



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

Inclusive Leadership Guide

Leading inclusively to stop racism in the workplace

For many of us, much of last month was an emotional rollercoaster. George Floyd's death, and the public outcry and protests that followed were a real awakening. Coupled with the current COVID-19 pandemic, it still feels like a double blow.

At a time when so much is being upended and challenged, inclusive leadership in the workplace is needed now more than ever before. Decades of applied research has given us a deeper understanding of what great leadership is. An inclusive leader goes one step further by adding a diversity lens of what a great leader should think, say and act to support a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace for all. Inclusive leaders set the tone and shape the future of organizations.

There is growing evidence of what it takes to be an inclusive leader. In 2016, Deloitte University Press published *The Six Signature Traits of Inclusive Leadership: Thriving in a Diverse New World* (<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>).

The report identifies six key areas that define an inclusive leader. This tip sheet explores how you can use traits of inclusive leadership to combat racism and drive transformational change across the organization:

Commitment

Commitment: Inclusive leaders who are committed show ongoing dedication to addressing racism and exclusion in the workplace. This is a pre-requisite trait to build an environment with accountabilities, decision-making and actions to address anti-racism.

How to action this trait:

- » **Remain committed to building an inclusive culture:** Remain steadfast in your relentless pursuit of a future where everyone belongs. Show your ongoing hope and determination for leading, and expecting others to lead in anti-racist ways.
- » **Be visible:** Speak up about your commitment in front of your team. Share your commitment with your customers, clients and stakeholders. Create blogs and videos to share your vision.
- » **Be available:** Be there for your colleagues who are looking for advice on how to commit to this work. Help them to understand by sharing your authentic story and your journey towards being an anti-racist.

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Cognizance

Cognizance (of bias): Inclusive leaders recognize they have biases like everyone else. They commit to unlearning thoughts that may prejudice against Black people, Indigenous people and people of colour, and seek new knowledge and skills to help them become active anti-racist leaders.

How to action this trait:

- » **Do some self-examination:** Assess your types and levels of biases by taking self-assessments like the [Implicit Association Test](#) (IAT) from Harvard University.
- » **Seek honest feedback:** Proactively reach out to racialized colleagues and friends to seek honest feedback in order to uncover your blind spots and increase your self-awareness.
- » **Be aware of differences:** Understand potential barriers to inclusion and anti-racism work at various levels of your organization: individual level, team level, and organizational level. Seek to understand how different employees experience the workplace and facilitate conversations towards raising awareness of biases in oneself and others.

Courage

Courage: Inclusive leaders demonstrate a constant quality of mind and spirit that allows them to confront uncertainty and face difficult conversations and situations in order to address racism at work. This also requires humility in recognizing that leaders don't have all the answers but are striving to listen to others and deepen their own understanding.

How to action this trait:

- » **Deliberate acts of humility:** Be visible in demonstrating your courage (e.g. speak up for someone who is being attacked for being anti-racist), lead conversations at work to support anti-oppression work, or as seen on social media take a knee in recognition of current racial struggles.
- » **Be unafraid to be vulnerable:** Acknowledge your privilege, share stories of struggles and misunderstanding you have had so far, explain how being vulnerable and compassionate are actually signs of strength, knowledge-seeking and wisdom.

Curiosity

Curiosity: Inclusive leaders have an inquisitive mind and seek to explore, investigate and learn about workplace dynamics. They ask questions and seek input from others in order to gain the full picture of how racism shows up at work in order to develop impactful solutions.

How to action this trait:

- » **Do some self-examination:** Assess how much you know about racism in Canada, and where the sources of your knowledge come from. Develop a deeper understanding and more critical analysis of what your 'trusted' sources of knowledge are.



- » **Consume and share content on the subject of race and privilege:** Are there sources such as books, videos, films, individuals or networks, that you should seek in order to allow you to grow in your competencies as an inclusive leader?
- » **Systemically incorporate new knowledge and expansive thinking into the fabric of the organization:** Develop an action plan to support your quest for curiosity. Develop a growth mindset and plan proactively to inject yourself, your team, and your organization with new knowledge to raise the collective awareness and capacity of your organization to become anti-racist.

Culturally intelligent

Culturally intelligent: Inclusive leaders demonstrate a desire to learn about other cultures at work. They are aware that their worldview and perspectives are only one lens, and that others have different lenses that impact how they perceive their role, their workplace and their sense of belonging. They actively seek to understand and navigate cultural differences, and to bridge across difference.

How to action this trait:

- » **Take an active interest in learning about the culture of Black, Indigenous and other racialized co-workers:** Expand your network by seeking the perspectives of racialized workers through many ways such as holding coffee conversations, organizing a focus group consultation to learn more about issues related to the culture of the organization in relation to individuals' own cultural experiences.
- » **Seek out opportunities to recognize the importance of diversity and the contributions of racialized people to the organization:** Highlight and promote stories on your intranet and social media of the successes and perspectives of diverse employees including racialized employees. Be an ally by giving them a platform to amplify their voices. Be intentional in recognizing them throughout the year, in addition to Black History Month and National Indigenous History Month.
- » **Build skills to navigate cultural differences at work:** Assess your intercultural competence through the [Intercultural Development Inventory \(IDI\) tool](#). Deepen your understanding of the cultural similarities and differences between individuals and groups of people, and learn how to properly interpret situations, asking for clarification when unclear, and building skills to be able to effectively bridge between cultures.

Collaboration

Collaboration: Inclusive leaders believe in the power of individuals working together to achieve a common business purpose or goal. They recognize that effective collaboration leverages the diversity of ideas and leads to better decision-making, higher productivity, higher levels of employee engagement and workplace innovation.



How to action this trait:

- » **Develop policies and processes to co-create change:** Invite racialized employees to provide feedback to existing programs and services, and pro-actively engage them into co-developing workplace solutions.
- » **Build the capacity for racialized employees to engage:** Provide racialized employees the time and resources to engage and provide their input and ideas effectively. Keep in mind that racialized employees are on their own journey of reflection and understanding about anti-racism, and therefore do not place undue burden on them and expect them to teach others or have all the answers.
- » **Recognize contributions:** Recognize and celebrate the contributions of diverse employees in making your workplace more inclusive. This will reinforce your workplace corporate values and anti-racist behaviours.

Viewing and reading shortlist – On race and privilege

- » **The Vanishing Half – by Brit Bennett**
- » **Uprooting Racism – by Paul Kivel**
- » **How to be an antiracist – by Ibram X. Kendi**
- » **[White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism – by Robin DiAngelo](#)**
- » **The 13th by Ava Duvernay – Netflix**
- » **[The danger of a single story – TED Talk](#)**
- » **[Unpacking the invisible knapsack – by Peggy McIntosh](#)**