Diversity work can reinforce whiteness more than promote inclusivity: An analysis of Mountain Equipment Company (MEC)’s 2018 Diversity Statement.

Overview

In 2018, Mountain Equipment Company (MEC) acknowledged a problem of representation in outdoor culture and pledged to inspire more diverse communities in the outdoors.

This analysis uncovered that the company’s effort towards diversity is an example of how diversity work often reproduces the very notion of white-centredness that it intends to dismantle.

Critiques of MEC’s Diversity Statement

1. No equity beyond face value
   - The presence of a diversity statement is often treated as a diversity success. This prompts a white-centred organization to feel complacent in the “work” they have done, blocking the organization’s ability to recognize the real changes that need to be made.

2. Failure to address core company structures
   - Marketing strategies aimed to promote diversity reinforce notions of who is “at home” in an organization and who is being invited in. In this way, diversity becomes about changing perceptions of inclusivity rather than changing the inclusivity of organizations.

3. Erasure of Canada’s Indigenous origins
   - By forming blanket statements about the past without explicitly accounting for Canada’s colonial history and its links to outdoor culture, diversity language is used as a coping mechanism, consequently brushing Truth and Reconciliation under the rug.

4. Narrow range of acknowledged identities
   - MEC’s diversity ads promote racial diversity at the expense of adequately representing other categories of identity, such as body type and (dis)ability, and highlight the highly gendered categories of the company’s clothing.