

Diversity and Inclusion Challenge 5 – Enhancing Workplace Cultures in Supply Chain Companies

The Opportunity

Saskatchewan’s minerals industry provides employment opportunities directly with mining companies and indirectly with the large and robust supply chain which supports the province’s operating mines and mills. In all, more than 30,000 people are employed in mining in Saskatchewan.

However, like the experience of minerals companies directly, the numbers of Indigenous people and women in the mining supply chain workforce are not representative of their numbers in the total workforce or the province’s population. As is the case with leading minerals companies, supply chain leaders must embrace a wider talent pool to find the right employees for the job, and to improve business performance via better decision making (Gartner 2016).

The Challenge

IMII’s major mineral company members realize that one of the challenges in increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous people and women in the minerals sector – including the companies themselves, is cultural. In seeking to address cultural issues through innovation, the IMII is not seeking special treatment for Indigenous people or women. It is looking to support its members, and those supply chain companies, whom have taken steps to change their organizational cultures in ways that attract Indigenous people and women, and help them thrive within their organizations.

IMII also recognizes that small and medium-sized supply chain companies may have some limits on their capacity to take on the development of innovations to improve on the participation of Indigenous peoples and women in their workforce on their own. This is one of the purposes of IMII’s Diversity & Inclusion Challenge program – to incent the *development* of innovations in education and training that, once successfully piloted or demonstrated, may be *deployed* by those whom share the minerals industry’s commitment to the greater inclusion of Indigenous people in the economic opportunity presented by mining. As such, the innovations being sought – once demonstrated, must be able to be transferred from one company to another, and scalable to meet the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as larger companies.

IMII commends the Saskatchewan Industrial & Mining Suppliers Association (SIMSA) for the development, in 2017, of “inclusion guidelines.” While focused on increasing the participation of Indigenous people in the mining sector through the employment, mentoring, education, training and development of, Indigenous people in supply chain companies, the recognition of the need to plan for building diversity, inclusion and retention into their talent management strategies is welcomed, and one IMII is seeking to support with this Diversity & Inclusion Challenge.

New Approaches to Enhancing Workplace Cultures and Building the Supply Chain Talent Pool

For 2018, IMII is seeking new approaches to workplace education for Indigenous people and women that can be deployed by supply chain companies to help them make their workplaces more diverse, integrated and reflective of Saskatchewan’s population. The innovations may be related to:

- Ready supply chain companies to offer a work culture supportive of Indigenous peoples and women (e.g., by bringing reconciliation into the workplace and changing the environment together, by ensuring access to mentors or sponsors trained in managing unconscious bias);
- Incorporating Indigenous education or training methodologies and/or learning styles into workplace education that enhance learning outcomes and support entry requirements for trades and production positions;
- Identifying and matching industry skills requirements with training that incorporates Indigenous teaching methodologies and/or learning styles that enhances learning outcomes for positions and careers in supply chain companies;
- Incorporating efforts from women in engineering and other science, technology and math (STEM) professions into recruitment and retention efforts (e.g., the use of hiring panels for recruitment); and
- Changing cultural values, leadership orientation and behaviours to support the recruitment, retention and advancement of Indigenous people and women.

Examples of aspects or practices that could be supportive of this Challenge include:

- Building linkages and partnerships between post-secondary education institutions and the supply chain;
- Offering flexibility in program and course delivery to allow for work and family commitments;
- Recognizing that the needs of First Nations and Métis peoples may be distinct;
- Recognizing that Indigenous knowledge may benefit all learners and having processes for two-way information sharing;
- Offering staff training on Indigenous history;
- Including experiential, hands-on learning activities;
- Offering culturally relevant assessment services for prior learning and/or math and language skills assessments;
- Offering workplace/worktime shifts and family policies; and
- Including activities structured around or respectful of family.

Conditions

The innovations proposed must recognize that the traditional educational approach to “sit to learn” is likely not the most appropriate learning model for enhancing workplace cultures.

Innovations proposed to enhance workplace cultures for Indigenous peoples should, at a minimum, recognize the intellectual and cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples and have been developed in consultation with an indigenous community or have a meaningful Indigenous partner (e.g., a college or institute, a Friendship Centre or Tribal Council).

Innovations proposed to enhance workplace cultures for women should, at a minimum, be supported by a team or organization reflective of the underlying goal of the IMII’s Diversity & Inclusion Challenge for participation of women in the minerals industry.