Persons. These celebrations build a sense of belonging and inclusion within the diverse communities and also help staff celebrate their culture at work, and share their culture with others.

In addition, City Council has approved a host of awards that are given to deserving citizens, such as Cultural Harmony Awards (recognition for individuals and organizations that display a significant and sustained commitment to the promotion of cultural harmony in Vancouver) and Access & Inclusion Awards (recognition for individuals and organizations that demonstrate leadership and commitment to enhancing accessibility, inclusion, universality and the elimination of any barriers that may impede the full participation of persons with any type of disability in community life). These awards also help to build bridges to the community and enhance staff awareness of related issues.

## The Results

The City reports that staff diversity has increased over time and that staff across the City have a greater awareness of the value of diversity and equity. This has not only resulted in increased diversity within the City's workforce, but also departments across the City now regularly look at their operations and services through a diversity and equity lens, which has made the City more responsive to its increasingly diverse residents.

Here are a few initiatives that illustrate the City's commitment to diversity and service delivery improvements in the broader community:

- The City Clerks department actively conducts outreach to various communities during local elections, including people with disabilities, youth, ethnic and multicultural communities.
- Under the leadership of the City Manager, a pilot mentorship project was launched in partnership with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IECBC), and three immigrant service providers: ISS of BC, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and MOSAIC. As part of this program, nineteen (19) City staff, including senior managers, volunteered to be mentors to newcomers during a four (4) month formal mentoring relationship.
- The City provides bi-annual training sessions for Engineering staff (e.g. Streets, Sanitation, Parks) who interact with low income/homeless citizens. A large part of the training is focused on gaining understanding of the homeless/street population and how to communicate/interact in an effective and respectful manner.
- The Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Public Library, Board of Parks and Recreation and other City departments regularly work with Vancouver's diverse communities to deliver programs and services that are culturally appropriate to their needs. For instance, the Mainly Mother Goose program recently hired an Aboriginal person to tell stories. Moreover, the City is looking into ways to offer more adapted fitness programs for people with disabilities and seniors. Furthermore, the Diversity and Aboriginal Policing Section works to provide cultural competency training to frontline police officers.



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- The Social Policy department is currently implementing the second phase of the Vancouver Dialogues project to promote increased intercultural understanding between immigrant communities and Vancouver's Aboriginal communities.
- The City is engaged in a partnership project with the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS) program, Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures, along with the City of Surrey to train and offer potential job opportunities to the Aboriginal participants.
- Various City publications are offered in multiple languages.
- The City of Vancouver's 3-1-1 service provides residents and businesses of Vancouver with one phone number to access most City information and non-emergency services. This one-stop citizen information number and centralized contact centre allows the City to enhance its level of service to citizens and provide them with easy access to City information, and has the capacity to provide translation services in over 150 languages.

The City of Vancouver is renowned for its innovative programs in the areas of sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity. In 2012, the City of Vancouver was named one of BC's Top Employers for the fourth consecutive year. The award recognizes the City for its policies, programs, and initiatives that enable it to retain and attract top-quality employees. The City of Vancouver has also been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers for the second consecutive year, in recognition of the City's leading workplace diversity and inclusion programs, as well as the one of Canada's Best Employer for New Canadians for 2012.

## Advice for other organizations

When asked if the City has any advice for other organizations considering implementing similar initiatives, the following advice was offered:

- Having solid leadership commitment from above is important—senior leaders need to champion it and support it as you go along.

- In a global world economy, it is short sighted not to include people from diverse backgrounds. Developing and maintaining a competitive advantage by having a multi-lingual, inter-culturally competent workforce is a clear advantage over organizations without these abilities. Diverse teams also improve organizational excellence and innovation.
- Every department needs to “own” diversity. It is important to have champions throughout the organization and weave equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the City’s work, including policies, programs, initiatives and staff and citizen engagement.
- Often, when you remove barriers for one group, it ends up being beneficial for other groups.

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