

At McCarthy Tétrault, it's time for Inclusion Now

Mona Tomlinson joined McCarthy Tétrault LLP as a storage clerk in 1998, and through several decades and promotions she has seen the national full-service law firm transform. Now a records coordinator, Tomlinson, who has been out as a lesbian since her initial job interview, says she's always felt welcome and supported. Even so, in her early days few others at the firm openly identified themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

"Now I no longer feel like I'm in a secret club," Tomlinson says. "We hold Pride Parties and run educational programs, and in 2019 we were the only national law firm to march in Toronto's annual Pride Parade. I also joined our firm's Pride Action Group, where there is so much open dialogue about what inclusion means."

The action group reflects the latest developments at Toronto-based McCarthy Tétrault, where diversity, inclusion and corporate social responsibility are longstanding values. In 1921, when 99 per cent of all law school graduates were male, it became one of Canada's first law firms to hire a woman lawyer. Today, thanks to deliberate efforts to increase opportunities for women, it has met or exceeded a number of benchmarks set to measure their progress.

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— Dave Leonard
CEO

Even so, CEO Dave Leonard says there's still more to be done. He adds that the firm is determined to move the needle for women, and for other equity-seeking groups who reflect the diversity of



DAVE LEONARD, CEO AND PARTNER (LEFT); AND MONA TOMLINSON, RECORDS MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR (RIGHT) AT MCCARTHY TÉTRAULT

Canadian society. To that end, in 2019 it launched Inclusion Now, an action-oriented program designed to fast-forward the firm's commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where programs and policies are in place to enable everyone to succeed.

Highlighting the importance of the undertaking, McCarthy Tétrault established an Inclusion Now Council composed of the firm's senior leadership. Leonard is chair and, along with the others, is accountable for its success.

"The research has shown, and we know from experience, that for D&I efforts to succeed, leaders need to take personal responsibility," Leonard says. "If it's not a focus, it doesn't happen."

The firm also created four action groups – Gender, Race, and Abilities, as well as Pride – each chaired by an equity partner and whose members are volunteers.

Their role: implement initiatives relating to recruitment, retention, education, community service and pro bono. Seventy people have signed up for the first action group, Pride.

A long-term goal for Leonard is to see diversity become so ingrained that special D&I initiatives are no longer needed. Until then, the firm will use key metrics to measure its progress in recruiting and retaining lawyers and employees from diverse backgrounds and abilities. "We want all of our people to know their contributions are valued and respected," says Leonard.

Tomlinson, for one, has gotten the message. She appreciates how the firm,

by promoting within, has enabled her to advance in her career. As well, colleagues demonstrate their personal regard by supporting her community activism.

McCarthy Tétrault is a major corporate charitable donor and invests deeply in pro bono work. But individuals are encouraged to identify their own charitable priorities and Tomlinson's colleagues generously donate to her fund-raising efforts for a local non-profit, Abuse Hurts.

She's also looking forward to being an active participant in the Pride Action Group. Says Tomlinson: "I'm really excited about shaping the culture and changing policies." ■

50% OF LEADERSHIP TEAM
ARE WOMEN

FOUR-MEMBER DEDICATED
INCLUSION OFFICE

NOW is the time for action,
inclusion and belonging.

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