



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

# Success stories

**Enbridge Inc.**

**A Canadian case study in diversity and inclusion**

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## Enbridge Inc: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion

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Thanks to Jill Chesley, Diversity & Inclusion Team Lead, HR OE Diversity at Enbridge Inc.  
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# The power of LGBT engagement to change mindsets

“Diversity and inclusion isn’t just something you talk about, it’s something you have to actively support, you have to publicly support and you have to show your employees and your community these things are important.” Leon Zupan is eloquent in a video supporting [OUT at Night](#), Egale Canada Human Rights Trust’s fundraising campaign to engage Canadians on the crisis of LGBTQ2S youth homelessness. He is a strong LGBT ally and executive sponsor of Prism Energy, Enbridge’s group for employees identifying as LGBT, queer and two-spirited, and allies. He is also Chief Operating Officer at Enbridge Inc.

Enbridge came out in support of the LGBT community nationally with their OUT at Night video in 2015. We were interested in how the Calgary-based company was creating LGBT engagement in the workplace and spoke to Jill Chesley, Team Lead in their Diversity department, to learn more.

With 11,000+ employees across North America and its largest offices in Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto, Enbridge has a team of five leading their diversity strategy and initiatives, an executive-led diversity and inclusion leadership committee and along with Prism Energy, has employee resource groups supporting women, parents, Aboriginal people, females in engineering, young professionals, internationally educated professionals and administrative professionals.

This case study examines what an energy company in a conservative sector has done to improve inclusion for people identifying as LGBT, focusing on Prism Energy, which was formed in 2013. Throughout the case study, testimonials the company received in response to employee surveys will illustrate the initiatives with personal experiences.

## The power of the business case

Enbridge’s business case for diversity focuses on leveraging talent to build growth for the company. The business case is a circle of cause and effect that starts with attracting and retaining

talent; then creating employee engagement to foster talent retention, innovation and improved performance; followed by enhancing the reputation of the company to build the brand's equity – which closes the circle with attracting talent.

To embed diversity and inclusion in the corporate culture so it would touch all parts of the company, Enbridge connected their business case for diversity to their core values: integrity, safety and respect across communities, the environment and people. And as the activities within the company's employee resource groups have created emotional connections with people, it has brought personal meaning to those values among employees.

**“My ‘aha’ moment: Talking about the meaning of safety and expanding it past just physical well-being.”** – participant at a Prism Energy event

At Enbridge, their corporate social responsibility policy infuses the business across all its operations. So when it touched human resources planning, the diversity strategy tapped into the company's core values, which has helped it to connect with employees and has shaped a sense of purpose into their business case for diversity.

## The power of awareness

Awareness is especially dynamic when an employee resource group can make a difference and extend its reach beyond its members to other employees, and still another step beyond, outside the company to the wider community. Many of Enbridge's employee groups are outward-looking, and like the others, Prism Energy has been able to extend its influence and reach a wider audience by partnering with national nonprofit organizations, Egale and Pride at Work Canada.

This kind of participation with nonprofits supports the values of corporate citizenship, commitment to the places the company works in, commitment to reflect local demographics and cultures, and of employee engagement that Enbridge embraces.

The group's relationships with Egale and Pride at Work have helped create awareness for Enbridge as a company that cares within the LGBT community, making it an appealing place to work. It's a great illustration that by reaching out and openly discussing the issues affecting people identifying as LGBT, the company has been building trust – and a reputation as an employer who 'gets it.'

**“Having this ERG helps raise awareness and influence people's attitudes. It fosters understanding and empathy, and it makes it easier for people in the LGBT community to not only work for Enbridge, but to feel comfortable here. It also helps raise the topic between people at Enbridge, when previously it might have gone unspoken.”**

In the video for Egale's OUT at Night campaign that helped more people see how coming out as LGBT left many youth stranded by their families, Leon Zupan explains, “Understanding homelessness is about understanding the people who have been made homeless and coming up with ways of reintegrating them back into our community. I think this (event) is a great way of providing that kind of awareness.”

Enbridge's partnerships with Egale and Pride at Work are based on shared values. The company has used a collaborative approach to creating awareness that has made their presence stronger by leveraging those shared values with partners in sponsorships that extend the social impact of their LGBT-focused initiatives.

## The power of storytelling

The way that Prism Energy has leveraged storytelling at events and with partners has helped the group build its impact. Sessions about how to be an ally and different perspectives on coming out have resonated with employees, attracting more to the group. Speaking events have been emotional when people at Enbridge and in the community have come forward to speak about their experiences.

**“I love what Prism does and I’m really glad to be identified as an ally. This is the best and most valuable event I have ever attended at Enbridge.”**

Jill spoke of a transformative effect among people working at the company identifying as LGBT and allies. She described an emotional connection that Prism's chair made with the rest of the group when talking about her experiences in coming out with her family and at work. Another employee told about a heartrending struggle with his homophobic father. Their COO shared how he felt about the challenges faced by those identifying as LGBT after his son came out. All these stories had an emotional impact on people that has helped grow this group.

## The power of allies

Enbridge discovered that employees were less comfortable talking about LGBT identity than other dimensions of diversity and has found that allies have been particularly valuable as champions. Prism Energy supports the friends and family of people identifying as LGBT with events and resources that address being an ally and the discrimination, bullying and violence experienced by people across the range of sexual preferences and gender identities that aren't heteronormative. The group's ally cards identify spaces in the company's offices that welcome LGBT-friendly conversations.

**“I am a gay employee and having this ERG makes me proud to work for Enbridge. I know that Enbridge has my back.”**

Much is written about the value of leadership in moving diversity forward and this is especially evident at Enbridge. As an ally, Leon Zupan is notably the most senior executive sponsoring an employee resource group at the company and his value has made a substantial difference to those within the company identifying as LGBT. His passion on the topic has promoted the responsibility of overtly recognizing diversity among employees, especially targeting the message to those who might be more resistant to connecting with the LGBT community.

## Tactics that made a difference

One of the biggest challenges for diversity professionals is creating initiatives that are meaningful to employees while demonstrating how they deliver value by aligning with the goals of the organization. When we asked about the effects that Prism Energy has had within Enbridge, Jill reported that there has been membership growth for the group, articles are being written and shared on the company's intranet about their events and initiatives, and the ally cards are promoting dialogue and wider understanding of the issues faced by people identifying as LGBT, especially those who are trans, and most likely to face bullying, violence and discrimination.

Jill had three suggestions for organizations planning for diversity which can support business, human resources and communications strategies.

### **Be clear about the business case**

Connect the business case for diversity to the goals and values of the organization. The view at Enbridge is that if, as is widely recognized, about 20% of the population identifies as LGBT, then it's realistic to expect to see that number reflected within workplaces and communities everywhere. So each organization needs to recognize its people who are LGBT – and promoting inclusion has to address this group explicitly. It's not enough to politely acknowledge that there are people in the workplace who are gay.

By aligning the business case for diversity with the goals and values of the organization, diversity and inclusion leaders can create success for their initiatives when they can appeal to leadership's vision while touching the hearts and minds of employees.

### **Support courageous leadership**

The backing of an organization's top level of leadership is essential for employee resource groups to be effective – and Jill describes having strong leadership that's able to represent the interests of each group from within as equally important. Group leaders who can bravely stand out and inspire others are valuable in creating groups that can bring about change.

**“I especially like how it felt safe to speak about the topic in public so everyone could share their experiences and help others learn too.”**

While Prism Energy is fortunate to have someone in the executive ranks as an influential ally, Linda Stollings leads the group as its chair, and is an outspoken leader in sharing her own experiences, which has been empowering for many of her colleagues identifying as LGBT and allies. Together with Leon Zupan, their voices contribute to a strong and positive LGBT experience for employees – which has reinforced the importance of this group at the company.

### **Start gently**

Jill suggested that by opening up opportunities for discussion and creating a space where people can participate voluntarily, Enbridge saw Prism Energy grow organically. They offered multiple points of entry in communications and events for employees to show up, connect with the issues

and engage emotionally. Jill explained how the video Enbridge sponsored for Egale turned into a great conversation-starter that went on to inspire many employees to become allies of Prism Energy. The team also created a video specifically about Prism Energy which is posted on the company's intranet site for all employees to view.

**“I have been to a lot of Lunch & Learn sessions before and have never witnessed the level of commitment and love that I felt today.”**

Videos and events have been valuable engagement tools that have encouraged participation within Enbridge, along with the ally cards in offices and cubicles which have started conversations recognizing differences and diversity.

## From business plan to employee engagement

Enbridge's business plan for diversity started with attracting and retaining a diverse workforce to ensure human resources had the capacity to support the company's business objectives. The plan incorporated the company's culture and values with effective leadership so that employees identifying as LGBT can feel welcomed in a workplace and safe to be themselves, don't have to hide who they are, suffer the prejudice and discrimination and are able to fulfill their potential.

We hear many diversity and inclusion professionals speak of LGBT inclusion as the final frontier, the last bias to be tackled. And while many organizations are successfully building inclusion for this dimension of diversity with similar strategies and tactics, what makes this series of case studies interesting is seeing each organization create its own success in a unique way – according to factors that come into play from their sector, demographics, business model, goals, values and other considerations. Enbridge's case study for diversity and inclusion is inspiring due to the kind of change they were able to effect on mindsets in a conservative sector.

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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](http://ccdi.ca) will keep you updated with the latest case studies, which will all be posted online at [ccdi.ca/successstories](http://ccdi.ca/successstories). For more information, contact [mail@ccdi.ca](mailto: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](mailto:Susan.Rogers@ccdi.ca) or (416) 968-6520, ext 103.

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