



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

Success stories

Accenture

A Canadian case study in diversity and inclusion

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Accenture: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion

By Brenda van Ginkel, Associate, with research by Wynton Bunyan. Thanks to Nicholas Greschner, Director of Human Resources at Accenture, for talking to us.

Developing engagement for Aboriginal talent and businesses

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations with about 4,000 employees in eight offices across Canada. Globally, Accenture has 375,000 employees serving clients in 120 countries; their [Global Inclusion & Diversity program](#) sets the overall diversity strategy while each geographic region's Diversity Council directs its own planning in the context of local regulatory and demographic considerations. The company's corporate vision values diversity for innovation and collaboration and identifies inclusion and diversity as being both key to innovation and essential for business in a digital age.

The Canadian Diversity Council is directed by Accenture's Canadian leadership, co-chaired by Bill Morris, President and Senior Managing Director, and Claudia Thompson, Managing Director of Human Capital and Diversity. The council assesses inclusion and diversity issues, sets strategic direction and prioritizes tactics. Accenture has developed global [training programs](#) that include *Diversity Awareness*, *Diversity Management* (leading, managing and working across cultures) and *Professional Development* to help women, people identifying as LGBT and other diverse employees build skills for success in leadership, client relations, negotiation and performance.

In Canada, Accenture has employee groups for Aboriginal peoples, women, men, employees identifying as LGBT, people with disabilities and military veterans. The company values the groups for connecting colleagues with similar interests or backgrounds, channeling programming and for recruiting. We spoke with Accenture's Canadian Human Resources Director Nicholas Greschner to learn about their group for Aboriginal employees.

Focused on Aboriginal talent

In its first publicly shared diversity survey this year, **Accenture reported** that, as of December 2015, 1% of its employees identify as Aboriginal peoples. Nicholas has been involved with the Aboriginal ERG since it started in 2011, when the company piloted its *Aboriginal Internship Program* to open up opportunities for young Aboriginal people in technology. He told us about the time he spent mentoring the first Human Resources intern coming through the program, a young Aboriginal woman in Montreal. As she transitioned into a full-time role with the company, other departments became interested in using the *Aboriginal Internship Program* to bring new talent into the company.

Over the year that he worked with the intern, Nicholas began to learn about some of the employment-related issues within the Aboriginal community and developed a deeper understanding of the biases and challenges facing Aboriginal people. He also became more aware of how Aboriginal people were perceived within the company, or conversely, were invisible.

When Nicholas became the lead on the Aboriginal employee resource group, it grew from seven to 50 members as awareness for it increased with the backing of leadership and employees, including non-Aboriginal people who wanted to contribute as friends of the group. The group now has more than 100 members.

Accenture developed the *Aboriginal Internship Program* by partnering with **Acosys**, an Aboriginal-owned social impact consulting firm specializing in business, technology and talent management. The program offered interns a competitive wage using Accenture's supplier agreement with Acosys and leveraging federal wage subsidies. The valuable experience interns gained working in Accenture's IT and HR operations only added to the appeal of the program as a hiring initiative for hiring managers as they saw the value of interns' contributions.

The Aboriginal Internship Program created a channel for job-ready resources and helped the company address its goal to increase Aboriginal representation in the company. In the time that Nicholas has led the Aboriginal resource group, his goals for the group have been to increase membership, build awareness internally and cultivate community outside the company. With the widespread support the group has found in the company, Accenture now celebrates Aboriginal Day each June 21 across its Canadian offices and in local community events.

Connecting global corporate citizenship with local impact

Corporate citizenship is an important value for Accenture and their global initiative, **Skills to Succeed**, has been engaging partners and employees to equip more than 3 million people in communities around the world with the skills to get a job or build a business by the end of the fiscal year 2020. In Canada, the initiative supports Aboriginal employment and businesses.

In 2008, the *Accenture Supplier Diversity Procurement Program* for Canada **was launched**, based on the American program and adapted to Canada's regulatory and demographic conditions. The company's supplier diversity strategy includes Aboriginal entrepreneurs and their communities among the groups that programming is directed to, along with businesses led by women and visible minorities. As there is less awareness about supplier diversity in Canada than in the

U.S., there has been particular attention to educating diverse suppliers about the practice and developing partnerships to increase diversity in their supply chain and procurement processes.

Strategic partnerships that made a difference

Accenture has invested in different kinds of partnerships – with nonprofit organizations representing Aboriginal people, other companies committed to diversity and individual Aboriginal-led businesses – to increase Aboriginal diversity in its supply chain. The company became a charter member of **CAMSC**, the Canadian Aboriginal & Minority Supplier Council. CAMSC is the certifying body that connects the organizations looking to work with Aboriginal businesses with those that meet their requirements for sector, location and other considerations. The businesses that are members of CAMSC create economic empowerment in Aboriginal communities and benefit from the organization's partnerships with organizations invested in supplier diversity.

Accenture supported their *Supplier Diversity Procurement Program* with a mentoring initiative, the *Diverse Supplier Development Program*, to create awareness and nurture relationships with designated businesses. In the first year, four high-potential entrepreneurs whose ventures were members of CAMSC were matched with senior Accenture executives who could mentor them, develop a better understanding of supplier diversity and the company's procurement processes, and offer knowledge that would help them build capacity for their businesses.

Accenture shared what it learned from the *Diverse Supplier Development Program*, as well as best practices and program benchmarking, with other CAMSC members, leading to collaborative mentorship workshops with RBC, TELUS and other partners, which amplified the results of the Aboriginal businesses that participated. In 2014, **CAMSC recognized** the company's collaborative initiative, noting that Accenture was the first to come forward with a mentoring program that was open to all CAMSC members, not only its suppliers, crediting the company for its positive impact of economic inclusion among Canada's Aboriginal and visible minority communities.

As Accenture's engagement with Aboriginal businesses grew, the company started reaching out to encourage more engagement among Aboriginal entrepreneurs. In 2012, Accenture was a founding partner of the **Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada** with RBC. This membership-based organization was founded to connect, support and promote outstanding leadership within Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities of professionals.

In 2011, Accenture leveraged its cross-industry experience, innovative solutions and industrialized assets of its world-class delivery centers to help launch the Aboriginal-owned social enterprise, **Indigena Solutions**. Indigena is a technology company owned by Tsawwassen First Nation and CAPE Fund, managed by Accenture, with a socio-economic mission to support First Nations communities as a technology services provider and recruiter for Aboriginal tech talent.

Achieving employee engagement for diversity

With interest and support from so many parts of the company, Nicholas explained that Accenture's resource group for Aboriginal employees has been able to increase its engagement by building

trust among Aboriginal people, many of whom might not have self-identified 10 years ago. Over the time that he has led the group, he has also noticed a shift in how people in the company talk about Aboriginal people – that the tone has become more positive. He connects the growth of the group with a raised awareness of and respect for Aboriginal people within the company.

Even though the company's engagement with Aboriginal employees has been improving, there is a goal to reach more Aboriginal people who aren't self-identifying yet to uncover how effectively Accenture's policies are – or aren't – suited to Aboriginal issues. The hope is that with more representation, the company will be better informed to meet employees' needs. And for the *Aboriginal Internship Program*, there is a goal to set recruiting targets to become an employer of choice in the Aboriginal community.

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The Success story initiative

There is astonishingly little published that shines a light on diversity and inclusion successes in Canada, though there are many, across a wide range of organizations. Case studies referenced by trainers and leadership tend to be reporting on different countries, cultures, political and economic settings.

The goal of this initiative is to support diversity and inclusion leadership with stories that are relevant to what's happening now, here in Canada. By sharing their stories, we celebrate the successes of Canadian organizations while contributing to learning for everyone that cares about diversity and inclusion.

The employers who have developed initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion as priorities in the workplace are responding to an increasingly competitive economy that's responsive to the diversity of employees – and the country. We are grateful to those who have participated in interviews.

This series of case studies will be published monthly through 2016. Subscribing to our monthly newsletter at ccdi.ca will keep you updated with the latest case studies, which will all be posted online at ccdi.ca/successstories. For more information, contact mail@ccdi.ca.

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

The CCDI has a mission to help the organizations we work with be inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination – and to generate the awareness, dialogue and action for people to recognize diversity as an asset and not an obstacle. Through the research, reports and toolkits we develop and our workshops, events and workplace consultations, we're helping Canadian employers understand their diversity, plan for it and create inclusion.

CCDI's leadership has a proven model that's cultivated trust as an impartial third party. Our expertise is focused on the topics of inclusion that are relevant in Canada now and the regional differences that shape diversity.

A charitable organization that thinks like a business, we have created a niche with our innovative research technology and data analysis that brings a deeper understanding of Canadian diversity demographics and mindsets at any given moment.

CCDI is grateful for the support of Employer Partners across Canada. For enquiries, contact Susan Rogers, Chief Client Officer, Susan.Rogers@ccdi.ca or (416) 968-6520, ext 103.



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