

Over Half of Indigenous Peoples in Canada are On Guard to Experiences of Bias

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Leaders can positively influence experiences of Indigenous employees

TORONTO, Feb. 10, 2021 /CNW/ -- A study from Catalyst, ***Building Inclusion for Indigenous Peoples in Canadian Workplaces***, found 52% of Indigenous Peoples working in Canada said they are regularly on guard to experiences of bias, a hallmark of emotional tax, with women on guard (67%) significantly more than men (38%).

The new research shows that in addition to paying an Emotional Tax – the combination of being on guard to protect against bias because of race, ethnicity, and gender and experiencing the associated effects on well-being and ability to thrive at work – only 39% of Indigenous employees feel psychologically safe at work.

Psychological safety is when employees feel they can make mistakes and take risks without being penalized, and Indigenous employees who do not experience it are less likely to report a sense of belonging or being valued for their uniqueness, speak up when something isn't right, experience task focus, and be able to exhibit creativity.



"Indigenous people in Canada, especially women, continue to face some of the workplaces' most entrenched hurdles, including bias and discrimination that impact their health, well-being, and ability to progress," says Vandana Juneja, Executive Director, Canada, Catalyst. "Companies must take intentional action to understand the unique challenges and biases faced by Indigenous employees, and specifically how these experiences impact their work experience, to help inform solutions."

The report, led by Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, PhD, and Joy Ohm, finds that when leaders create an empowering workplace, show accountability, and demonstrate humility, Indigenous employees feel more psychologically safe. The study surveyed 86 Indigenous Peoples working in Canada, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Indigenous Peoples comprise 4.9% of the total Canadian population.

"These findings provide employers with a unique opportunity to address inequities experienced in the workplace by Indigenous employees," said Thorpe-Moscon, Vice President, Research, and Chair, Catalyst Award, Catalyst. "The goal is for inclusive leaders to enable a culture of empowerment, accountability, and humility that creates an environment where Indigenous employees can belong, contribute, and thrive in the workplace."

The experience of Indigenous Peoples in the workplace is part of the long history of colonialism, genocide, racism, and inequities for the Indigenous population living on the land now known as Canada. In the workplace, this experience translates to a wage gap and feelings of isolation because of a lack of Indigenous role models at senior levels.

Additionally, Indigenous Peoples are often surrounded by managers, colleagues, and senior executives unfamiliar with their history and cultures or the burdens they carry. It is no surprise then that Indigenous employees are frequently on guard to bias, which includes feeling the need to prepare for possible insults or avoid certain situations where they anticipate bias may occur. The gender disparity in being on guard to bias likely reflects the disproportionate discrimination and violence Indigenous women experience compared to other groups.

Learn more and download the study.

About Catalyst

Catalyst is a global nonprofit working with some of the world's most powerful CEOs and leading companies to help build workplaces that work for women. Founded in 1962, Catalyst drives change with pioneering research, practical tools, and proven solutions to accelerate and advance women into leadership—because progress for women is progress for everyone.

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