

Speech by Mariat Jibril – BC Business 2025 Women of the Year Awards

Category: Diversity & Inclusion

Good evening everyone,

Before I begin, I would like to honour and recognize the Indigenous lands on which I work and live the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam)**, **Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish)**, and **səlílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh)** Nations. I acknowledge their enduring connection to this land and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

What an incredible honor it is to stand here with you all tonight. I'm deeply humbled to receive this recognition in the category of Diversity and Inclusion a space that is not just professional for me, but deeply personal, spiritual, and purposeful.

First, I want to thank God for His abundant grace and mercy over my life. Lately, I've been spending more time in reflection and meditation and I've come to realize that healing doesn't always look like solitude. Sometimes, healing is being seen. Sometimes, healing is this moment where the work I've done, often quietly, often from the margins, is recognized. And that recognition... that seeing... is powerful.

As someone who sits in the 1% — quite literally in Vancouver, this award means more than words can describe. It is hard enough to show up. But to stand tall, to hold space, and to centre impact over appearances that takes something deeper.

I want to especially thank Bruce Munro Wright and Paul Larocque. Thank you for seeing me. Thank you for believing in me. And thank you for nominating me for this prestigious award.

To my friend Jeanette Vergara your friendship is so appreciated and thank you for your amazing support. I am grateful.

Thank you to Jen Murtagh and Erin Seeley for seeing me and inviting me to spaces. I am grateful. Erin, I appreciate the business partnership and collaborations.

To Ryan Benn and the entire team at BC Business thank you for creating a platform that uplifts women across industries, backgrounds, and communities. A special thank you to Sandrine Jacquot, Darcy Matheson, and Hannah Dewar your work behind the scenes does not go unnoticed. Thank you for your passion and commitment to making tonight so meaningful.

To all the nominees in this room — whether your name was called or not, please hear me when I say:

You are all winners.

Every woman in this room is a winner.

You are leaders, trailblazers, visionaries and I celebrate each of you.

I call myself a visionary, not because I see what's popular but because I see what's possible.

Most of my ideas are rooted in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging not as buzzwords, but as blueprints for a better world. A friend once told a potential client:

“If you want someone who will just check the boxes, don’t call Mariat.

But if you want someone who will challenge the system, inspire change, and ensure your organization actually lives what it says on paper she’s the one.”

I’ve carried those words with me.

So tonight, I want to use this moment to make a plea to every leader, every decision-maker, every person in this room with influence:

Take DEIB seriously. Not just as a policy. Not just as a department. But as a culture, a mindset, and a commitment.

When people do not feel valued, accepted, appreciated, or heard it doesn’t just impact morale. It impacts mental health. It creates disconnection. And disconnection is not our default.

Our default, as humans, is love.

It’s kindness.

It’s empathy.

It’s compassion.

Anything less is not just a flaw in the system it’s a call for healing.

And healing begins with equity.

Representation alone is not enough. Just hiring someone from a marginalized community someone who’s often overqualified is not the win. That’s just checking the box. Equity is the game changer. Equity means access, opportunity, support, and belonging at every level.

DEIB is not just about the “what” it’s about the “how” and the “who.” It’s about infusing our lived experiences through the lens of intersectionality into the structures we create, so that we can build a truly just world.

And as we celebrate this beautiful month of June, I want to say Happy Pride to everyone in the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Your existence is a gift. Your voice is powerful. Your joy is revolutionary.

Let’s also recognize the vibrant celebrations happening throughout Vancouver and BC this month

- Pride Month
- National Indigenous History Month
- Filipino Heritage Month
- Italian Heritage Month
- Portuguese Heritage Month

This is a time of honoring culture, resilience, and unity. Let us carry these celebrations not just as events, but as values values we live and lead by.

In closing I accept this award not just for myself, but for every person who's ever felt unseen, overlooked, or underestimated.

I see you.

I honor you.

And together, we rise.

Finally, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the organizations that have consulted my services over the years, and to my employer, **TD Bank**, who has given me a platform to close critical financial gaps for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Your support makes this work possible.

Thank you.