

Interpreting Job Postings and Assessing Employers

Many employers have committed to creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. Although guided by good intentions, diversity and inclusion programs may suffer from oversights and shortcomings. This worksheet is designed to help co-op students independently research and assess their prospective employers' values, behaviours, and diversity initiatives.

What is Tokenism?

Tokenism creates the **impression of inclusion and fairness** through symbolic initiatives.

Tokenism's worst manifestation occurs when employers intentionally use the presence of an Indigenous person in the workplace to deflect accusations of racism and discrimination. Even well-intentioned employers, however, might contribute to tokenism, where Indigenous employees might be put into uncomfortable or exploitative positions or assumed to be representative spokespersons of their communities or experts on all Indigenous people and Indigenous cultures.

Additionally, tokenism can manifest in a failure to accommodate the use of non-English names, pronouns, and time off for Indigenous events and ceremonies. Consciously or not, tokenism can also restrict career paths and outcomes, where a company or organization places Indigenous hires in dead-ended or siloed positions.

Finding Meaningful Placements and Supportive Employers

It can be difficult to identify employers who tokenize Indigenous employees, especially from the vantage of those outside the workplace and company culture. Employers might also engage in performative allyship, where company appearances are prioritized over responding to the TRC's Calls to Action and fostering more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

At a minimum, employers are responsible for **empowering** and **respecting** members of equity-seeking groups as leaders, knowledge contributors, and whole persons. To assist in your process of reading a job posting, researching an employer, and engaging your interviewer, we suggest a few specific questions to consider.

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Deconstructing the Job Posting

- Does the employer offer a specific reason for wanting to hire an Indigenous person? How do you feel about this reason?
- What opportunities are available for you to work with a team? What would be your role in **collaborative** projects?
- Does the job offer you **career development opportunities**?
- How much independence or oversight does this position have? Are you comfortable with that?
- How do your identity and life experiences relate to the job description?

Researching the Employer

- What is the organization's mission/values statement?
- What public statements has the employer released? Who speaks for the organization? Whose interests are prioritized and represented?
- Who holds leadership positions in the organization? Who sits on the executive board?
- What have prior (Indigenous) employees said about this employer (on social media, blogs, and online employer reviews)?
- Who is represented in promotional or public relations campaigns? Do you think this reflects the diversity of their workforce?

Engaging the Interviewer

- Which Indigenous Nations, communities, and/or organizations does the employer work with or consult?
- Has the employer hired Indigenous WIL students in the past? Did the employer try to retain or promote these employees?
- How will you be supported in bringing cultural knowledge and competencies to your work? (How) does the employer recognize and support engagement with your community or process of community re-connection? (e.g. would the employer accommodate your participation and learning in community events, ceremony, language classes, and etc.?)

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