



**CEDEC**

# **AFRICAN-CANADIAN CAREER EXCELLENCE**

**2015 EMPLOYER SURVEY**

SUMMARY REPORT

**AUGUST 2015**



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction and Acknowledgments</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The ACCE Initiative</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Three Partners</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The 2015 Employer Survey</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Data analysis</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Conclusion and Lessons Learned</b>	<b>15</b>

# Introduction and Acknowledgments

This report provides the final data analysis and interpretation of the 2015 employer survey on the hiring norms and practices of businesses across various sectors and industries in the Greater Montreal area, with a focus on employers' attitudes towards the importance of a having a diverse workforce. This study is part of the African-Canadian Career Excellence (ACCE) initiative aimed at countering the migration of Black graduates from Montreal.

## The ACCE Initiative

The ACCE initiative was created from a concern that the ongoing underemployment and out-migration of educated Blacks has been taking a toll on the Black communities in Quebec. Project funding has historically targeted employment remediation at local community organizations and para-government offices to address issues of the Black unemployed or the working poor in Quebec. ACCE's mandate is to facilitate the transition to meaningful local careers for this group by better preparing both the career-seekers and their potential employers.

The ACCE initiative intends to:

- encourage Black graduates, in particular, to stay in the province of Quebec in order to contribute to the vitality of the middle-class community as a whole; and
- assist employers as they move toward diversifying their workforce.

This initiative hopes to mitigate the exodus of educated Black youth by helping them attain meaningful and sustainable local employment that is commensurate with their skills.

All three partners of the ACCE initiative (see box below) are striving to engage key partners and stakeholders to help mitigate the exodus of young educated Blacks from Montreal. More specifically, this partnership aims to:

- encourage networking within Montreal's Black community;
- enhance professional capacity building; strive toward having a civic work force with a representative number of Black employees;
- help Montreal's Black graduates find gainful and sustainable employment in their various areas of specialisation with salaries commensurate to their qualifications; provide potential employers with highly qualified professionals; and
- reduce the unemployment rate in Montreal, especially within the Black community.

### Three Partners

**The Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)** is Quebec's only province-wide organization with an economic and labour force development mandate. CEDEC helps communities throughout Quebec identify, assess, and prepare to act on social, cultural, and economic development opportunities.

CEDEC supports communities by lending planning expertise and follows through by brokering the strategic partnerships that make their plans a reality. A volunteer-driven organization, CEDEC sparks economic innovation in building forward-looking, prosperous and confident communities.

The **Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC)** is a growing, resource-based organization that strengthens community capacity by providing professional support to organizations and individuals in need. The Centre is committed to helping visible minority youth rekindle their dreams and achieve their full potential.

BCRC takes a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of English-speaking youth and community service (the "Holistic Project"). In recognizing that youth have many needs (socio-cultural, educational, and economic) that must be addressed in order for them to achieve, the Centre's multi-interventionist, holistic strategy is progressive and unique. At its foundation is the idea of leveraging partnerships and encouraging collaboration in order to support individuals, families and organizations.

BCRC provides and implements professional innovative support services to individuals, communities, para-public and public organizations. The Centre also develops and runs health, education, socio-culture, and community economic development programs.

The **African and Caribbean Students' Network of Canada (ACSioN)** is the organization pioneering the greatest collaboration of post-secondary students and professionals of African descent in Canada, formally inaugurated in September 2006 and headquartered in Montreal. With a robust organizational framework and common value system supported by its national boards, chapters, and various member-associations, the ACSioN Network provides programs which allow students and professionals of African descent to successfully pursue a united vision and mission centered upon academic, economic, and sociocultural excellence.

The ACSioN Network envisions a community of prosperous, confident, magnanimous, respectable and respected people of African descent, united through their pursuit of the utmost excellence and their willingness to serve the community.

#### *Members of ACCE Committee*

Information and insights herein were provided by the following members of ACCE Committee: Dorothy W. Williams of the Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC), Dwight Best of the African and Caribbean Students' Network of Canada (ACSioN), Velda Bourne, and Nina Kim of the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC).

# The 2015 Employer Survey

The Community Economic Development and Employment Corporation (CEDEC) conducted an employer survey in June and July 2015, with a view to formulate recommendations on how to help businesses attain more diversity in their workforce. The employer survey was designed to better understand the hiring practices of businesses across various sectors and industries along with any needs and challenges they face in establishing a diverse workforce.<sup>1</sup>

## Data analysis

The 24-question employer survey was completed by 23 respondents. The survey was completed mostly by hiring managers, in keeping with the criterion that it is done by “someone in the company that is familiar with or plays a role in the hiring process of the company”. As expected, hiring managers would be very knowledgeable on recruitment norms and practices of the firm, given it is part of their responsibility (82.6% of responding firms).

**Table 1 Respondent role in the company, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
Hiring manager (ex. manager, director, president, etc.)	13	56.5
A member of the internal recruitment team	2	8.7
A human resource representative	1	4.3
Externally via an agency/ head-hunter	0	0
Other	7	30.4

**Table 2 Person responsible for recruiting, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
Hiring manager (ex. manager, director, president, etc.)	19	82.6
A member of the internal recruitment team	7	30.4
A human resource representative	3	13.0
Externally via an agency/ head-hunter	1	4.3
Other	2	8.7

The survey collected information on:

- basic firm characteristics, such as years in business, industry and size;
- employees’ profile in terms of representation by gender, ancestry, and educational attainment;
- recruitment and hiring norms and practices, with a focus on practices with regards to workforce diversity.

<sup>1</sup> In 2013, CEDEC published the ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey 2011-2012 Summary Report. In 2015, a summary report was also prepared based on data from the ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey 2014.

The results, as presented below, provide a profile of the 23 respondents who participated in the survey. The results are intended to shed light on the challenges of those particular businesses in attaining more diversity in their workforce.

The report is organized as follows. First, we present a brief profile of the firms who completed the survey, as well as a profile of their employees. The report then looks at the hiring practices of the firms such as recruitment methods and make up of their pool of interviewees. Finally, we present the initiatives employers have in place in order to create a diverse workforce and the challenges they may face in doing so.

## Firm profile

Though the survey was completed by only a small number of companies (23), they were diverse in terms of the industry in which they operate, the length of time in business, and the number of employees.

**Industry:** Respondent firms included those operating in the professional, scientific and technical services industry (21.7%), finance and insurance (17.4%), educational services (17.4%) and non-profit or community organization (13.0%). Two of the 23 (8.7%) respondents were from the construction industry, likewise retail trade and health care and social assistance, while one each (4.3%) was from transportation and warehousing, information and cultural industries, and arts, entertainment and recreation.

**Table 3 Industry, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
Construction	2	8.7
Retail trade	2	8.7
Transportation and warehousing	1	4.3
Information and cultural industries	1	4.3
Finance and insurance	4	17.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	5	21.7
Educational services	4	17.4
Health care and social assistance	2	8.7
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1	4.3
Non-profit or community organization	3	13.0
Other	2	8.7

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.

**Years in business:** The majority of firms responding to the survey (60.9%) were in business for 20 years or more, while 17.4% were in business for between one to five years. One firm reported being in business for 10 to 15 years and one other for 15 to 20 years.

**Table 4 Years in business, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
1 to 5 years	4	17.4
6 to 10 years	0	0.0
10 to 15 years	1	4.3
15 to 20 years	1	4.3
20 years or more	14	60.9
Not stated	3	13.0

**Size:** Respondent firms included a mix of small, medium and large, in terms of number of employees. Five firms (21.7%) reported having fewer than 10 employees, the same amount reported having 11 to 20 employees. Four (17.4%) respondent firms reported between 21 to 50 employees and another four had more than 500 employees. There was one firm with 51 to 100 employees and another with 101 to 500 employees.

**Table 5 Number of employees, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
Fewer than 10 employees	5	21.7
Between 11 and 20 employees	5	21.7
Between 21 and 50 employees	4	17.4
Between 51 and 100 employees	1	4.3
Between 101 and 500 employees	1	4.3
More than 500 employees	4	17.4
Not stated	3	13.0

## Employee profile

The survey also established that the workforce of some of these firms is diverse in terms of representation by sex, ancestry and educational attainment.

**Gender:** Almost half of the 23 companies (47.8%) reported that more than 50 per cent of the employees were female. Only one company had no female employees, 13% had between one and 10 percent female employees, 8.7% reported between 11 and 25 percent females and 13% had between 26 and 50 percent female employees.



**Table 6 Gender composition of the workforce, 2015**

What percentage of employees are females?	Count	Percentage
0 percent	1	4.3
Between 1 and 10 percent	3	13.0
Between 11 and 25 percent	2	8.7
Between 26 and 50 percent	3	13.0
Between 51 and 75 percent	8	34.8
Between 75 and 100 percent	3	13.0
Not stated	3	13.0

**Ancestry– African descent:** While most firms reported having someone of African descent in their workforce, in most cases they represented 10 per cent or less of the workforce. For instance four firms (17.4%) reported having no one of African descent as employees, 34.8% said they were between 1 and 10 percent of the workforce. Two firms (8.7%) said they comprised 11 to 25 per cent of employees. Of the remaining responding firms, three (13.0%) reported workers of African descent made up 26 to 50 percent of employees, two (8.7%) said between 51 and 75 per cent and one said between 75 and 100 per cent.

**Table 7 Ancestry composition of the workforce, 2015**

What percentage of employees is of African descent?	Count	Percentage
0 percent	4	17.4
Between 1 and 10 percent	8	34.8
Between 11 and 25 percent	2	8.7
Between 26 and 50 percent	3	13.0
Between 51 and 75 percent	2	8.7
Between 75 and 100 percent	1	4.3
Not stated	3	13.0

**Educational attainment:** No respondents reported that the highest level of education attained by staff was a high school diploma. This suggests that responding firms have workforce with post-secondary education qualifications and in some cases with graduate degrees: 39.1% reported employees with masters or professional degrees and 13.0% of respondents said employees included personnel with a Ph.D.

**Table 8 Highest category of educational attainment among employees, 2015**

What is the highest category of education amongst the employees?	Count	Percentage
High school diploma	0	0.0
College diploma	4	17.4
Bachelor's degree	4	17.4
Master's degree/MBA/CFA	9	39.1
Ph.D	3	13.0
Not stated	3	13.0

## Recruitment and hiring practices

The survey asked respondents several questions on their hiring practices. These included questions on how they find candidates for hire, the number of recent hires, and the proportion who were of African descent.

**Recruitment methods:** Among respondents, the most common method used for recruiting of employees is through the company's website (69.6%). This was followed by internal referrals (52.2%), social and professional media (47.8%), then job boards and networking and campus recruitment, both by 43.5% of respondent firms. Government employment service providers, placement agencies and job fairs were used only by a few of the companies.

**Table 9 Recruitment methods, 2015**

How does your company find candidates?	Count	Percentage
Company's website	16	69.6
Job boards	10	43.5
Social and professional media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	11	47.8
Governmental employment service providers	3	13.0
Internal referrals	12	52.2
Networking/professional associations, campus recruitment	10	43.5
External: placement agency/head-hunter	4	17.4
Job fairs	3	13.0
Other	5	21.7

**Recent hires:** When asked about hires in the past 12 months, almost all noted that they had done some hiring, with only two firms (8.7%) saying they did not. Most of them had hired between one to ten persons (56.5%).

**Table 10 Number of hires in the past 12 months, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
None	2	8.7
Between 1 and 5	8	34.8
Between 6 and 10	5	21.7
Between 11 and 25	1	4.3
Between 26 and 50	1	4.3
Between 51 and 100	0	0.0
More than 100	1	4.3
Not stated	5	21.7

**Interviewees of African descent:** About one-fifth (21.7%) of firms said that none of the interviewees were of African descent. Seven firms (30.4%) said between one to ten percent of interviewees in the past 12 months were of African descent, two firms (8.7%) reported that people of African descent was over 50% of those interviewed.

**Table 11 Interviewees of African descent, 2015**

Among the applicants interviewed for your company's openings in the past 12 months, what proportion were of African descent?	Count	Percentage
0 percent	5	21.7
Between 1 and 10 percent	7	30.4
Between 11 and 25 percent	2	8.7
Between 26 and 50 percent	2	8.7
Between 51 and 75 percent	1	4.3
Between 75 and 100 percent	1	4.3
Not stated	5	21.7

**Turnover rates:** No respondents reported having more than half of their employees staying with the company for fewer than 6 months. Among most companies that responded to the survey, an important proportion (26.1%) said more than half of the employees stay over 5 years on the job.

**Table 12 Employee turnovers, 2015**

Firms who reported having more than 50% of their employees staying within the company for:	Count	Percentage
Fewer than 6 months	0	0
Between 6 and 12 months	5	21.7
Between 13 and 2 years	4	17.4
Between 2 and 5 years	2	8.7
Over 5 years	6	26.1
Not stated	5	21.7

Note: Counts do not add up to 23 and percentages do not add up to 100%. This is because respondents were asked several questions about the proportion of their employees who stay for fewer than 6 months, between 6 and 12 months, between 13 months and 2 years, between 2 years and 5 years and over 5 years. (See Appendix for details.) Figures shown here are a summary of question-by-question results.

**Diversity hiring plan:** Only six firms (26.1%) reported having a diversity hiring plan. One aspect that is noteworthy: the number of non-response for this question is relatively high (30%) in comparison to other questions on the survey.

All six firms with diversity hiring plans said that their plan included people with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples and people of African descent. Five (21.7%) said the diversity plan included mature workers 45 years of age and older. Although only six firms reported having a diversity hiring plan, nine firms reported visible minorities and women are included in their diversity hiring plan.

**Table 13 Diversity hiring plan, 2015**

Do you have a diversity hiring plan?	Count	Percentage
Yes	6	26.1
No	10	43.5
Not stated	7	30.4

**Table 14 Groups included in firms' diversity hiring plan, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
People with disabilities	6	26.1
Aboriginal peoples	6	26.1
People of African descent	6	26.1
Mature workers (over 45 years of age)	5	21.7
Visible minorities	9	39.1
Women	9	39.1
Not stated	7	30.4

**Intentions to improve or expand diversity hiring practices:** The majority of firms did not have intentions to improve their diversity hiring practices or did not respond to the question on planned improvements to their diversity hiring plan. Again, the number of non-response for this question is relatively high: 8 out of 23 respondents (34.7%) did not provide an answer when asked about plans to improve diversity hiring practices with regards to people with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, matured workers, women, visible minorities.

When asked about plans to improve diversity hiring practices with regards to people of African descent, 9 respondents chose not to answer. Only 13% said they plan to improve their diversity hiring practices for people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples and 17.4% said they plan to do so for people of African descent and for mature workers. Plans to improve hiring practices towards women and visible minorities fared better, with 30.4% and 26.1% of companies, respectively, saying they plan to do so.

**Table 15 Intentions to improve or expand diversity hiring practices, 2015**

The company is planning to improve or expand its diversity hiring plan for the following groups:	Count	Percentage
People with disabilities	3	13.0
Aboriginal peoples	3	13.0
People of African descent	4	17.4
Mature workers	4	17.4
Visible minorities	6	26.1
Women	7	30.4

**Support with diversity plan:** When asked about the type of support needed to help implement a diversity hiring plan, the most common response was “identifying best practices and systemic challenges”, which was selected by 34.8% of respondents. This was followed by “effective recruitment strategies that address barriers experienced by underrepresented groups” (30.4%). An equal proportion of respondents (17.4%) said “workshops on integrating diversity into the workplace”, and “tools to measure progress in removing those barriers” would help, but just as many said nothing was needed.

**Table 16 Support needed to help implement diversity hiring practices, 2015**

	Count	Percentage
Workshops on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce	3	13.0
Workshops on integrating diversity into the workplace	4	17.4
Tools to measure progress in removing those barriers	4	17.4
Effective recruitment strategies that address barriers experienced by underrepresented groups	7	30.4
Identifying best practices and systemic challenges	8	34.8
None	4	17.4
Other	3	13.0

### Challenges in attaining a diverse workplace

For each the following questions on the challenges companies may face in attaining a diverse workforce, the number of non-response is, again, relatively high (30% or above).

**Recruiting and hiring people from certain groups:** When asked about challenges in creating a diverse workplace by recruiting from various disadvantage populations, the responses revealed the following: 17.4% said they “very much” or “quite a bit” faced challenges recruiting and hiring people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples; 13% said they “very much” or “quite a bit” faced challenges recruiting and hiring people of African descent, and 8.7% said it was so for mature workers and women. Only 4.3% said that was the case for visible minorities.

**Table 17 Challenges in recruiting and hiring people from certain groups, 2015**

To what extent your company faces challenges in <u>recruiting and hiring</u> members of this group?		Not at all	A little or moderate	Quite a bit or very much	Not applicable	Not stated
<b>People with disabilities</b>	Count	6	3	4	3	7
	Percentage	26.1	13.0	17.4	13.0	30.4
<b>Aboriginal peoples</b>	Count	7	0	4	5	7
	Percentage	30.4	0	17.4	21.7	30.4
<b>People of African descent</b>	Count	10	1	3	2	7
	Percentage	43.5	4.3	13.0	8.7	30.4
<b>Mature workers</b>	Count	8	3	2	3	7
	Percentage	34.8	13.0	8.7	13.0	30.4
<b>Visible minorities</b>	Count	11	3	1	1	7
	Percentage	47.8	13.0	4.3	4.3	30.4
<b>Women</b>	Count	12	1	2	1	7
	Percentage	52.2	4.3	8.7	4.3	30.4

**Integrating people from certain groups:** For the most part, the vast majority of firms said they did not experience challenges in integrating people with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, people of African descent, visible minorities, mature workers or women. But among those groups, people with disabilities were most likely to be challenging to integrate: four (17.4%) firms said this was “quite a bit” or “very much” the case. Only one (4.3%) or two (8.6%) firms indicated that this was the case for the other groups.

**Table 18 Challenges in integrating people from certain groups, 2015**

To what extent your company faces challenges in <u>integrating</u> members of this group?		Not at all	A little or moderate	Quite a bit or very much	Not applicable	Not stated
<b>People with disabilities</b>	Count	3	2	4	7	7
	Percentage	13.0	8.7	17.4	30.4	30.4
<b>Aboriginal peoples</b>	Count	5	1	1	9	7
	Percentage	21.7	4.3	4.3	39.1	30.4
<b>People of African descent</b>	Count	7	3	2	3	8
	Percentage	30.4	13.0	8.7	13.0	34.8
<b>Mature workers</b>	Count	6	4	1	5	7
	Percentage	26.1	17.4	4.3	21.7	30.4
<b>Visible minorities</b>	Count	9	3	2	2	7
	Percentage	39.1	13.0	8.7	8.7	30.4
<b>Women</b>	Count	10	3	1	2	7
	Percentage	43.5	13.0	4.3	8.7	30.4

**Retaining people from certain groups:** In terms of employee retention, very few firms said they face “quite a bit” or “very much” challenges in doing so for people with disabilities (2 firms or 8.7%), Aboriginal peoples (1 firm or 4.3%), people of African descent (2 firms or 8.7%), visible minorities (2 firms or 8.7%), mature workers (1 firm or 4.3%) and women (1 firm or 4.3%).

**Table 19 Challenges in retaining people from certain groups, 2015**

To what extent your company faces challenges in <u>retaining</u> members of this group?		Not at all	A little or moderate	Quite a bit or very much	Not applicable	Not stated
<b>People with disabilities</b>	Count	5	1	2	8	7
	Percentage	21.7	4.3	8.7	34.8	30.4
<b>Aboriginal peoples</b>	Count	6	0	1	9	7
	Percentage	26.1	0	4.3	39.1	30.4
<b>People of African descent</b>	Count	10	1	2	3	7
	Percentage	43.5	4.3	8.7	13.0	30.4
<b>Mature workers</b>	Count	7	2	1	5	8
	Percentage	30.4	8.7	4.3	21.7	34.8
<b>Visible minorities</b>	Count	10	2	2	2	7
	Percentage	43.5	8.7	8.7	8.7	30.4
<b>Women</b>	Count	12	1	1	2	7
	Percentage	52.2	4.3	4.3	8.7	30.4

**Promoting people from certain groups:** When asked about challenges in promoting people from these same disadvantaged groups, very few (one or two companies) said this was an issue for them. It is worth noting that the majority of companies did not provide an answer to this question, with combined response categories of “not applicable” and “not stated” being consistently over 50%. One exception: in terms of challenges promoting women, slightly less than 50% of respondents chose “not applicable” or simply did not answer the question.

**Table 20 Challenges in promoting people from certain groups, 2015**

To what extent your company faces challenges in promoting members of this group?		Not at all	A little or moderate	Quite a bit or very much	Not applicable	Not stated
<b>People with disabilities</b>	Count	4	0	2	10	7
	Percentage	17.4	0	8.7	43.5	30.4
<b>Aboriginal peoples</b>	Count	5	0	1	10	7
	Percentage	21.7	0	4.3	43.5	30.4
<b>People of African descent</b>	Count	5	3	2	5	8
	Percentage	21.7	13.0	8.7	21.7	34.8
<b>Mature workers</b>	Count	5	2	1	6	9
	Percentage	21.7	8.7	4.3	26.1	39.1
<b>Visible minorities</b>	Count	7	2	2	4	8
	Percentage	30.4	8.7	8.7	17.4	34.8
<b>Women</b>	Count	9	2	1	3	8
	Percentage	39.1	8.7	4.3	13.0	34.8

### Challenges in attaining a diverse workplace: what the respondents said

When asked to elaborate on the specific challenges they faced, respondents described them as follows:

- *There is no discrimination at the company and all candidates are equally viewed (they are hired based on their capacity to perform the job).*
- *There are very few People of African descent in my community. I can't determine the Aboriginal status of applicants.*
- *Stigma and people's attitudes sometimes [contribute to challenges in recruiting candidates from certain disadvantaged groups].*
- *[The main challenge is] to provide a work environment that is accepting of diversity from upper management to the shop floor. Traditionally "the old boy's network" is still in operation and systemic racism makes it uncomfortable for diversity employees, especially people of African descent. To establish a base-line understanding, including key metrics, of the Company's current strengths and weaknesses with respect to workplace diversity has not effectively and efficiently been address[ed], so diversity employees quit, become users of the EFAP program due to effects of discrimination and*



*non-inclusion. To recommend effective and efficient strategic actions, initiatives, and goals and evaluate the outcomes of each annually.*

- *Our jobs outside of our offices would require full mobility making it difficult to integrate those with physical disabilities. Our target populations are African-Canadians or visible-minorities, but we would not automatically refuse to hire an Aboriginal candidate.*
- *Our company is successful at recruiting candidates from visible minority backgrounds. Our challenge is that the front line and middle management candidates we hire represent the diverse community we serve, but upper management and board members are not representative of the community. This is changing and the leadership team is far more diverse than it used to be, but there is still work to be done.*
- *[Our company is] currently active in diversity recruitment. There is a Diversity Leadership Council (DLC), which was formed in 2010 to enhance the diversity and cultural competence of the organization to create an atmosphere that is supportive of diverse populations. Through the DLC, the company intended to develop a sustainable workplace where all can contribute in an engaging work environment assisting in attracting and recruiting the best talent while continuing to motivate existing employees. But, there is no mandate for INCLUSION. There are no inclusion policies or practices leaving the Aboriginal, people of African descent, visible minorities and mature workers isolated from work teams and work groups and subject to systemic challenges alone and often bullied and harassed and discriminated by management and non-management employees. The DLC is ineffective and falls short because diversity employees are excluded from the initiatives, especially non-management employees and women. DLC members meet only four times a year with two of the meetings being in-person. A council member is expected to attend at least 3 of the 4 meetings annually. All council members are expected to contribute a minimum of 2 days per quarter worth of time for the attending of meetings, recruitment activities, outreach programs, and other council-led initiatives. However, there is no interaction with the groups they are there to represent and they do not appear to have any power.*
- *There is no Aboriginal HR Manager, there is no African descent/visible minority HR Manager and most HR professionals do not have harassment or discrimination investigation training. Most employees [are] hire[d] on early in their career and become eligible to retire in their late 40's early 50's, so new hires that are mature workers are not actively recruited as a rule. There are so few positions and such a low turnover [that] promotions are rare.*
- *The systemic discrimination with built in barriers and isolation make promoting Aboriginal, visible minorities, especially people of African descent, and mature workers challenging. Mature workers are thought to be "too old to learn" and visible minorities, especially people of African descent are not SEEN. If you do not SEE the employee, how can you promote the employee? Very challenging.*
- *I don't know the Aboriginal Status of any employee. All but two employees are 45+, so they form the majority.*

- *The company is changing and has gone from little diversity in its upper management to a team that is from diverse cultural backgrounds. This is a recent change and needs to also work its way into our board structure.*
- *Once someone is connected we try to keep them for as long as possible until our funding runs out. We usually let people go only because of funding issues.*

## Conclusion and Lessons Learned

Discrimination describes unfair behaviour or differential treatment on the basis of a group characteristic that results in negative consequences for that group. Researchers have found evidence of discrimination by some employers unwilling to hire immigrant employees or refusing to hire individuals with certain characteristics related to their name, language or accent. Other studies have shown that visible minority immigrants are more likely to be overqualified for their job and experience lower wages than their similarly educated Canadian-born or white immigrant worker.<sup>2</sup>

The ACCE 2015 survey was completed by only a small number of companies (23). Therefore, it would be presumptuous to draw conclusions at this point. Nevertheless, a number of lessons-learned emerge from the analysis of the survey.

**Raising awareness:** There appears to be a lack of knowledge and awareness about issues of workforce diversity. For instance, there was some confusion as to whether the recruitment practices of the company included a diversity hiring plan. While six firms reported having a diversity hiring plan, nine firms reported visible minorities and women are included in their diversity hiring plan. There may also be confusion between the concepts of people of African descent and visible minorities, as those two groups are not mutually exclusive.

### **Recognizing discomfort and reluctance to report on workforce diversity practices:**

One aspect that is remarkable is the importance of non-response to many of the survey questions. The number of non-response for all questions that deal with matters of workforce diversity is quite high, at 30% or above. When asked about challenges in creating a diverse workplace by recruiting from various disadvantage populations, or by integrating, retaining or promoting the various groups identified, around a third of respondents chose not to answer and large proportions of them (in some cases, more than half) stated that they did “not at all” face any challenge or that it was “not applicable”, depending on the specific question or group of interest.

**All disadvantaged groups are equal, but some are more equal than others:** Visible minorities and women are two groups that seem to fare better when it comes to workforce diversity. When asked about plans to improve diversity hiring practices only three companies out of 23 said they plan to improve their diversity hiring practices for people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples and four said they plan to do so for people of African descent and for

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<sup>2</sup> For a fuller discussion of these issues, see the 2015 summary report on the ACCE Undergraduate Student Survey 2014

mature workers. Plans to improve hiring practices towards women and visible minorities in general fared better, with seven and six companies, respectively, saying they plan to do so.

**Changing mentalities:** As one respondent wrote, the key challenge is to provide a work environment that is accepting of diversity *from upper management to the shop floor*. Identifying best practices and systemic challenges and raising knowledge of effective recruitment strategies that address barriers experienced by underrepresented groups will help increase awareness among those responsible for recruitment, and those sharing the work environment.