



the face of leadership™

Inclusive Leadership Forum 2024 *virtual event*

SEPT 24-26, 2024

*event summary
and resource
guide*

FORUM SPONSORS



DAILY SPONSORS



ODLUM BROWN
Investing for Generations®



#INCLUSIVELEADERSHIPFORUM



minervabc



school/minervabc

about the inclusive leadership forum

Thank you for joining us for the 6th annual **Face of Leadership™ Inclusive Leadership Forum!**

The purpose of the Forum is simple: to connect people and organizations across BC who are committed to advancing women in leadership and who want to learn and share knowledge about how to create more inclusive workplace cultures.

As organizational leaders in the private, public and social sector, we all have a role to play in advancing gender equality in the workplace.

The Minerva team has curated an agenda that blends practical strategies and case studies, along with presentations about how to take an intersectional approach to equity, diversity and inclusion. We hope you leave with new ideas and strategies to try.

We are grateful to our engaging speakers and committed sponsors who make this event possible. **Thank you to BCLC, PwC Canada, Best Buy, TransLink, Odlum Brown, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, and Global BC** for supporting our work. We are also grateful for you, our attendees. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to change the face of leadership in BC.

We hope this resource guide will allow a revisit of key takeaway points, exploration of ways to apply learnings in the workplace and life, and a deeper dive into the content through highlighted resources.

Tina Strehlke
CEO, Minerva BC

about minerva bc

Minerva BC is a Vancouver-based charity that is dedicated to advancing the leadership of women and girls. For 25 years we have helped women across British Columbia expand their capacities through education, mentorship and leadership training.

We specialize in delivering high-impact programs that equip women and girls with the knowledge and tools they need to step into their full leadership potential. We also support the business and wider community in implementing attitudes and systems that champion women's achievement and propel them into leadership positions.



breaking barriers, developing leaders

Tina Strehlke,
CEO, Minerva BC

session overview

Minerva's CEO set the stage for the 2024 Inclusive Leadership Forum by sharing some reflections and findings from Minerva's **Unobstructed Journeys: Dismantling Barriers to Gender Equality in the Workplace** report.

session highlights

70% of women and **76%** of men in BC believe gender equality has been achieved in the workplace, but representation and women's experiences tell a different story.

- **38%** of women in Canada hold Corporate Director and Executive Officer positions¹
- **10%** of Black, Indigenous and women of colour hold senior leadership positions (across all roles)

Women have less access to opportunities that help them advance in their careers. For women and men **in leadership positions** in BC:

- **57%** of women have participated in leadership training vs **68%** of men
- **55%** of women have had opportunities to lead critical work vs **70%** of men
- **46%** of women have access to peer groups vs **62%** of men

ideas for action

- **Awareness and Open Discussion:** Talk to women in your organization to understand what is working, and not, in terms of career growth, flexibility and culture
- **Focus on Inclusion as a Skill to Develop:** Create a culture where advancing gender equity is a shared responsibility and evaluate and reward leaders on their inclusion-focused values, behaviours and results
- **Create Space for Community and Networks:** Train leaders to proactively support employee's career development, and create opportunities for women in your workplace to connect and learn from each other
- **Engage in, and Support, Leadership Development:** Pay for memberships to women's industry associations, sponsor attendance at women's conferences and events, and ensure all managers are skilled at providing fair and effective feedback to all employees

resources

- [Unobstructed Journeys Research Report](#)
- [Canadian Prosperity Project 2024 Zero Report](#)
- [McKinsey & Co Women in the Workplace 2024 Report](#)

stay connected



[linkedin.com/in/tstrehlke](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tstrehlke)



minervabc.ca

unlearning silence at work

Elaine Lin Hering,
Author, Facilitator
and Speaker

Tara Robertson,
DEI Consultant and
Coach

session overview

In this session, Elaine Lin Hering, author of the best-selling book **Unlearning Silence: How to Speak your Mind, Unleash Talent, and Live More Fully**, spoke with Tara Robertson, a Vancouver-based DEI Consultant and Coach, about silence in the workplace. Together they explored the barriers to speaking up in the workplace, and the impact of silence on DEI efforts. Elaine shared her insights on the role of culture and upbringing in silence and offered actionable advice to enable leaders to create more inclusive environments.

session highlights + key points

- There is silence that is learned and there are ways other people silence us. Silence can be learned as a survival tactic and survival mechanism – to keep a job, pay bills, stay in the country, in a relationship, and having a seat at the table – it is part of a toolkit for surviving in a world that is not always kind or welcoming.
- We need different perspectives and ideas to be able to lead in a complex world. Advice like ‘just speak up’ or you need more courage or more confidence falls flat if we fail to recognize that silence has been learned and there are real and perceived costs associated with speaking up. We need to change that view so people know their thoughts are welcome, that difference will be accepted, recognized and rewarded. With that, thoughts and insights are much more likely to be shared.
- Innovation and collaboration require voice. Silence inhibits voice. Unlearning silence needs to happen at the individual, leader and cultural levels.

Unlearning Silence System:

Leader: As a leader, your actions speak louder than your words. It’s not enough to tell people to speak up, you need to stop silencing people.

Self: Each of us has learned and benefited from silence. Unlearning silence allows us to actively choose where and when we lend our talent.

Culture: Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Building a culture of voice requires policies and practices that reward voice rather than silence it.

“ Opportunity for learning and growth
hides in the perspectives we don't
want to hear. ”

con't...

ideas for action

Tips for creating a culture of voice:

- Build relationships with employees
- Call in different perspectives
- Use your own voice to lead by example
- Live in alignment with what you say and what you do

resource

- [Unlearning Silence](#)

stay connected



elainelinhering.com



tararobertson.ca

finding your voice, leading with purpose

Natasha Questel,
Chief Social Purpose
Officer, BCLC

Candice Loring,
Director of Indigenous
Relations, Genome BC

Neelam Sahota,
CEO, DIVERSEcity Community
Resources Society

Anita Atwal,
Anita Atwal Law

session overview

In this session, four accomplished senior leaders spoke candidly about their leadership: how they found their voice, and how they lead with purpose and authenticity. The panel also shared actionable ideas to foster inclusivity for all women in the workplace.

session highlights + key points

Natasha

"Over the years I have become more self aware that as a leader there are areas I need to over-index because if I'm feeling insecure about showing that as a leader, I can imagine that people I'm working with are feeling the same"

"I have the ability to occupy a lot of space because for many years I was small on so many fronts – from race to gender to income levels – It has taken a lifetime to learn to take space because often times we make ourselves small as women because we worry if we make ourselves too large, we won't be liked. I really have struggled with that for a long time – I've been through a lot – I have had to reinvent my career and reinvent myself, but I give myself a pat on the back for having the courage to make my way through a lot of tough things"

Candice

"I don't enter relationships like I'm there to help someone be better. Sometimes it is being able to see the good in people when they can't see it and help them see themselves through new eyes. That is something I had along the way – people that saw things in me that I didn't quite see yet and they helped nurture me to see that in myself"

"I really believe in leading with heart, not ego. My grandmother had a big name as a hereditary chief, but she never measured her wealth by how much she accumulated, rather by how much of herself she had to give. For me, being in a leadership position isn't necessarily elevating oneself to a position of power, it is about giving oneself in service of others, and success is really being measured by the success of those around you"

con't...

Neelam

"I'm here because of all of me – saying to yourself, I'm going to unpeel the onion that has been inside of me, and I'm going to bring up more and more of my personality. I'm going to test the waters – that is what I think is what brings people in. The biggest part of courage is when you actually resonate with someone else and they say "yeah, that was my experience as well" – that is the moment when you start living your truth"

"For leadership, I'm a big believer that it starts off with a basic humanity of care and compassion. I care about you, and I care about what is happening in your life and from there trust is built"

Anita

"Once you get to a place where you can help others out, extend a hand to that next generation, you need to help open doors and make yourself available"

"I don't think we can ignore the fact that to be successful, no matter how you define that success, it requires a lot of hard work along with a lot of discipline and a lot of consistency. You aren't always going to be perfect and some days you will waver, but in the long run I think you really do have to put in the hard work to be successful in whatever it is you are trying to accomplish"

stay connected



[linkedin.com/in/natasha-questel](https://www.linkedin.com/in/natasha-questel)



[linkedin.com/in/candice-loring](https://www.linkedin.com/in/candice-loring)



[linkedin.com/in/neelamsahota](https://www.linkedin.com/in/neelamsahota)



[linkedin.com/in/anita-atwal](https://www.linkedin.com/in/anita-atwal)

building a future-fit workforce in an age of transformation

Carolyn Rush,
Partner,
PwC Canada

Emily Lublow,
Manager, Workforce
of the Future, PwC
Canada

Manu Varma,
Head of People and
Culture, SWITCH

Wendy Corneau,
VP Real Estate, Commercial
Strategy & Innovation, TransLink

Sydney Stephen,
Sales Development,
Bucketlist Rewards

session overview

Change is everywhere—and employees are feeling it. PwC's latest Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey builds on the theme of reinvention and readiness, exploring themes related to workforce including leading through transformation, unleashing GenAI and creating a next-gen employee experience. Panelists discussed how the survey results impact the future of work for Canadian employers.

session highlights + key points

PwC's survey found that more than half of workers feel there's too much change at work happening at once, and **44%** don't understand why things need to change at all. Workers also report increased workloads, uncertainty about job security and pervasive financial struggles. At the same time, there are signs of optimism: most employees say they're ready to adapt to new ways of working including embracing upskilling and AI. These mixed signals suggest a workforce caught between today and tomorrow.

Focal Areas for a Future Fit Workforce:

Leading through disruption:

- **58%** of workers say they've experienced more change at work in the past year than in the 12 months prior
- **75%** feel ready to adapt to new ways of working
- **69%** are excited about opportunities to learn and grow in their role
- **43%** say recent changes they have experienced makes them concerned about job security

Nearly half of workers have used GenAI at least once in the last year, but far fewer are using it regularly and only **7%** use it daily.

More employees say they are likely to change employer in the coming year than during the "Great Resignation" **25%** in 2024 versus **16%** in 2022.

“ For employees feeling a change and feeling that overwhelm, a way to help combat that is through communication with leadership and through teams. If we can improve communication, it's not going to solve all our problems, but it can definitely help to alleviate the stress and anxiety that employees are feeling. ”

Sydney

con't...

“To help build a resilient workforce, we need to have a mindset of experimentation and being agile. People need to be able to fail quickly without the fear of reprisal.”

Manu

“Resilience is built into our strategy; it is built into our culture. Building strong leadership resiliency can inspire the rest of your team and help guide them in what they are moving through.”

Wendy

ideas for action

How to build a future-fit workforce in an age of transformation

- Lead in new ways to build resilience among a stressed-out workforce
- Engage employees on change to drive transformation
- Help employees lead innovation
- Instill confidence in GenAI
- Recognize how critical skill-building is to workers
- Prioritize the employee experience for performance

resource

- [PwC Workforce Hopes and Fears Report](#)

stay connected



linkedin.com/in/carolynrush



linkedin.com/in/emilylublow



linkedin.com/in/manu-varma



linkedin.com/in/wendy-corneau



linkedin.com/in/sydney-stephen

2-minute talks: leading through uncertainty

Camelia Cirjoi,
Technology
Executive

Daniela Cohen,
Transformative
Conversations

Farah Shakir, People
and Culture Leader

Karan Johar,
Co-founder,
Glow Within Foundation

Melissa Busse,
Professional Leadership
Coach and Facilitator

session overview

This fast-paced session featured five local experts who had 120 seconds and one slide to share practical strategies to help lead people and teams through change. Attendees walked away with new ideas for how to engage the workforce of the future.

session highlights + key points

Important themes emerged around the need to dig into and lead from our values, create conflict-positive spaces, and how to use both a coaching approach and AI to inspire innovation on our teams.

Resilience: Leading through uncertainty – Farah

- L:** Listen to your intuitive voice
- E:** Establish your personal values
- A:** Accept your potential, transcend self-skepticism
- D:** Discover your authentic self

Navigating Conflict – Daniela

- Adopt a 'conflict-positive mindset
- Create a structure where people can be fully heard
- Integrate a conflict engagement system into your organizational culture

Leading in the AI driven world – Camelia

- Artificial Intelligence is here to stay. Embrace it!
- AI is not a replacement for human talent: it is a powerful tool to augment and amplify human capabilities
- Critical pillars to adopting AI: Talent Readiness, Business Readiness, Leadership

Leading through Uncertainty and Change through Authenticity – Karan

- Build THICK Trust
- Foster Psychological Safety
- Lead with Shared Values

con't...

What Makes Coaching an Effective Leadership Tool? – Melissa

Open-ended questions are one of the most powerful tools a coach can use to help generate insights during times of uncertainty. Try asking one or two and notice if there are shifts in tone, insight, body language, outcomes or results.

- What would excellent results look like?
- How has your experience prepared you for this situation?
- What challenges can you foresee?
- What will matter about this in a year from now?

resource

- [Essential Impact Leadership Coaching](#)

stay connected



linkedin.com/in/carmeliacirjoi



linkedin.com/in/fyshakir



linkedin.com/in/kpjohar



linkedin.com/in/melissa-busse-bsc-pcc-clc



linkedin.com/in/daniela-cohen

understanding the hourglass ceiling: how time impacts women's health and career

Dr. Lyndall Strazdins, Professor,
Australian National University

session overview

Lyndall Strazdins leads research on time as a determinant of health. Most recently she has been using new methods to reveal the health harms of long work hours, which are emerging as one of the most important drivers of social and gender inequality. The so-called "hourglass ceiling" pushes otherwise qualified and capable women out of well-paid and influential jobs, compromising their income and creating a two-tiered, gender-polarized labour market that undermines equality. This session explored research on how time and health are related and applied these time-health relationships to an analysis of gender inequality in employment.

session highlights + key points

The hourglass ceiling refers to the time gap that women experience in the workplace. Top jobs tend to couple long hours with high incomes. When women try to crack the (hour) glass ceiling, they will do so by trading off their health (while men do not).

- In North America and Europe, women spend **16%** of their day in unpaid care and domestic work versus men who spend **9.1%** of their day.
- Gender equality policies aim for full and equal pay and participation but solve it with flexible and part-time options which reinforce work hour polarization. We want women to work (and earn) as men currently do but accept that they are not free to do so
- In top positions, gender wage gaps are the widest and women's representation is the lowest
- Inequality is not about 'one thing', it is a system with multiple pieces that interlock. In the labour market a key inequality system is the interplay between earning, time and health

ideas for action

Leading by example : the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce

- Time for Life – ensuring our workforce is provided with adequate time to rest
- Wellbeing – ensuring that mental health and wellbeing is prioritized
- Diversity and Inclusion – Ensuring the industry can attract and retain a diverse range of people

“ We focus on the gender wage gap, but what about the gender time gap and the advantage this delivers in the labour market? ”

resource

- [The Unequal Hour: how time is shaping health](#)

stay connected



[linkedin.com/in/lyndall-strazdins](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lyndall-strazdins)



researchportalplus.anu.edu.au/

reducing burnout and improving mental health for gen z women

Amal Masri, Founder,
Fix the Broken Rung

session overview

In this session, we heard from Amal Masri, a purpose-driven executive and founder of the only campaign that addresses the combined impact of racial and gender bias in the workplace by targeting the first promotion point from entry-level to manager. Amal shared stories from her work with Gen Z and immigrant women, as well as tactics and strategies that all leaders can use to reduce burnout and improve mental health for all employees.

session highlights + key points

Workplace burnout is on the rise globally, and women and workers under the age of 30 are at greatest risk. Burnout is caused by chronic workplace stress and is characterized by three things: feelings of exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job; and reduced professional efficacy.

Employees that have a very reasonable workload can still become extremely burnt out because they don't have a sense of belonging. Gen Z women care about high achievement and recognition. Providing better feedback is a solution to making them feel seen and heard and showing them that they are important enough to receive that kind of coaching.

Career development and career planning is key – once a month, managers should be having a conversation with their employees that's purely dedicated to development. In addition to creating an individual development plan at the beginning of the year, and a performance review at the end, there should be continuous and structured micro conversations with career feedback so there are no surprises. It should be aligned to the North Star of a woman's overall career and where she wants to go.

Help women develop strong interpersonal relationships at work. For women of colour, for immigrants, there are multiple barriers that are exclusionary. It is difficult to build bonds and relationships if you come from a different culture and don't have similar commonalities. It really helps to have a process for how to build relationships. To do this, go through the org chart and let them know who they should be talking to, which relationships they should build. Prep them to be able to talk to senior leaders so they aren't intimidated, to know what questions to ask and how to follow-up and keep building that relationship.

78% of women recall being called emotional versus **11%** of men, and **56%** of women recall being called unlikable versus **16%** of men. Women are 7 times more likely to internalize negative stereotypes about themselves and to think about themselves that way, whereas men tend to do the opposite.

“ We give women emotional solutions to structural problems. ”

con't...

ideas for action

- Build a team that has high belonging and psychological safety.
- Make the unwritten cultural codes more visible and transparent.
- Give feedback that is actionable, specific and precise. Instead of saying 'you should work on your team leadership skills' offer a specific example of what to improve, for example, 'you need to do a better job delegating tasks'.
- Support women's career planning and development - help them navigate the system and build strong interpersonal relationships.

stay connected



[linkedin.com/in/amalmasri](https://www.linkedin.com/in/amalmasri)



[#FixTheBrokenRung](#)

beyond the first job: accelerating immigrants' career ascension into top leadership teams

Aminat Muibi,
Researcher and
PhD candidate,
UVIC

Fariba Pacheleh,
Director of Corporate
Projects, BC Liquor
Distribution Branch

Sandhya Ghai,
Director, Equity,
Diversity & Inclusion,
SFU Library

Sobhana Jaya-Madhavan,
Chief Impact Officer,
MSM Unify

Olga Stachova,
CEO, MOSAIC
(Moderator)

session overview

Immigrant women face distinct challenges integrating and advancing in the labour market, despite the tremendous skills and experience they bring. In this session, we heard findings from a recent study completed by MOSAIC and UVIC, that examines the experiences of immigrants in the BC labour market. We also heard from three immigrant women who've achieved top leadership positions, as they shared valuable insights about enabling the successful integration of immigrant women leaders into the workforce.

session highlights + key points

- In a BC study of immigrants' career ascension into top leadership jobs, female racialized immigrants accounted for **only 1% of executives**. In comparison, female racialized immigrants represent **8.4%** of Canada's population, **11.2%** of BC's population, and **18.2%** of Vancouver's population.
- Female racialized immigrants are almost completely absent in senior leadership teams in BC's top firms.
- Among the 708 executives across 97 of BC's Top Employers, only **4%** were racialized immigrants.

“**Inclusive environment sounds like a cliché. You have to build it. I create psychological safety for my team – they can make mistakes, and they know that I am there to support them.**”

Fariba

“**Clarifying unwritten rules and expectations in the workplace is needed. I help my colleagues navigate this and encourage them to ask questions and set boundaries. As a leader you have to take care.**”

Sandhya

con't...

“ I try to keep things simple. I approach leadership from a place of empathy and humanity. Everyone has difficulties – that will never change. I try to combine a deep level of respect and empathy, but also set clear expectations for performance. ”

Sobhana

ideas for action

Recommendations for employers:

- Create a culture of inclusion through mentorship and sponsorship programs.
- Training should be related to performance, evaluations, and promotions, and managerial training to credit contributions fairly.
- Leverage immigrants' experience and skills by placing immigrants where their skills are most useful, establish a buddy system with domestic colleagues, and redesign hiring, recognition and promotion to value international experience.

resource

- [Beyond the First Job Report](#)

stay connected



linkedin.com/in/sobhana-jaya-madhavan



linkedin.com/in/aminat-muibi



linkedin.com/in/faribapacheleh



linkedin.com/in/sandhya-ghai



linkedin.com/in/olgastachova

turning career challenges into opportunities: the power of resilience

Adobea Foli,
Speaker + Career Coach

session overview

In this session, Adobea Foli invited us to rethink how resilience can be a powerful force for personal and collective growth. Building on themes from the opening session, Adobea explored how resilience, combined with community, renewal, and commitment, can help us overcome career challenges and transform traditional structures. Drawing from her journey as an immigrant and her work helping accomplished newcomers achieve fulfilling careers in Canada, Adobea shared practical strategies to enhance individual resilience, drive personal growth, and create impactful change in careers and beyond.

session highlights

The Resilience Burden

- **Resilience in isolation** – there are dangers to individualism and over emphasis on resilience
- **Resilience alone is not enough** – it places undue burden on the individual, especially women and marginalized groups
- **Hardness and Grit lead to burnout** – carrying the burden on our shoulders alone leads to burnout

Rest & Recovery includes: Pausing, Reflecting, Recovering and Renewal

A Strong Support System includes: Mentors, Allies and Community

Workplace Inclusive Support Systems include: Employee Resource Groups – safe spaces for employees to connect; structured Mentorship & Sponsorship Programs; and on-going training on inclusive practices

ideas for action

- Hold systems accountable for the challenges they create
- Address systemic barriers by going beyond surface-level issues
- Advocate for more inclusive practices within the workplace
- Create equitable practices to help resilience thrive

“It’s not enough to keep bouncing back from the same challenges. We need to work towards changing the systems that create those challenges in the first place.”

resources

- [Resilience Redefined | Handbook](#)

stay connected



[linkedin.com/in/adobeafoliapm](https://www.linkedin.com/in/adobeafoliapm)



adobeafoli.com

being an active ally at work regardless of your title

Dr. Golnaz Golnaraghi,
CEO, Accelerate
Her Future

Sara Aghvami,
Director of IDEB,
Best Buy Canada

session overview

Allyship is a commitment to standing in solidarity with those who face systemic barriers. In this presentation, Dr. Golnaz Golnaraghi, CEO of Accelerate Her Future, shared actionable steps to becoming a genuine ally, beyond performative gestures and surface-level actions. Attendees heard what it truly means to be an ally, and why it's crucial for advancing gender equity and supporting racialized women in the workplace. At a time when backlash against DEI is growing, this session provided meaningful actions to make a difference.

session highlights + key points

Our Current Reality²:

- **9.4%** racialized women in pipeline to senior leadership positions
- **Less than 1%** Black women, executive and pipeline to senior leadership positions
- **7:1** ratio of white women to racialized women in board positions across all sectors in Vancouver
- For every 100 men promoted from entry level to manager positions, 81 women were promoted and 72 women of colour were promoted
- **90%** of women ages 30 and under want to be promoted to the next level
- **96%** of women of colour say their career is important to them

Allyship: **77%** of white employee say they are allies to women of colour but only **21%** are advocating for new opportunities for women of colour and **10%** are mentoring or sponsoring a woman of colour.

“**Secret allyship will not rewrite the story.**”

ideas for action

Deep Allyship:

- Understand and acknowledge the inequities and barriers that women of color experience in the workplace.
- View women we are in allyship with as equals.
- Be willing to take action and challenge the barriers that impact women of color in the workplace.

resource

- [Spotlight | Accelerate Her Future](#)

stay connected



[linkedin.com/in/ggolnaraghi](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ggolnaraghi)



golnazgolnaraghi.com



[linkedin.com/in/sara-aghvami](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sara-aghvami)



stay in touch

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Forum. We enjoyed learning alongside you.

Here are additional ways to stay involved with Minerva BC and continue the journey to achieve inclusive leadership and gender equality in BC:

women leading the way™

Designed for mid-level leaders, this four-month program generates exceptional outcomes for high-potential women who want to expand their impact, and for experienced leaders who want to advance towards senior or executive leadership.

emerging leaders program

This 7-week development program helps new managers make the transition from individual contributor to effective leader. The emphasis on applied learning ensures participants improve their leadership abilities as well as their confidence to manage people and teams.

workshops

Minerva offers workplace workshops on a range of equity topics. Please contact us to discuss.

pay equity project launching in 2025

Minerva is launching a new program to help small and medium sized business advance their compensation practices and address the gender pay gap. Contact us if you would like to get involved.

support our work

Our events and youth initiatives are made possible thanks to corporate sponsorship and donations. Please contact us if you or your organization are interested in supporting Minerva's work.

To stay connected with Minerva, sign up for our newsletter and follow us on LinkedIn and Instagram!



Thank you for your support of Minerva!



the face of leadership™

Inclusive Leadership Forum 2024 *virtual event*

FORUM SPONSORS



DAILY SPONSORS



ODLUM BROWN
Investing for Generations®



#INCLUSIVELEADERSHIPFORUM



minervabc



school/minervabc