

It Takes a Village: Bridging the Diversity Disconnect for Meaningful Inclusion

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For most career development professionals, inclusion and belonging for *all* clients, both at work and throughout their communities, are a shared aspirational goal. However, recent Canadian research revealed serious disconnects: between jobseekers and potential employers, between service providers and policymakers, and between available workplace accommodations and those needed to enable diverse employees to perform at their best (Taylor et al., 2026). whose voices are missing and how we can address those gaps. “Color-blindness” is neither an excuse nor a strategy; when we say that we see everyone as equal, we deny the painful realities that people experience daily. We need to be especially conscious of how social media and artificial intelligence can perpetuate biases and stereotypes and ensure that the information we rely on comes from credible sources and the lived experiences of the individuals we serve.

Some of this disconnect stems from our individual blind spots; we simply don’t know what we don’t know. Only through authentic interactions with people whose backgrounds and experiences differ substantially from our own can we learn about the realities of their day-to-day lives: the barriers, biases, discrimination, and, in many cases, outright hatred that they encounter as they participate in their communities and workplaces (Borgen, 2023). Many of their stories can be painful to hear; however, listening deeply, feeling that pain, and empathizing with their experiences can motivate us to channel our outrage to champion change (Neault, 2008). Once we become aware of the disconnects around us, how can we be most helpful? A useful starting point is to adopt a stance of not knowing, thereby embodying cultural *humility* rather than cultural competence. With humility, we recognize how little we know. We become more receptive to learning from our clients, colleagues, and other “cultural informants” and to working collaboratively to create positive change.

Regular reflection on whose voices have influenced and continue to influence our perspectives is helpful, as is identifying Engaging with employers, community leaders, and policymakers can be an important next step. In our research, we found that most participants from these groups were committed to embracing diversity and creating inclusive environments (Taylor et al., 2026). However, this commitment was not reflected in the lived experiences of some jobseekers and

employees within the same organizations and communities.

Career development professionals are uniquely positioned to bridge the diversity disconnect by raising awareness of barriers to successful employment and straightforward solutions that can support individuals with diverse abilities to thrive. Through conversations, webinars, presentations, blogs, and other types of interactions, we can share stories (preserving confidentiality by removing identifying information), offer practical examples of effective accommodations, and create and consistently model a “culture of kindness.” We can also support our individual clients to engage in self-advocacy, equipping them with the confidence to speak publicly, interact with decision-makers, and raise awareness of the biases and barriers that they encounter every day.

Bridging the diversity disconnect requires collective effort. Bridging this disconnect is neither a short-term solution nor a project with a defined timeline. However, together, we *can* make a difference; bridging the diversity disconnect truly does “take a village.” Intentionally expand your professional networks, work directly with employers and community leaders, and meet with your government representatives to explore how to mitigate the disconnects that you and your clients have encountered. Commit to continuous learning, strengthening relationships, and working collaboratively to create workplaces and spaces where each unique individual can contribute fully.

Taylor, C., Borgen, R., Carlson, D., Warkentin, M., & White, E. (2026). Rural realities: Bridging the diversity disconnect & supporting inclusion in challenging contexts. *Canadian Journal of Career Development*, 25(1), 65–83.
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