

DIALOGUES in DIVERSITY

A Webinar Series on the EDI Implications of COVID-19

Dialogues in Diversity is a series of conversations among leading academics, EDI practitioners and social justice advocates whose work reflects the realities of COVID-19 and the challenges we now face. It will provide an interactive and engaging space to support the critical analysis necessary to successfully address the social, economic and cultural inequities, now exacerbated by COVID-19.

COVID-19, Rights and Responsibilities:

Lessons Learned and the Way Forward



It can be argued that it is precisely because the economic, social and cultural rights of some have been routinely ignored (in some instance over many generations) that certain groups are now more susceptible to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this, the final webinar in the series, we focus on the ways in which an adequate and appropriate response to COVID-19 must ultimately be informed by a human-rights based approach (HRBA), in alignment with international rights treaties; as well as with domestic law.



August 27, 2020 @ 2pm

REGISTER



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COVID-19, Rights and Responsibilities:

Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

The COVID-19 pandemic has led governments across Canada, and around the world to respond in innovative and inevitably unprecedented ways.

However, measures to protect public health can potentially have a negative impact on persons' human rights, such as freedom of movement and assembly, rights to education, employment and non-discrimination.¹

In fact, it can be argued that it is precisely because the economic, social and cultural rights of some have been routinely ignored (in some instance over many generations) that certain groups are now more susceptible to the effects of the pandemic.

Ultimately, any effective response to COVID-19 must be informed by a human rights-based approach (HRBA), in alignment with international rights treaties including the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, as well as with domestic law. Such an approach offers a unique opportunity to benefit all societies, both during the pandemic and for generations to come.

The final webinar in the series will focus on the way forward out of the pandemic, and the establishment of a HRBA framework to guide future global crises.

At the end of this webinar, attendees will be able to:

1. understand the relationship between personal, communal and state rights and responsibilities in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. appreciate the legal parameters of any response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
3. identify the ways in which an adequate and appropriate response to COVID-19 should ideally be informed by a Human-rights based approach (HRBA).

¹ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-statement-human-rights-based-approach-managing-covid-19-pandemic>

COVID-19, Rights and Responsibilities: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward



Anita Balakrishna is currently serving as the Director, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine. Anita is a lawyer and educator with a human rights background. She graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 2003 and was called to the Bar in Ontario in 2004 after articling with the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

She has focused on a social justice-based practice, providing legal advocacy, education, and law reform activities alongside low-income and other underserved communities through her work at the Human Rights Legal Support Centre, the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario and the Rexdale Community Legal Clinic. She has provided leadership on non-profit community boards, including the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (where she was the Chair between 2005-2007) and the AIDS Committee of York Region.

Between 2014-2017 she taught law courses for paralegals at Centennial College and Seneca College and focused on co-designing legal curriculum with an equity lens. Anita also holds a Certificate in Dispute Resolution with a focus on mediation and other alternative forms of dispute resolution from York University and is in the process of completing her Masters of Education degree at OISE, with a focus on adult education and community development.

She has extensive experience developing EDI-related education, programming and policy initiatives; engaging in inclusive conflict resolution processes; managing and addressing complaints and concerns related to discrimination and harassment; developing and delivering EDI-related workshops and training sessions; and, advising on promising practices for addressing and responding to EDI issues.

Besides being very involved in social justice work, Anita is a trained yoga teacher and yoga therapist interested in exploring ways to incorporate diverse yoga practices into healing and wellness with individuals, workplaces and organizations.



Jodie Glean-Mitchell is the Director of the Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office at the University of Toronto. She attained her Master of Arts in Educational Studies from Concordia University and is currently completing her PhD degree in Education at York University. Jodie's research aims to advance the effectiveness of institutional equity policies in postsecondary institutions.

Jodie brings more than ten years of experience in the field of equity, inclusion and training. In 2017, Jodie was the recipient of the Leadership in Learning Award from the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in Higher Education.

In 2020, Jodie was the recipient of the Harry Jerome Diversity Award.

Jodie is the Principal Consultant at REACT (Race Equity Advisory Consulting & Training) where she works with organizations to increase education and strategic initiatives on antiracism, equity, diversity and inclusion.



Rita Samson received her LLB and BA degrees from the University of Toronto and her MA (Understanding and Securing Human Rights) from the University of London, England.

She was called to the Bar of Ontario and practised human rights, labour and administrative law for four years, representing clients from both the public and private sectors.

For eight years, Rita coordinated Disability Rights Promotion International (DRPI), an international human rights project promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, based at York University.

At DRPI, Rita developed, managed and delivered participatory human rights education and capacity building programs in diverse communities around the world. Rita is a former member of the Human Rights Committee of Human Rights Watch Canada and the LEAF (Legal Education and Action Fund) Law Program Committee.

For the past seven years, Rita has worked at the Ontario Human Rights Commission, first as a Public Education and Outreach Officer and now as a Senior Policy Analyst. In this role, Rita develops and drafts public policy on a range of human rights and social justice issues.

She also delivers public education and undertakes consultations with stakeholder groups and the broader public



Navdip K Singh is a Sikh Canadian feminist lawyer, adjudicator, professor, policy consultant and writer.

She has many years of experience working in government, social justice, post-secondary education, hospitals, and non-profit community agencies.

She received her law degree from the University of Toronto, after studying diversity and inclusion at McGill University. She is a barrister & solicitor in good standing with the Law Society of Ontario and currently serves as a tribunal member of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada



Suzanne M. Charles Watson joined the SickKids Research Institute in 2019 and is currently the Program Manager, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

She holds a BSc (Hons) in Sociology, a graduate Diploma in International Relations and an Master's degree specializing in Gender Equity Studies and Social Policy. She is also a certified Project Manager. She is currently completing PhD studies in equity and education.

Her career has focused on issues of gender, social development and inclusion; recognized as an accomplished Social Researcher with a genuine passion and ability for creating synergies, fostering policy dialogue and promoting social justice.

She has published widely around issues of equity and inclusion and has produced technical reports for a range of organisations, including UN Women, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), the Caribbean Development Bank, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, OXFAM, the Office of the Prime Minister (Jamaica), the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Before joining SickKids she worked as a Research Fellow at the regional headquarters of the University of the West Indies (UWI), where she co-authored the university's Gender Policy, adopted by the University Council in 2017.



MORE INFO

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