



## Woman of Influence | Interview with Siobhan Calderbank

We are proud to feature our interview with **Siobhan Calderbank**, a woman of valour and tenacity who is elevating the field of change management and the role of Black women in leadership. She is also one of Canada's first Change Management Institute members, and has been honoured with the following achievements:

- Universal Womens Network 2019 Women of Inspiration Award recipient for Diversity & Inclusiveness
- Voted the Top 10 Inspirational Female Entrepreneur 2019 by Women Entrepreneur
- Recognised as one of the 10 Most Influential Businesswomen to Follow in 2020 by Insights Success.
- Recognised as one of the Top 100 Black Women to Watch in Canada 2020 by the Canada International Black Women Event (CIBWE)

Like so many change professionals, Siobhan came to change management via a series of roles. Her career started in telecommunications, followed by a learning and development focus leading to a variety of consulting roles. Combined with juggling the challenges of higher degrees and a young family, Siobhan has formed a unique view on taking risks to pursue growth in her change management career. "I think taking risks is a good thing. I really would encourage folks just to be open to change and to new opportunities and new experiences, and to not allow the fear to hold you back,

especially when pivoting from one career field to another. Deviations on the path are never a bad thing. It will just end up getting you back to the path that you're supposed to be on, and all those other experiences will make sense.”

Siobhan is dedicated to advancing the role of women in leadership and in developing equity for visible minorities. Siobhan not only advances the role of women in leadership as a role model, but she also plays a very active role. She is the founder of Butterfly Ladies – a Mentoring Program committed to helping develop the careers of women and youth, especially visible minorities.

As change practitioners and agents, it is our duty to speak up to influence and usher change, including as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion. Siobhan shares, “If you look at your employee base, and if they're not representative of the community in which you serve, there's a problem. And we need to start shifting and changing that. Organisations that are more diverse outperform by eight times organisations that are less diverse. Hearing all those different perspectives, allows us to be innovative and agile, it allows us to have better financials at the end of the day. So there's a big business case for change and to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion.”

One of the biggest misconceptions about the diversity, equity and inclusion business case, is the belief that it's about filling quotas. “People of colour are afraid of getting a job not because it's earned, but because an organisation is simply trying to fill a quota. I never want to be able to receive a position or an opportunity just because of the colour of my skin, I just want the opportunity to be able to compete. And that's the point; equal opportunity. We need to create spaces where it is equitable, where everybody can compete fairly and have a fair chance.”

Siobhan also notes that there can be real challenges for women speaking up depending on the culture you're working in. “You have to value yourself; you have to know that you're here for a reason, and people need to hear what you have to say. So this is where you have to have the courage to speak up.”

One strategy she finds works really well is to do a lot of pre-meeting work if you know you're in a situation where people tend to speak over you. “Have conversations with other people who are attending the meeting and share some of your ideas and get them on board prior. Women are fantastic at putting together a great presentation and articulating bullet points, but they're not as good with networking prior to the meeting. Once you start doing that, you also increase your influencing skills, because now you're gaining people's support, you're gaining their commitment and you gain confidence with their backing.”

Due to the pandemic, there is increased focus on great leadership and human-centred engagement. Siobhan considers the most important quality in a leader is authenticity. “Know who you are, be clear in terms of your values and demonstrate strong alignment between who you are, what you do and what you say. Respect others for their different

perspectives, hear what they have to say, be open and transparent as much as you can.”

While HR has always been very human centred, we are seeing a shift towards more human centric type of behaviours and initiatives in organisations. Siobhan highlights that “employee engagement is the secret sauce, if you're focusing too much on the product or the service without thinking enough about the employee then you're going to fail, because employees really are the key to everything. By putting them at the centre and making them feel valued you'll get more output and more varied perspectives.”

Siobhan feels grateful for her Change Management Institute community. “I think the biggest value of being a part of this community is the experience of being able to network with other experienced professionals. You'll learn from their experiences, their knowledge and skill sets, and sharing that information builds a whole community of practice. For me, some of the best learnings I've had was just by listening to others, and hearing about their trials, their experiences, their challenges. That's helped me to be a better leader and a better professional, because I've learned to adapt and pivot based on the lessons learned by others. If we're able to hear from others in the same profession, we can expand our knowledge base, and we can come up with far better solutions, collectively than we can independently.”

*The Change Management Institute thank Siobhan Calderbank for her time and willingness to share some of her experiences and inspiring views with fellow members.*