

# Framing Contemporary Issues: The Impact of Microaggressions:

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Presenters:

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# Who is Angela Simmonds

Executive Director for the Equity and Anti-Racism Office

Consultant in Private Practice

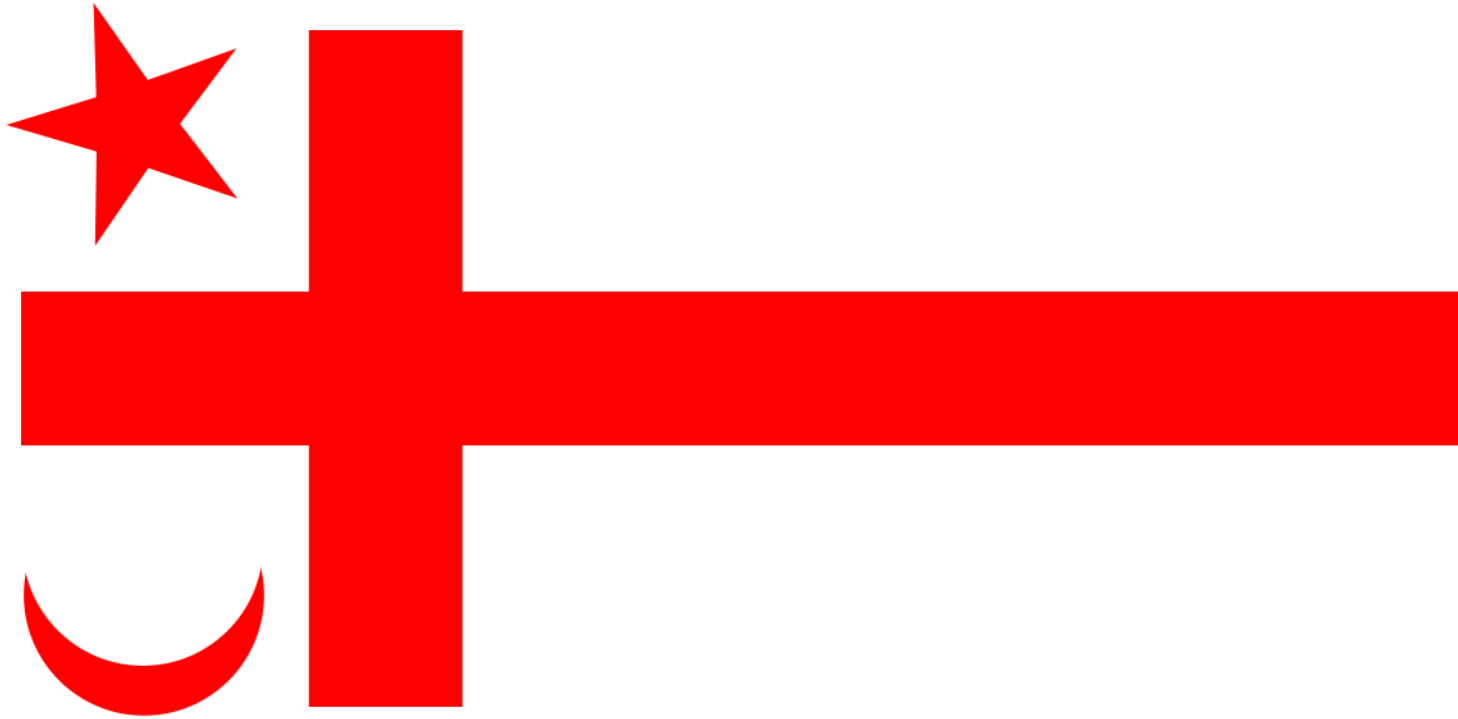
Former:

- Managing Lawyer Equity and Access Office
- SchoolsPlus Co-ordinator
- Small Business Entrepreneur
- Employment , Policy and Strategy
- *Land Titles Clarification Act (LTCA)*, Expert

Facilitator, community mobilizer, advisor, advocate and grandmother!



# Land and Territorial Acknowledgement



# **CIRCLE OF SAFETY**

- **Race, equity and diversity are extremely sensitive issues**
- **We are all at different stages and levels of understanding**
- **To have a productive dialogue while having conversations we have to feel safe to share information and ask questions**

# Your Questions Before We Begin

- ▶ Last year you began this work of EDI and began the conversation with: The imperative for diversity and inclusion. Today I will continue to support you in increasing your cultural competence in the process for building Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion within your profession.
- ▶ What are your questions as we begin?

# Why Diverse Teams

- ▶ Under-represented peoples are gaining increasing space in society
- ▶ Demographic of Nova Scotia is changing
- ▶ Improves our ability to manage complex problems
- ▶ Improves business opportunity



## A group of people, including a woman in a pink jacket, holding a protest sign that reads "ARE NOT BLACK DISPOSABLE WORKERS MATTER". The sign is white with black text. The woman is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Other people are visible in the background, some holding similar signs. The scene appears to be outdoors, possibly on a street or in a park.





# What Equity IS NOT!

- It is not about reducing standards for physicians and doctors
- It is not just about culture and culture is not only about colour
- It is not only about language and political correctness





# Equity vs Equality

## Equality



## Equity



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# Diversity vs. Inclusion

What is the difference between inclusion and diversity?

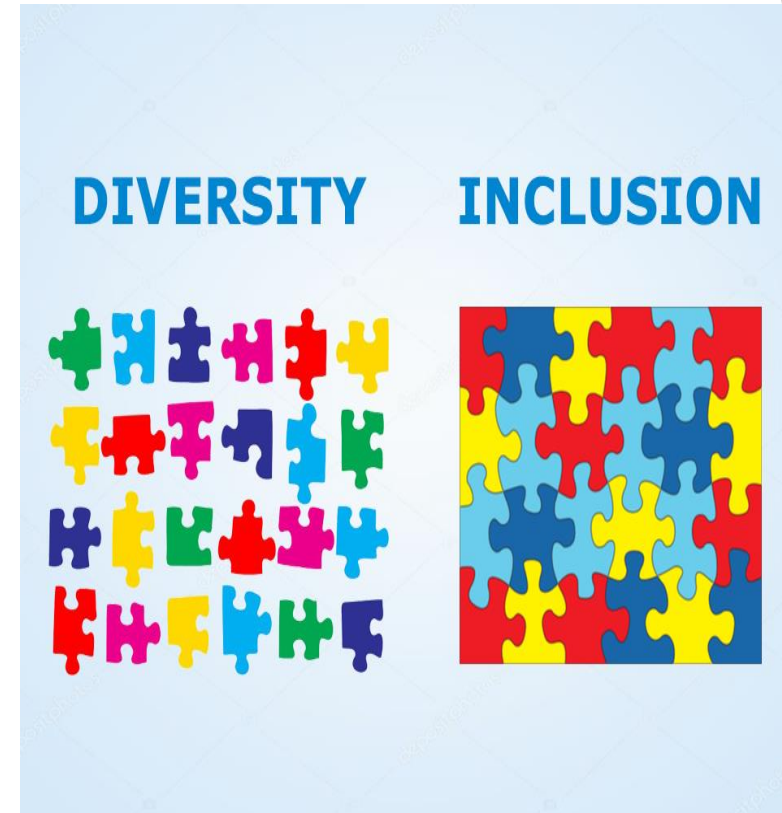
- The Presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes both visible and invisible. Within a group, organization or society .

Whereas, 'inclusion'

- Inclusion is the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals feel a sense of belonging, are treated fairly, are respected and free to achieve their full potential and being free to contribute fully to the organization success

***“Diversity is being asked to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”***

***Verna Myers***



# Diverse Teams - How?

- ▶ Through acceptance of the possibility that the workplace may be “structurally hostile” to diverse employees
- ▶ Through developing a Culturally Competent workplace
- ▶ Through targeted recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse employees

# The Problem with Diversity

- ▶ Sue and Sue in their classic text, “Counselling the Culturally Different”, proposed several principles including:
  - The more similar we are the easier we’ll get along together.
  - The more dissimilar we are the harder it will be for us to get along.
- ▶ Cultural Competence requires Inclusion
  - ▶ Inclusion requires work!



# Cultural Competence Definition

- ➔ Cultural Competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures:
  - A. Understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from others
  - B. Understand the different social and cultural realities we work in
  - C. Cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
  - D. Generate and interpret a variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
  - E. Understand structural oppression and commit to social justice

What does cultural  
competence look like in  
practice?

# Staffing for Diversity

- ➔ In an effort to increase cultural competence in your staff you want to do two things: Introduce cultural competence as a screening question with new hires AND place a cultural competence component in the annual performance review of employees.
- ➔ Frame up the question you would ask at interview and during performance review
- ➔ How would you evaluate the questions at each point? What are you looking for as indicators?

# transformation happens when....

*"It takes tremendous discipline, takes tremendous courage, to think for yourself, to examine yourself."*

*- Cornell West*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf9QBnPK6Yg>



# Bias and Decision Making

Our Perception

Our Attitude

Our Behaviours

Our Attention

Our Listening Skills

Our Micro-affirmations

# Defining Microaggressions

Microaggressions are “the subtle ways in which body and verbal language convey oppressive ideology about power or privilege against marginalized identities.”

# Defining Micro-Aggressions

- Verbal comments and nonverbal behaviours
- Communicate negative, hostile, and derogatory messages rooted in unconscious bias against people based on their membership in marginalized groups (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.)
- Occur in everyday interactions
- Can be intentional or unintentional
- Are often unacknowledged

(Professor Derald Wing Sue, 2010)

# Four Types of Microaggressions

## ► Microinsults

- Ascription of intelligence
- Pathologizing cultural values and communication styles
- Ascription of criminality
- Second-class status

## ► Environmental

- Are seen in the images we are exposed to
- Can reside in the climate of an organization or the broader society
- Create a sense of validation for one group, but invalidation for another group

## Microinvalidations

- Alien in own land
- Denial of oppression
- Colour blindness
- Myth of meritocracy

## Microassaults

- “Old-fashioned” discrimination
- Name-calling, avoidant behaviour or deliberate acts of discrimination
- Likely to be conscious and deliberate



# APPROPRIATE ATTITUDES

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450&list=RDhDd3bzA7450&start\\_radio=1&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450&list=RDhDd3bzA7450&start_radio=1&t=0)

# Tamara Smith-Jones

- Tamara is an African Nova Scotian woman, 27 years of age, who comes from Truro Nova Scotia
- She has worked in health care for the past 8 years and is a new staff with your department
- She is an excellent worker and has been working shifts in a couple of different departments
- In one department there are a few staff that have complained she is standoffish and rude. She has appeared difficult to deal with.
- During her mid-year clinic evaluation, Dr. Jones told her that she was doing fine, but that in her 360 evaluation, her colleagues mentioned there have been some issues with some staff. She could not recall any disagreeable encounters with the anyone and asked him if they mentioned a specific incidence when she was rude. He responded, “Does it matter? It would probably benefit you to just smile more
- What do Tamara’s team members need to do to support her?
- Was there microaggression
- What are the impacts
- What external supports can you provide to support Tamara?

# “I Don’t See Colour”



- ▶ **BIPOC people see colour all the time.**
  - ▶ Not because we are actively looking for it **but** because the spaces in which we navigate often require us to consider what others make of our presence in the room.
- ▶ **“I don’t see colour” says:**
  - ▶ you lack empathy and an ignorance to the historical context will continue to stand in someone’s way, despite their hard work and individual effort
  - ▶ you are choosing to ignore part of one’s identify because it makes you more comfortable
  - ▶ you are simultaneously silencing the voices of Black and Brown people invalidating their reality and lived experiences

# Impact of Microaggressions

“Historic and current traumatic assaults have enduring consequences — environmentally, socially, culturally, emotionally, biologically, psychologically and, above all, spiritually for both indigenous peoples and their perpetrators.” (Evans-Campbell & Walters, 2006)



# Working Against Racial Trauma

- ▶ If racism has caused trauma for BIPOC, then institutions must overcome their historical and symbolic identification with the perpetrators of that trauma

# Equity Diversity Inclusion - How to?

## Acknowledge Hostility

- ▶ Racism is North America's original sin
- ▶ The culture is hostile towards staff and employees who represent diversity
- ▶ The workplace and its leaders must replace those hostilities with affirmations
- ▶ The wise leader knows and counters the micro-aggressions which are felt by each staff member

# Equity Diversity Inclusion: How Not

- ▶ Do not place the responsibility solely on the shoulders of “diverse” staff and/or interns/volunteers
- ▶ Do not confuse cultural celebrations for cultural responsiveness training

# Your Commitment for change

- ▶ **We must**
  - ▶ understand the nature of privilege
  - ▶ demonstrate an awareness of structural discrimination
  - ▶ understand allyship and be an ally

# **Next Steps – Individual work**

- **Acknowledge How Racism, Sexism, Genderism, Systemic Discrimination and Unconscious bias has Shaped You**
- **Educate Yourself**
- **Speak Up and Do Your Part**

