Concurrent Session A

Session 1 – Policy, Research & Ethics

Leveraging the Human Rights Law Framework to Advance EDI in Canadian Higher Education – Vishakha Wijenayake

This session critically examines the strategic potential for leveraging the Canadian human rights framework in pursuit of sustaining Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) momentum within Canadian higher education. Canadian universities are simultaneously governed by both the human rights framework enforced through legislative and judicial avenues, and the more recent project of EDI in higher education. The session aims to provide insights into how higher education institutions can effectively foster a nuanced understanding of the advantages and challenges associated with aligning these two normative frameworks.

First, it analyzes the extent to which Canada's human rights obligations have led to the enactment of legislative and policy frameworks undergirding EDI initiatives. As EDI initiatives encounter resistance, the integration of human rights principles offers a powerful and widely recognized foundation to strengthen these policies. Secondly, conceptual synergies can be found between human rights principles and EDI policies. International Human Rights Law offers resources and case studies on how EDI concepts can be theorized and applied in diverse contexts.

Despite these confluences, the session cautions against a superficial conflation of these two larger normative frameworks, given the divergences in their underlying epistemic and political foundations. The hierarchical structures of human rights enforcement may conflict conceptually with the decolonial approaches championed by EDI policies. Despite these risks, the session argues that delving into the conceptual underpinnings of each framework can facilitate avenues of collaboration and mutually sustaining engagements.

Building Community, Leveraging Individual and Organizational Capacity for Collective Impact and Social Innovation – Andreas Robinson

This session is focused on highlighting leading best practices, unpacking uncomfortable truths and exploring the many opportunities for individuals, organizations and communities to leverage their lived experience to create an innovative, collaborative, resilient culture, with a foundation in anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion.

A key focus will be acknowledging the reality, needs and opportunities at the individual, community, organization, institution, industry, board of director and government level. We will address various opportunities to reduce barriers to access, innovation, equity, inclusion, and diversity, while exploring the pervasive nature of systemic racism and the commitment needed to identify, call it out and take action to address it. Rooted in experiential learning and active engagement, the style of this session is for it to be an open and honest conversation- where everyone has a voice. *It will be done in a discussion and interactive based format.

Key themes include (but not limited to);
• Setting and implementing commitment *
• Building Shared Language
• Authentic Engagement
• Duty of Care, Ethics
• Policy, Promotion & Retention
• Accountability and Values
• Leveraging Strategy, Partnerships and Collective Impact

Decolonization, Anti-Racism and Feminism within International Cooperation Sector – Judyannet Muchiri

This session focuses on decolonization, anti-racism and feminism within the international cooperation sector. Building on Inter-Council Network's recent research on decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches to public engagement, this project focuses on an enabling environment for the effective and meaningful use of these approaches. Specifically, we are interested in the strategies that public engagement practitioners use to implement these approaches.

We are also interested in exploring the ecosystem in which these approaches are used. Our past research identifies key areas of action that both governmental and non-governmental actors should focus on in their public engagement approaches. To move towards decolonial, anti-racist and feminist public engagement, actors should center communities, invest resources, foster open dialogues, build relations of trust and solidarity and develop critical reflexivity mechanisms. Although these actions suggest pathways towards better public engagement approaches, in the absence of a supportive environment these actions are likely to lose their potential to contribute to substantial change. Our research therefore contributes to the ongoing work to institutionalize decolonial, anti-racist and feminist approaches in policy and practice.

Session 2 Building Community

North American Partnership with Equity and Racial Justice – Charles Smith

Recently Canada has seen an increasing rise of discrimination, racist violence, push backs on anti-racism/equity projects, and hate, including:

- Challenges to implementing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Missing and Murdered Women reports;
- Police killings of Black peoples and the latter's disproportionate high incarceration rates, school withdrawals, low economic achievement and political involvement;
- Anti-Asian Racism exacerbated by COVID-19;
- Racial profiling and attacks/killings of Muslims in mosques, and the banning of religious wear in public spaces;
- Anti-Semitic, homophobic and transphobic hate crimes and challenges to recognizing diverse sexual identities.

A central player in the recently established *Tripartite Partnership for Equity and Racial Justice involving Mexico and the U.S*., the **CNERJ** will create a network of representatives from community activists, business, academia, education, labour, arts, housing and public services, employment and health sectors by:

- Commissioning/participating in local, regional, national and inter-national across the three countries in the partnership;
- Sharing evidence-based practices and inventive approaches to advance equity and racial justice in public policies and societal engagements; and
- Convening public forums to engage diverse sectors in constructive dialogue on these issues.

This project will identify and propose ways to address these issues through:

- Using a disaggregated approach, i.e., looking at the impact of disparities as they affect particular communities and not homogenizing based on broad categories such as race; and
- Documenting and sharing such disparities and strategies to address them.

Where do Black Children go in Summer: Unmasking Social Disparities, Immigration and Health Implications – Obianuju Bushi

This session takes a critical look at some social disparities that negatively impact Black Canadian and Black immigrant children and youth from accessing culturally relevant programs and support in summer. This session will examine how Black families and their children struggle to access support in summer and the challenges they encounter (Immigration, status, income, limited local knowledge). In this session, I will discuss my experiences as a Black parent, an educator, and a non-profit founder. In addition, this workshop seeks to invite faculty members to re-imagine their positions and scholarships and how they can positively influence marginalized and racialized communities within their localities.

This session aims to critically examine the often-overlooked question: Where do Black children go in the summer? Beyond the literal sense, this inquiry delves into the intricate web of social disparities, immigration patterns, and health implications that shape the summer experiences of Black children. The summer months, often perceived as leisure and freedom for children, can unveil profound disparities in access to affordable and culturally relevant summer experiences. This session seeks to unmask the complex realities faced by Black parents and children during the summer, examining how social, economic, and immigration factors contribute to divergent trajectories.

**Inclusive Initiatives: Pioneering EDI-AR in Psychology at Memorial University –
Ayush Mathur & Ksenia Kiseleva**

The Department of Psychology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, recognizes the gaps in EDI-AR practices within the department and has taken initiatives to address them. A volunteer-based EDI-AR Departmental Committee was formed in 2021, open to faculty, staff, and graduate students. One initiative was to encourage adoption of Open Educational Resources, resulting in open access textbooks for large-enrolment Introductory Psychology courses. The Department further dedicated their EDI-AR work by creating an EDI-AR Research Assistant position in 2022 as part of Memorial's Undergraduate Career Experience Program (MUCEP). The MUCEP students, who are from equity-deserving groups, are empowered to utilize their lived experiences to direct the focus of their EDI-AR work each semester. Previous MUCEP students conducted environmental scans to gather resources on EDI-AR initiatives at other universities. The most recent MUCEP students conducted 12 interviews with undergraduate students from diverse equity-deserving groups to shed light on their experiences and assess the current environment of EDI-AR among students. The interviews were enlightening and showcased student's concerns, among many others, of a lack of diversity and sense of belongingness. The interview transcripts provided insight on EDI-AR areas to focus on and have led to the development of an EDI-AR survey set to be released to undergraduate students in the Fall 2024 semester. The Department of Psychology is at the early phase of its EDI-AR practices, but has shown commitment to building the momentum, especially by actively recruiting students from equity-deserving groups as co-leaders in the engagement process and in mentoring them to engage in further EDI-AR work.

Navigating Whiteness in EDI-AR Leadership: Reflections and Actions – Amy Abe

White folks, particularly white women, dominate EDI and anti-racism leadership roles in academic spaces, benefiting from networks with other white people. This dominance extends to EDI-AR consulting, where white women secure more contracts compared to BIPOC counterparts. Consequently, white women have the power to shape and define EDI-AR landscapes, where unexamined habits and patterns rooted in whiteness can obstruct genuine equity.

The session highlights the importance of white individuals in EDI-AR work undertaking critical reflection on obstructive habits of whiteness to align actions with stated intentions and values. It emphasizes the need to slow down, examine ingrained racial biases, and interrupt harmful behaviours. By acknowledging and understanding whiteness as habit, culture, and system, white EDI-AR leaders can foster genuine collaboration and solidarity with other equity leaders and affinity groups.

The session offers insights into managing and disrupting whiteness within EDI leadership, suggesting actions for individual growth, community building, unlearning, and collective organizing. It aims to provide practical responses and actions for addressing abstract issues, fostering authentic relationships, resilience, and genuine solidarity within and between communities.

<u>Session 3 Education & Training</u>

Teaching and Learning Within an Indigenous Health Course – Erica Hurley

The TRC Calls to Action have called upon Canadians to take concrete actions against the harms done and being done to Indigenous people. As a Mi'kmaq faculty member, I created an Indigenous Health, Healing and Wellness course. The course was intended for both nursing and humanities students but is open to anyone who would like to examine Indigenous health and wellness. The aim of the course was to not simply include Indigenous content but to really be inclusive in including different ways of teaching and learning.

The course utilized approaches grounded in Indigenous worldviews, specifically Indigenous approaches to knowledge. The course included a variety of teaching and learning strategies, such as having assignments that allowed students to self-select an assessment format; i.e. Art forms, audio forms, beading. This flexible approach recognizes and affirms different ways of knowing, making the course accessible for students with different learning styles and needs. The session will provide an overview of the alternative approaches associated with various assignments, discuss the feedback related to the assignments, and provide a general overview. While some students were reluctant at first to attempt alternate assignment methods other than writing when supported and provided with feedback they demonstrated their knowledge within the pieces.

Women in the Workforce: Weaving Women into the Fabric of our Communities – Saniya Ghalehdar

Women both globally and domestically are continuing to break barriers in many ways. Creating opportunity for women in the workforce is crucial in an economic sense but also to ensure the health of a society. Areas of the world that limit women or remove them from the workforce suffer, and in turn this suffering impacts the communities around them. A concrete example of this is the regressive policies of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the virtual removal of women taking part in any kind of workplace activities. Outdated or other repressive policies also effect women from partaking in certain fields or occupations as well.

Pay equity also creates a disparity that creates barriers for women and prevents social and economic mobility. When women are able to build wealth, they can elevate themselves and/or their families so that they not only survive but thrive. Removing barriers like pay disparity, access to childcare, sexual harassment, when they are allowed to work, or what industries are allowed for women to enter are critical to growth of not only individuals but for the economy. There is direct evidence to show the importance and benefits of lifting or removing obstacles like this.

During the discussion, participants will look at cases of outdated policies or laws that impact women and their communities. We will also dive into change, growth, and examples of countries or regions that are making meaningful change. Strategies of creating more inclusive work environments and equitable practices will be looked at to help women and their community's flourish.

Fostering Inclusive Communities: Building Anti-Racism Initiatives at the University of Glasgow – Nighet Riaz

The University of Glasgow has embarked on a transformative journey to foster a more inclusive and diverse campus environment, guided by the principles of anti-racism. Following the 'Understanding Racism and Transforming University Cultures' (2021) report and action plan, the university has implemented a comprehensive set of initiatives to address systemic racism and promote a culture of belonging for all members of its community. Through strategic interventions by the Senior Management Group, the university has undertaken targeted awareness campaigns, anti-racism training programs, and the establishment of support networks for marginalised groups.

By prioritising dialogue, education, and collaboration, the university is focusing on creating an environment where anti-racism is a core part of everyday practice. The university's anti-racism initiatives include a historical examination of its ties to the transatlantic slave trade, leading to reparative justice efforts; transparent dialogue and action through the public release of critical reports; professional commitment and accountability from senior leadership; the establishment of support networks for staff from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds; and a sustained commitment to combating racism, as evidenced by ongoing progress and campaigns. The University of Glasgow's approach provides valuable insights into how institutions can start to build community around anti-racism, fostering a culture of respect, understanding, and solidarity within higher education settings.

<u>Session 4 Policy, Research and Ethics</u>

Significance of Fostering Environments, Reimagine Frameworks and Policies at Post-Secondary Institutions – Indira Naidoo-Harris

Post-secondary institutions in Canada are at a critical point in their histories. While university and college communities are demanding the prioritization of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), leadership teams are faced with unprecedented social and economic challenges. With rising polarization, hatred, and funding concerns, post-secondary institutions must pivot to meet the current set of poly-crises we're faced with.

Drawing on her experience as a trusted public leader, policy-maker, journalist, and advocate and her current role as the AVP of Diversity and Human Rights at the University of Guelph, Indira Naidoo-Harris will demonstrate that beyond just being the right thing to do, EDI is an institutional and workforce imperative. Research has shown that diverse and inclusive teams are more innovative, more likely to make better decisions, and more likely to outperform their less-EDI focused counterparts. This session will challenge conference attendees to critically examine their roles as catalysts for change in the pursuit of equity, inclusivity, and excellence.

Indira will highlight the importance of cultivating transformative post-secondary environments that celebrate inclusion and ignites innovation. Through engaging anecdotes and research, Indira will guide participants through a conversation about the value of fostering genuine partnerships to collectively reimagine frameworks and policies at post-secondary institutions.

This session will emphasize the significance of fostering environments where diverse voices are heard, respected, and valued. Indira will discuss strategies for promoting cultural humility, leveraging the power of EDI, and promoting transformative change to build the workforce of the future.

Unpacking Critiques of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Practice: Towards Nuanced Understanding and Effective Implementation – Rowland Caesar Apentiik

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives have become increasingly prevalent across various sectors, reflecting a commitment to addressing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusive environments. However, alongside the growing popularity of EDI policies and practices, there has been a rise in critiques questioning their effectiveness, unintended consequences, underlying assumptions, and implementation. This abstract delves into the nuanced critiques of EDI policy and practice, aiming to shed light on the complexities inherent in advancing and implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion policies.

Critiques of EDI policy and practice encompass a range of perspectives, including concerns about tokenism, symbolic gestures, and the co-optation of diversity for organizational branding. Additionally, critiques highlight the potential for EDI initiatives to overlook intersecting forms of oppression, reinforce existing power dynamics, and marginalize certain groups within diverse communities. Moreover, skeptics argue that EDI efforts often prioritize surface-level diversity metrics over deeper structural changes, perpetuating the status quo rather than challenging systemic inequities.

Despite the critiques, EDI policy and practice remain essential tools for promoting social justice, fostering inclusive environments, and driving organizational transformation. By engaging with critiques in a constructive and reflective manner, organizations can strengthen their EDI efforts, build more equitable systems, and create environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered.

Diversity, Inclusion, Transformational Leadership, and the Reinvention of Higher Education – Mark Kainz, Jean-Blaise & Ripon College Former Employee

In Canada and the US, the highly diversified number of protesters who raise their voice after each attack on EDI principles reveals a need for productive conversations about issues of diversity. Their growing number signals that it's about time our society moves beyond spirited debates and truly makes room for inclusive attitudes and practices. In this regard, experts agree on the fundamental role education plays as the ultimate means and place to bring about societal transformation. However, the central question in the academia remains "how to make it happen", because many faculty, students, staff members, administrators, and executives, although genuinely motivated to create inclusive environments, still grapple with the practical approaches to inclusivity.

Panel intends to share experiences of building and implementing institutional capacity, developing EDI-embedded and anti-racist curriculum, and crafting internal policies to sustain respectful cross-cultural interactions. Building on Nelson Mandela's vision of education as "the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world", the panelists aim to expand on the argument that developing an EDI-practicing academic environment implies some transformation in leadership and pedagogical approaches, a transition that requires a clear vision for reconceptualizing higher education.

Concurrent Session B

Session 5 Building Community

Racial Justice Work in Post-Secondary Institutions Through Critical Dialogue – Regine King

Different Canadian post-secondary institutions participated in a historic virtual signing ceremony of the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in 2021. The Charter is a call to action that emerged from the national dialogue on inclusive higher education and communities. In an aligned action, the University of Calgary established ii' taa'poh'to'p, an Indigenous Strategy to reimagine different ways of knowing, doing, connecting and being, and take parallel paths together "in a good way," toward reconciliation and Indigenization.

The University of Calgary has also put in place resources and a network for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access (EDIA) that connect the university leadership and EDIA work being conducted at the faculty level. These changes at the structural and relational levels are forward looking for a young university located in one of the fastest growing cities of Canada. However, to build institutional and organizational capacity, and sustain cultural and institutional changes, there must be transformation in the understanding of racism, its impacts, and the urgency of racial justice work. The challenge remains engaging diverse members of the university community and partners through honest and critical dialogue for change.

Discussion will emphasize the initial steps of bringing together groups of students, staff, faculty, administrative unit leaders, and community partners for critical dialogue. Participants will address factors that shape and sustain racism within the university and engage in personal and social transformative processes aimed at changing attitudes and motivating actions towards racial justice.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, what about African Immigrant Men? – Alphonse Ndeam Ahola

EDI (Equity, diversity and inclusion) is a leitmotif in Canada. People are concerned about racism, homophobia, sexism and more. However, less attention has been paid to African immigrant men. How are they included, how do they experience exclusion? How do these African immigrant men evolve towards new types of masculinity, drawing on both their cultural background and the dominant standards and norms in Canada? What measures and services are needed for them to be included? This session attempts to fill this void. Canadian social trends and the current framework of family-related policies create a context of discord in which African men may feel that the price of becoming Canadian is beyond their reach. Yet, over time, they also developed their own strategies to adapt their own values to Canadian norms.

The distinctive approach of this session is that it aims to account for the challenges of African immigrant men as well as their successes by examining the conflicting but complementary coexistence of different sets of cultural and social norms, examining how these men rely on separate sets of standards to maintain family ties and pursue their goal of having a better life in Canada.

African "Elders Critical Teachings (ElderCrit): The Epistemic Gift for Decolonial Turn – Paul Banahene Adjei

The session explores how African Elders Critical Teachings (ElderCrits) can be used as critical thinking pedagogical tools to nurture a politicized understanding of Africa. The data for the study is collected among Indigenous African Elders, leading scholars, and educational practitioners from Canada and Ghana currently engaged in transformative educational work. ElderCrit is conceptualized as bodies of knowledge emerging from the shared voices, experiences, history, cultures, and viewpoints of African Indigenous Elders over generations because of sustained occupation of or attachments to the Land, Culture, and Nature. They are bodies of knowledge that are treasured and held in highest esteem by Indigenous African community members, and they often inform, shape, guide, organize, and regulate how community members uphold to the promise of a better future.

Such knowledges speak of society, Nature, and culture interface and serve as African traditional teachings that guide social behavior and action in African communities. Such knowledges are often transmitted through orality, symbolism, modeling, and animation and not through the written word to the next generation. They are expressed in folklore, proverbs, symbols, artefacts, sculptures, artistic expressions, and storytelling and their formulations and uses represent an opportunity to think, talk and teach differently about Africa.

ElderCrit, as cultural traditions and wisdoms, offers a 'grammar of educational futurity' that highlights the spiral as opposed to the linear aspect of the past, the present, and the future trialectic of Africa. ElderCrit, as cultural resources, offers pedagogical guidance to challenge colonial appellations and imperial ecstasies of Africa as the inferiorized other. They offer viable educational initiatives, pragmatic ideas, and emancipatory potentials to resuscitate Africa from terminal collapse. ElderCrits offers educational consciousness of one's embodied existence as African rooted in self-definition, self-pride, self-dependence, and the shared bonds with Africans in the continent of Africa and in diaspora.

Session 6 Policy, Research & Ethics

Exploring "Best Practices" for Promoting EDI-AR at Hiring – Carolyn Walsh & Mandy Penney

After introducing the Joint Equity Committee's role and process as a blended (MUNFA/ Administration) committee, which is to act as a tool to support EDI-AR practice in the hiring process for Academic Staff Members (ASMs), we will demonstrate how EDI-AR values can take a variety of institutional forms, both within and among universities and other places of work. Our efforts in the context of the JEC is but one iteration, and is formalized in the MUNFA Collective Agreement (CA).

Importantly, within the boundaries of the CA, Search Committees have agency to tailor their search procedures in order to promote EDI-AR in hiring. We will introduce some practices that the JEC has found exemplary here at Memorial University, as well as recommendations from other organizations that conference participants may wish to consider adapting for their own hiring contexts.

Our goal is to encourage departmental Search Committees, in particular, to work creatively to promote EDI-AR within the prescribed structures for ASM hiring, and to provide some suggestions for their consideration, thereby aligning with the conference theme of "creating and maintaining" EDI-AR momentum. The practices described will be relevant to non-ASM hiring, as well as hiring practices outside the university setting. We hope to engage participants from both the University and the broader community to further consider and create possible "best practices" for implementing EDI-AR goals into hiring procedures.

EDI, Anti-Racism and Decolonization demand more than a Passive Awareness – Amy Abe

True progress requires the courage to challenge the familiar and embrace diverse ways of doing, learning, knowing, and relating. Sustaining momentum in meaningful and sustainable change demands a paradigm shift, prompting us to not only think but also act differently. This necessitates shedding habits that uphold the status quo and embracing those that actively promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in their truest, most concrete sense.

Equitable, inclusive learning occurs in a space of continuous reframing. This involves shifting from a Eurocentric/universal worldview (where everyone fits into the dominant system or way of thinking) to a pluriversal worldview. In a pluriversal learning environment, different perspectives come together to co-create knew knowledges and new systems that are meaningful). How do we practice reframing in the context of strategic planning?

This participatory session delves into the subtle and often uncomfortable art of frame shifting within the realm of planning, with a particular emphasis on fostering fair and inclusive learning spaces. Rooted in theories of critical pedagogy and decolonization, we delve into the transformative journey undertaken by Bishop's University in crafting its inaugural Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy.

Strategic Equity and Anti-Racism (StEAR) Framework at The University of British Columbia – Lucy Buchanan-Parker

Introduced in September 2022 by the Associate Vice President, Equity & Inclusion, the Strategic Equity & Anti-Racism (StEAR) Framework at the University of British Columbia is a planning and accountability tool to guide the implementation of institutional EDI-AR priorities and the cyclical evaluation of progress. The StEAR Framework brings together UBC's existing EDI and anti-racism plans, recommendations, and commitments for the purposes of governance, implementation, and evaluation. In doing so, it aims to prevent duplication of effort, streamline communications and engagement, and maintain focus on actioning identified priorities.

An innovative element of the Framework is an evaluation approach that enables the EIO's ability to monitor and communicate about progress. Recognizing that StEAR is a system change effort, our approach draws inspiration from Cabaj's (2019) inquiry framework for evaluating systems change results. There are three primary lines of inquiry:
(1) How are institutional and decentralized systems, processes, and practices changing?
(2) How are the experiences of people and groups changing?
(3) What insights are we gaining to inform our continuing efforts?

Session 7 Education & Training

Dispatches from EDI-AR in Japan – Theodore Bonnah

Japan is often viewed as a wonderland by people in the west. Media images focus on the clean streets, the lack of crime, and the beauty of its temples and nature. Travelers report that the service is great, as is the food, that trains are on time, and that people are unfailingly polite. This is all attributed to Japan's vaunted social harmony and shared cultural upbringing of its populace.

As a sociologist who spent 22 years in Japan as a tenured professor teaching Japanese Society, Culture, and Media courses at Japanese universities, I have also seen another side of Japan. To create its homogeneous society, Japan strongly delineates those who are outside and inside of its power structures. This means that Japan's vertical society requires inherent exclusion, and that the resulting inequalities weigh heavily on women, immigrants, and people of 'foreign' races. Pariah groups such as Zainichi (Japan-born North Koreans) and Burakumin (outcasts), as well as Japan's indigenous people, the Ainu, have all faced discrimination and marginalization in Japan.

In this talk, I first present the characteristics of Japan, the structural inequalities that exist there, and the grassroots movements that have sprung up to combat them. Next, I present my work in EDI-AR (DEI) for the company ENJOI, as well as my guest lectures about diversity in management for Kyoto University. I conclude with my thoughts on what Japan's government needs to do to support these successes, as well as what insights Canadians can take away from Japan's example.

Advancing EDIA through Curricular Intervention – Afua Cooper

In September 2023, a bachelor's program in Black and African Diaspora Studies (BAFD) was launched at Dalhousie University in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Within the BA program a prospective student could declare a minor, a major, or a bachelor's degree.

The motivation for setting up this BA came out of the Black Studies Minor that I conceptualized and created, and which was launched in September 2016. Additional inspiration was provided by a recommendation from the Lord Dalhousie Report on Slavery and Race which called for the setting up of a Black Studies program at the university to assist in the struggle against anti-Black racism in the curriculum.

There was a sense of triumph among those of us who were involved in the development of the BAFD project as the Sept. 2023 launch date approached. We felt this way because we had experienced setbacks and challenges over the course of the four years that it took to realize this BA.

This session explores the making of a Black studies program at a Canadian university. It discusses the actual curricular content but as important, the drive to build capacity through the hiring of Black professors, the faculty and university politics, and the "management" of the efforts to create Black studies.

Anti-Oppressive Science Teaching: An Investigation of Intermediate and Secondary Science Teachers' Views and Practices – Nikita Stapleton

Whether via outright abuse, exploitation, neglect, or exclusion, the oppression of marginalized identities within science is a long-standing and well-documented phenomenon. These issues will require the collaboration of many stakeholders to rectify. However, research suggests that schools, being a main vehicle of socialization, are important places for this anti-oppressive work. Furthermore, if science education programs are not mindful to appropriately address these issues they may serve to reinforce them. Anti-oppressive efforts have been shown to lead to improved outcomes, improved participation, and an increased feeling of belonging for marginalized students.

The results demonstrated significant variability among local teachers' perspectives on anti-oppressive teaching. Several participants expressed a lack of awareness in relation to oppression in science, and some expressed significant resistance to engaging with such topics. However, most participants claimed to feel a sense of responsibility to address these issues within their classes and expressed a strong desire to support marginalized students in science.

The study revealed several factors which either promote or limit teachers' engagement with anti-oppressive teaching. Most notably, teachers cited a lack of training and the absence of such topics within the curriculum as constraints to their engagement. Consideration of these factors, together with existing literature, illuminated some key actions for advancing anti-oppressive science teaching in the province.

Breaking Barriers and Empowering Women in STEM – Monica Hernandez

In the world of STEM, Monica's story illuminates crucial lessons about breaking barriers and empowering women. As an immigrant woman in a male-dominated field, Monica faced significant challenges, but her journey is defined not just by the obstacles she encountered, but by the strategies she employed to overcome them. Monica's success stems from her resilience and resourcefulness. She didn't let the statistics or biases deter her. Instead, she focused on carving her niche and leveraging her unique perspective to create opportunities where others saw barriers. Her ability to navigate both external challenges and internal doubts serves as a blueprint for empowerment in STEM. Monica's journey reflects a broader trend of change in STEM. As more women like her assert their presence and demand recognition, the landscape is evolving. It's not just about breaking barriers; it's about changing mindsets and creating a culture where everyone, regardless of gender or background, can thrive. Join us as we explore how we are reshaping the future of STEM, opening doors for empowerment and opportunity for all.

Session 8 Policy (Workshop)

Mobilizing Critical Race Theory as Practice in Undergraduate Social Science Teaching – Katherine Morton Richards & Brad Richards

Too often EDI-AR is treated strictly as professional development, instead of imbedded into our epistemological decisions. EDI-AR should not and cannot be assumed to be an addition, that can be taken or left, and yet, EDI-AR is sometimes relegated to the development of an educator outside of the post-secondary classroom.

As researchers and educators working within sociology and social work, we are interested in how and where EDI-AR learning and discussion are incorporated into course design and assessment, through meaningful engagement with critical race theory. Critical race theory does not realize its emancipatory potential when passively described to students, as one of many theories alone. In order to build momentum for EDI-AR, not as a special interest area, but as meaningful and concrete action, we call for critical race theory to be actioned within the scaffolding, assessment, and discussions of undergraduate sociology and social work courses.

This interdisciplinary workshop aims to explore creative and student-centered incorporations of critical race theory into undergraduate social work and sociology courses, with an emphasis on embeddedness. This workshop further interrogates how critical race theory is oftentimes relegated to a small number of courses and is left unread and unexplored in collaboration with students. This workshop will strategize how to overcome these limitations and reimagine anti-racism and critical race theory in the undergrad classroom. Finally, this workshop will strategize participatory action learning within the context of the critical race theory, to blur the separation between activism/ anti-oppressive practice and anti-oppressive learning.

<u>Session 9 Policy, Research & Ethics</u>

Canada's Black Justice Strategy – Martine St-Louis

Black communities continue to live with the effects of prejudice, discrimination, and hatred—from unconscious bias to anti-Black hate crimes and violence. This has its origins in Canada's history of colonialism, slavery, and segregation. Despite decades of work by Black communities to reduce the injustices affecting Black people, inequalities continue to exist in Canada. The murder of a Black man, George Floyd from Minnesota, US, on May 25, 2020 by police, galvanized mass international protests against anti-Black racism, systemic discrimination and police brutality. Similar incidents have also occurred in Canada.

Canada's Black Justice Strategy (the Strategy) is the federal government's response to address anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination that has led to the overrepresentation of Black people in the criminal justice system, including as victims of crime. The Strategy will aim to help ensure that Black people have access to equal treatment before and under the law in Canada.

At the international level, the Strategy will help respond to the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD 2015-2024)'s call to action, which recognizes the barriers experienced by Black people, including in the criminal justice system, and urges reform and modernization of justice systems across the world.

The Strategy will be developed in five phases:

- Establishment of the Steering Group for Canada's Black Justice Strategy (completed)
- Consultations and engagements with Black communities (completed)
- Final Strategy Report from the Steering Group (current phase)
- Development and release of an Implementation Plan
- Implementation of Canada's Black Justice Strategy

<u>**Session 10 Policy, Research & Ethics**</u>

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Canadian Research and Training Federal Funding – Sam Nakhla

On January 22, 2021 the Privy Council of Canada released "Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service."
[1] This Call possessed general focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in all branches of the Canadian government highlighting two minority groups, namely, Indigenous and Black. The Call addressed the Public Service leaders to appoint, sponsor, support, and recruit persons belonging to racialized minority groups. It worth noting, this Call does not represent an inaugural initiative in Canada. A clear example on earlier initiatives, is the Tri-Agency EDI Action Plan for 2018–2025

[2]. Where the Tri-Agency are three major federal granting agencies that promotes and supports post-secondary research and training. These agencies are, Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Tri-Agency action plan is developed to foster a more equitable, diverse and inclusive research ecosystem in Canada. As highlighted by the plan itself "In order to achieve world-class research, we must address systemic barriers that limit the full participation of all talented individuals. Moreover, we must create a culture where embedding EDI considerations into all aspects of research is second nature."

One effective tool to assess any plan is to monitor its results. Therefore, the Tri-Agency developed statistical tools to enable researchers to review success rates in securing federal funding. These tools provide multiple filters to enable fine tuning and accurate analysis of data to identify trends in various categories and locations. In this work, we go over various statistical tools made available by each of the tri-agencies. In the meantime, we will focus on statistical tools provided by NSERC.

Black Women's Experience in Canadian Research and Training Federal Funding – Ana Maria Alcantara

As a Black woman, I have experienced discrimination related to my race and gender throughout my life. The issue of skin colour discrimination or colourism surfaced for me in my experiences in childhood, in school, in jobs, in social events, in relationships, including my family growing up, and also now as a mother. My partner is white, and my son is Brown. His experience as a mixed-race child in Brazil opened my eyes to issues related to colourism and led me to ask the following questions: What does it mean to be Brown in Brazil? What does it mean to be Black in Brazil? What does it mean to be a Black woman inside and outside racial groups? Those questions led me to the topic of this research.

This research is timely and relevant for several reasons. First, understanding the nuances of Black women's experiences with colourism can contribute to developing actions to combat institutionalized racist practices by creating public policies to help Black women as a group. Second, it can help other societal groups better comprehend the oppressions that overlap in Black women's lives. Finally, as I will explore in my videocast, the resistance articulated by Black women to survive this oppression might also strengthen our sense of belonging as Black women and promote a sense of hope.

Through this study, I will review the literature on colourism while considering intersections of gender, class and race (Davis, 2018; hooks, 2019; Gonzalez, 2020; Crenshaw, 2013; Akotirene, 2019). I also intend to critically review theories about racism and colourism in Brazilian society.

Advancing Organizational and Societal Viability through understanding first-voice accounts on Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Anti-Discrimination – Farshad Amini

Despite efforts to promote inclusivity, the havoc of social exclusion and discrimination continues to impact people's well-being within organizations and communities. While organizations set priorities for inclusivity. Also, it is unclear how to contest the current discriminatory misconceptions and traumatic narratives (Smith et al., 2011). To address the gap, I used a dynamic framework guided by participatory action research (PAR) in the ethno-culturally diverse context of Talesh, Iran.

Combined with the back-casting approach, the PAR project aimed at advancing the collective understanding of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-discrimination (EDI-AD). The framework helps evaluate strategies and performance of organizations in embracing EDI-AD within the hosting places and ethno-culturally diverse communities.

An organization guided by EDI-AD needs to face the complex past of the hosting place and understand its current experiences and practices and the aspirations of its people for the future. Advancing a place's endogenous knowledge and values affects the residents' well-being by influencing community-building initiatives partnered with organizations. Community well-being develops from collective subjective well-being acquired by "the inner self as the most authentic account of experience, emotion, cognition, and our associated well-being" (Atkinson et al., 2020, p. 1909). Well-being understandings cultivate a cognitive template that can "influence anyone, in any place, at any time by accurately diagnosing the surroundings" and guide well-being advancing approaches wisely (Kutz, 2017, p. 10).

Understanding inclusivity is a critical local knowledge element without which indigenous forces cannot agree on visions for their shared, desired futures, processes to get there, and evaluation of the outcomes. An ethical, reflexive cognitive template presents the integration character required for responsibly leading forces in various capacities at individual, organizational, or community level roles. It creates narratives for self-actualization and community capacity orchestration to keep the place.

Black Youth Mentorship and leadership Program – Bukola Salami

Black youth experience social, economic, and health inequities in Canada and are less likely to attain post-secondary qualifications. Black-focused education can improve economic outcomes for Black youth. Strong evidence indicates mentorship is effective across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of youth development. The inception of the Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program (BYMLP) is rooted in extensive research collaboration with Black parents, community leaders, and service providers. Findings underscore the urgent need for mentorship opportunities to overcome educational disparities, racism, and bullying experienced by Black youths.

The BYMLP's goals include enhancing economic prospects, community integration, leadership skills, and fostering a positive cultural identity among participants. The BYMLP uses a participatory approach aimed at improving community belonging and leadership skills as well as fostering a positive cultural identity in Black youth. The program activities usually take place during the summer. Youths are selected through a competitive process that begins with the completion of an online application form, a one-page essay explaining why they want to participate in the program, and submission of their high school transcript. The BYMLP actively involves Black youths in research projects and provides internship opportunities.

<u>Session 11 Education & Training</u>

A Funny thing happened on the way to my thesis defense: Lessons learned from a mid-program autism diagnosis - Andreae Callanan

Disability occupies a complicated space within university EDI-AR dialogues; Mellifont et al. argue that "[w]hile gender and ethnic diversity have received significant attention" in discussions around enriching diversity within university faculty and staff, "disability has been rather less visible." Within the category of disability, autism holds a contested position, theorized at once as a "superpower" and as a constellation of deficits. For some autistics, academia can be a place of *inclusion* rather than of exclusion: a space where niche fixations are rewarded, and where habits that might be considered eccentric in other workplaces are overlooked. This paper combines current research on autism and disability as equity issues with reflections on the author's lived experience as an autistic scholar; the author identifies frustrations that could have been avoided through better policies, autism-informed procedures, and awareness among faculty and staff of autistic communication styles and needs.

Via a grounding in anti-oppression scholarship, critical disability studies, and critical autism studies, this paper proposes that current perspectives on autism, read through the lens of neurocosmopolitanism, can enrich the larger EDI-AR conversation, and can help move us all beyond mere tolerance and toward radical appreciation of all modes of diversity.

Mellifont, Damian et al. "The Ableism Elephant in the Academy: A Study Examining Academia as Informed by Australian Scholars with Lived Experience." *Disability & Society* 34, no. 7–8 (2019): 1180–99.

Importance of Neurodiversity in Educational Institutions - Virginia McNeil

As a teacher, I inherently value diversity and inclusion as integral parts of any learning space. As a MUN student, during my most recent undergrad program I was diagnosed as autistic at the age of 49.

As an ally, I consistently cultivated an environment of awareness and acceptance to students; however, I suddenly realized that I was actually a member of the neurodivergent community which I supported with passion over many years.
As an individual with autism I am able to look back at my own experiences in education with a mixture of appreciation, awe and horror. My diagnosis makes me understand so much more about myself, my perceptions of myself and my abilities, and also my challenges as an undiagnosed individual.

My passion is to strengthen the neurodiverse community by focusing on the positives that often accompany a diagnosis of neurodiversity. So often people see only the challenges, the struggles, and the negative aspects that can accompany a diagnosis. Emerging science, however, is eye-opening.

On the post-secondary level, universities and colleges offer much more to neurodiverse students than ever before. Places such as the Blundon Centre offer a myriad of services to students, and help to maximize the experience of the student in terms of offering any accommodations that may be required. There are also advocacy groups available to students who identity as neurodiverse.

Impacts of AI on the Integrity of Student Learning Assessment – Katherine Pendakis

Recently, oral exams have been suggested as a way of mitigating the impacts of AI on the integrity of student learning assessment. This 'solution' has been lauded in several academic and public forums (Times Higher Education, The Conversation, CBC, among others).

This session provides an overview of the emergence, use, and decline of the oral exam as a primary tool of assessment in the social sciences and humanities. Using an intersectional feminist approach, we then reflect on the oral exam in relation to EDI-AR principles and ask: In what ways could the widespread use of oral exams undermine EDI-AR principles? In what ways could oral exams potentially enhance diversity, equity and inclusion? Central to our intersectional approach is a concern with the broader social-cultural challenges faced by Gen Z students who are still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic in the form of social isolation and anxiety.

Ultimately, we pose the question of whether a tool steeped in patriarchal, colonial and class norms and exclusions can be recuperated and reimagined as an inclusive tool of teaching and learning. We conclude our session with a proposal to design (and evaluate) an EDI-AR informed oral assessment tool for an Introduction to Sociology class.

Session 13 Education & Training

Building Community Capacity to Create and Maintain Welcoming, Inclusive and Safer Environments for All – Colleen Belle

Intercultural, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (I-EDI) is an integral part of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) work, whose vision is to build a community where all can belong and grow. This session highlights the innovative strategies employed by ISANS' Innovation and Strategic Partnerships team to empower communities through targeted I-EDI training initiatives.

Highlighting the positive impact of these programs, this session underscores their role in fostering inclusive environments across Nova Scotia. It delves into the methodologies and approaches integrated into program design and implementation, including education on key topics, such as intercultural competence, equity, diversity, inclusion, unconscious bias, micro-aggressions, anti-racism, power and privilege, and cultural humility. Central to ISANS' approach is also listening to the lived experiences of equity-deserving groups, fostering relationships, and collaborating with community partners to ensure safer spaces for all.

This session offers insights into some of the successes achieved by our I-EDI team in fostering inclusive communities. Besides our targeted educational workshops, team members actively contribute to working groups and steering committees, collaborating with strategic partners to design and implement EDI-AR initiatives across Nova Scotia. Through these efforts, ISANS continues to drive impactful change and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the province.

Co-Creating a Sustainable EDI Community of Practice at a Settler University: Our Learning from the Pilot Year - Rachel Nelson & Bee Brigidi

Since 2020, Simon Fraser University (SFU) has taken concrete steps to develop structures, strategies, tools, and resources to support Faculty, Staff, and Students to gain knowledge of, and dismantle systems that create inequity in the institution. One of the objectives of our strategy was to provide EDI learning and training that is responsive to the evolving needs of our community. A 'Community of Practice' (CoPr) of Faculty and Staff EDI leads/practitioners was developed as a direct action to support, build, and implement their EDI knowledge and capacity to align with institutional EDI priorities.

This session will tell the story of SFU's EDI CoPr pilot year, and how we are co-building a sustainable and vibrant community of EDI practitioners and supporting transformational systems change across the institution through connection, learning, action, and advocacy. We will share the details of our model, process, and the results of our Developmental Evaluation (DE), which was an evaluation approach chosen to support the process of building, iterating and adapting the EDI CoPr as we progressed through the year.

<u>Session 13 Building Community</u>

Human Rights Justice: Imagining, (Re) Building and Sustaining – Carey Majid, Catherine Ann Kelly & Maria Dussan

Presenters will share the ongoing work of redesigning a human rights complaints process and building Community Justice Connect, a restorative Justice program housed within the NL Human Rights Commission. Presenters will share reflections on identity based human rights complaints and the barriers to Justice within Newfoundland and Labrador. They will explore the tensions and possibilities with restorative justice and anti-racism, access to justice and building trust in community.

They will share with conference participants:

- why this work was needed (looking at justice as a whole, but also in the context of Newfoundland and Labrador);
- the work of building capacity within the Commission (culture building),
- the process to date (what has been achieved, what's not worked and the work to come)
- the difficulties and accountability required in anti-racism organizational development in justice work,
- emerging insights and possibilities from reimagining a trauma informed process design rooted in restorative justice, anti-racism and anti-colonial practice

This session will speak to the why, what and how of this work.

Support for Leaders of Colour in Leadership Spaces – Louise Adongo

After we have celebrated the shattering glass ceilings, we are witnessing a massive fallout of Black women leaders exiting spaces where their leadership was precarious. The glass cliff phenomenon at play for Black women leaders in corporate, social sector and DEI spaces raises more questions than answers.

What do we need to do, to prevent these leaders from falling off glass cliffs? Restore leaders who have fallen off cliffs and most importantly, foster leadership transitions that mean cliffs are a consistent reality of the past?

Women in Seabird Science – Cerren Richards & Sydney Collins

Women are a minority in research worldwide, representing only 28% of the STEM workforce. Indeed, the share of women's representation in STEM decreases with increasingly senior roles, a phenomenon known as the 'leaky pipeline.' Moreover, the novel scientific contributions of gender minorities are also up taken by the scientific community less often than contributions by gender-conforming individuals, especially men.

Change in these trends is positive, but slow. Some of the reasons for this gender disparity include limited encouragement of STEM interests in girls, lack of female role models, gender stereotypes, and the gendered culture of certain fields. To combat these barriers, we have launched Women in Seabird Science (womeninseabirdscience.com), a platform to create and maintain EDI momentum in seabird science.

Women in Seabird Science has three main aims:
 1) to connect a global community of women and underrepresented genders in seabird science;
2) to amplify the voices of diverse individuals in seabird science; and
3) to inspire girls, women, and underrepresented groups to pursue and continue a career in seabird science.