

Pride at Work Canada  
312-192 Spadina Ave  
Toronto, ON M5T 2C2  
[info@prideatwork.ca](mailto:info@prideatwork.ca)



## June 9th, 2021 Virtual ProPride: Beyond Inclusion Towards Belonging

*Captioning Transcript*



**Terri Eklund**

Hello, everyone. Welcome. Welcome all. Welcome to Virtual ProPride: From Inclusion Towards Belonging. This event is the first in our 2021 Virtual ProPride series that is focused on moving beyond diversity, equity and inclusion. My name is Terri Eklund., I'm a member of the Pride at Work Canada board of directors, I work as an educational developer at the Southern Alberta Institute of technology, at SAIT.

As you likely just heard, this session is being recorded. You'll find at the bottom of your screen there is a button for closed captioning that is available. Closed captioning is being provided by National Captioning Canada. This session is in a Zoom webinar mode, so participants are able to make use of the chat as well as the Q&A box, but you won't be able to turn on your video or audio. This session will last one-and-a-half hours, and will end at 1:30 Eastern Daylight Time. I know there's plenty of folks from all over, including overseas, so welcome to all of you. If you are experiencing any technical difficulties, we do encourage you to connect with our team. So we have Pru Girme and Jade Pichette available. You can send direct messages to Pru or Jade using the chat and they can work with you. And we have Luis at Pride at Work Canada helping us out in the chat. So thank you, thank you all.

If this is the first time you've been at a Pride at Work Canada event or if you join us every time we're happy to have you. Through dialogue, education and thought leadership, Pride at Work Canada empowers employers to build workplaces that celebrate all employees regardless of gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation. We help create safer, more inclusive work spaces that realize the full potential of all employees, and bring down barriers to employment. As many of you know, our learning, networking and community events happen across the country, and we celebrate and

connect the most inclusive Canadian employers. So thank you for being here.

As with all of our events, it's important we recognize that Pride at Work Canada works on the traditional territories of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, this includes Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Indigenous people. We recognize there are multiple barriers that impact Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Indigenous people from accessing meaningful, affirming and inclusive employment. In our work, we look to reduce those barriers and are open to feedback from Indigenous workers, employers and job seekers in making that a reality.

Pride at Work's main office is based in Tkaronto. Today we will have presenters who live on multiple different traditional territories. In the spirit of reconciliation, I would like to acknowledge, I am presenting from Moh-kíns-tsis, where the Bow and Elbow rivers meet, which is the traditional territories of the Blackfoot, Siksika, Piikani, Kaina First Nations, the Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, and the Métis Nation Region III and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. As a settler it's important that I continue to understand the current and historical realities of where I live and where I work.

Today we will begin with remarks from Elder Laureen Blu Waters, and then move into our panel which includes time for a Q&A. Please ensure that we keep this whole space, the chat and the Q&A, an inclusive or a belonging space and we want to wish you a Happy Pride, Happy Pride from all of us. We'll wrap up today with some resources, as well as look to our upcoming exciting events as part of this Virtual ProPride.

Pride at Work Canada would like to thank our sponsors for making this event a reality. This includes our presenting sponsor, which is Amazon, as well as our community sponsor, BHER, the Business and Higher Education Roundtable. BHER is thrilled to be a sponsor for ProPride 2021. Today's theme of belonging hits especially close to home for them. As an organization that focuses on talent development, learner pathways, and stronger connections between post-secondary institutions and employers, we strive to better understand and make strides in providing students with positive, impactful experiential and work-related learning opportunities. Central to this work is making sure students from equity deserving communities have equitable access to opportunities, but that they truly feel they belong and are able to thrive as they launch those careers. So thank you to both of our sponsors.

Today's event is focussing on moving from inclusion towards belonging. According to inclusion expert Verna Meyers, diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance - I think you've seen this, I've seen it in email signatures, it's well-known - in which case belonging is actually choosing the playlist at the party. So belonging in the workplace is where employees are not only just able to bring their whole selves to work, but they actually feel like all pieces of themselves are valued. We know that employees who feel they belong at work invest themselves in the work they do with more depth, and our research confirms that employees who feel they belong will be more productive. They make better team decisions and they're more likely to remain in those workplaces. Today we'll hear from a panel of experts who are working to create these spaces of belonging, as well as doing research as to why not all LGBTQ2+ folks may not feel a sense of belonging at work.

To start today, we are grateful that Elder Laureen Blu Waters will be opening our discussion.

**Jade Pichette**

Just as a note, Blu is running a few minutes late, and should be joining us shortly.

**Terri Eklund**

Thank you, Jade. I'll introduce who Blu is, and hopefully they have a chance to join us. So Elder Blu's family is from Big River Saskatchewan, Star Blanket Reserve and Bra d'Or Lake, Eskasoni First Nations, Cape Breton Nova Scotia, and the Red River. Blu grew up with their grandmother and learned about traditional medicines learning healing methods and care of the sick. Their grandmother also shared her knowledge of the great teachings.

They are currently working at Seneca College as an Elder on campus providing traditional teachings and one-to-one counselling.

Blu spent 2.5 years working for the Nation Inquiry for murdered and missing women as a grandmother to commissioner Brian Eyolfson, and sits on the grandmother circle. Blu sits on the Thunder women healing lodge as a director of the board. Blu also sits as the Ontario representative for Metis people with 2 Spirits in Motion board. Blu also provides ceremony and teaching and counselling for 2 Spirited People of the First Nations, in Toronto.

Blu was also the national caucus representative for the Toronto Urban Aboriginal strategies for five years working with the community of Toronto and the government. They are also a graduate of DeVry Institute of Technology receiving their business software micro-computer architecture and A+ certification.

Blu's gifts include: Traditional teachings, giving traditional spirit names, hand drumming, song writings, creative writings, and full moon conductor. Pipe ceremonies and sweat lodge ceremonies and Traditional counseling.

Blu is a 2 spirit person, a parent of 3, a grandparent of 3, a sun dancer, pipe carrier.

And I believe Blu has joined us. So thank you, Blu, we're thankful you can offer your opening remarks for this panel.

**Elder Laureen Blu Waters** Thank you. So would you like me to start now?

**Terri Eklund** Yes, sure. Thank you.

**Elder Laureen Blu Waters** Alright, thank you. So first and foremost, I want to acknowledge the many territories from which we are attending this event today. I know that there are people from all across Canada, so I possibly couldn't know all those First Nations, so what I'm going to say is we give thanks to all those original ancestors, we're here walking upon Turtle Island in the many nations that exist. We give thanks for those ancestors and those that are still here that take care of the land, protect the land, take care of the water, and make this space available for all of us as human beings to work, live, and be on the lands. So for that we give thanks.

And as we come together today, I ask those ancestors to look upon us, to help us do this work, to help us speak the words that need to be heard, to help us use our ears to listen to what is being heard, and to do this work with kindness, gentleness, and compassion, as beautiful gifts from creation, as we come together here as a

magnitude of multiple and non-binary, and the identities that exist in our original languages, and those that are yet to be discovered, because they've been kept in safekeeping by those ones that know the original languages that describe gender diversity in all of its beauty that exists.

So we give thanks for that today that we can come together in this way and provide a safe learning environment for all of us to express what it is that we need to say, and for those to hear what needs to be heard. And we do this with humility and kindness, because we know that when we get together, we're here to support each other, to lift each other up, and to do this work in humbleness, not to look for gratitude for ourselves, but just to be a resource to help others. So as we're doing this work today, we give thanks that we can be here in this way. And you've heard my name, which is Istchii Nikamoon, which means Earth Song, and I'm from the Wolf Clan, my family is from Saskatchewan and Eskasoni First Nation as well as the Red River. In the Cree language I identify as *aayahkweew*. *Aayahkweew* is one of our original words that means neither man nor woman.

So, again, bringing us the understanding that diversity long existed before colonial idealisms came to this land. So we're grateful we can reclaim those words, and, again, make our ancestors who fought long and hard to prepare this space for us, so that we can pick up that work and continue doing this work in a good way. So for that I say, hiy hiy, miigwech, and thank you everyone who joins us today. Hiy, hiy, miigwech, thank you.

**Terri Eklund**

Thank you, Blu, and I just wanted to mention that we're in this virtual space, so some of the traditions we have to adapt, and Jade did make

an offering, tobacco offering, to the ground in the Cree tradition for you to be with us, and to share your knowledge, and a bit about yourself and your people. So thank you.

I'd now like to introduce our moderator today, Sandeep Nair, Manager of Business Operations, Pride at Work Canada. Sandeep holds a bachelor degree in communication and journalism and a diploma in 2D and 3D animation and graphic design. With over 12 years of work experience, Sandeep has worked as EDI, program consultant and prior to that, worked for a communication agency. Experienced in project management and creative development, he worked on various projects ranging from web sites, online communication, to product packaging deliverables. With a core belief that everybody has a special responsibility for making a positive difference, Sandeep's work focuses largely on creating an inclusive workplace environment for all, especially 2SLGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities. Sandeep has led programs and campaigns, and provided training and consultancy services to drive the EDI strategy across various organizations in the Asian region. He has played a key role in developing three research publications, to achieve success in creating a safe and inclusive society. Sandeep is on the board of Nanaimo Pride society, and SIETAR BC, the Society for Intercultural Education Research and Training. So thank you for being our moderator, Sandeep, and welcome. I will hand it over to you.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you, Terri very much for that detail, much appreciated. Hello, everyone, my name is Sandeep, I use the pronouns he/him/his. I greatly acknowledge the unceded territories of the Snuneymuxw and Coast Salish people where I work, reside, and learn. It is known as Nanaimo in BC. It is my honour to introduce our panellists.



First we have Dr. OmiSoore Dryden, a Black queer femme, is the James R Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies, Faculty of Medicine, and Associate Professor, Community Health & Epidemiology at Dalhousie University. Dr. Dryden is an interdisciplinary scholar and researcher focussing on Black LGBTQI people and HIV vulnerability within Black diasporic communities in Canada; systemic/structural issues that affect health and well-being, including experiences with blood donation; medical education; and Black health curricular content development. She is a Researcher-In-Residence and has affiliation with the African, Caribbean, and Black Program Science Scholars Lab at the Ontario HIV Treatment Network. Dr. Dryden is the co-president of the Black Canadian Studies Academic Association (2019-2021) and is a member of the Black Feminist Health Science Studies International Collective based at Northeastern University (Boston, Massachusetts). Welcome.

Percy Lezard is a registered member of the Penticton Indian Band and their people, the Sqilxw, have lived on the territory known as the Okanagan Valley since the beginning of people on our land.

Percy's background includes over thirty+ years of field experience as a social worker, activist, researcher and scholar and with strong relations with many Indigenous communities, both urban and on reserve; as well as solidarity work with Black & Racialized communities and across multiple marginalities. Wherever they go, they bring a specialization in Indigenous social work, 2Spirit pedagogies, Indigenous research methodologies, substance use/misuse, harm reduction, anti-racist/anti-colonial praxis and trauma informed practices. Percy combines these theories, research approaches and frameworks of understanding to create a culture of healing wherever they go. Their current focus is on ensuring this

culture of healing is fostered and supported within systems and structures. Welcome Percy.

Our third panelist is Sonia Sangha. Sonia Sangha is a global Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leader at IKEA, and contributes to fostering a diverse and inclusive co-worker base, integrating diversity and inclusion throughout IKEA's business practices, and inspiring change within the markets IKEA operates in worldwide.

Previously, Sonia was the Diversity and Inclusion Leader for IKEA Canada, and implemented IKEA Canada's first ever D&I strategy for 6,500 co-workers and leaders. In 2020, with a focus on gender equality, LGBT+ Inclusion and anti-racism, Sonia developed an intersectional approach to ED&I leadership development. Sonia also developed the Refugee Skills for Employment initiative at IKEA Canada.

Sonia is first generation born Indo-Canadian, originally from the west coast, and currently resides in Toronto. She's deeply inspired by the life stories and unique perspectives of others and our sense of shared humanity. Welcome Sonia.

Everyone can think of a moment when they felt that they didn't belong. It's not a feeling that we forget. Exclusion hurts, and thinking of times when we didn't fit in because of something we couldn't control, can teleport us into that sad feeling. Think of that soul-destroying feeling of not belonging, now imagine dealing with that every day at work. So have you ever wondered if the colleagues who sit around you feel like they have to filter major parts of their identity out of their professional persona, that they need to check a part of their life at the door each day. How painful it must be to tolerate that sense of exclusion every day just to make a living, and

yet it happens all the time. We often fail to recognize that just because someone is included in the organization, certainly doesn't mean that they feel that they belong. So with that in mind, in today's discussion we're looking at the difference between inclusion and belonging so we can create work spaces where everyone feels they can belong regardless of gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. To start off with all the panelists today, how would each of you describe inclusion and belonging, in a short sentence. Let's start with Dr. OmiSoore Dryden.

**Dr. OmiSoore Dryden**

Thank you, it's great to be here. I'm currently located in Chebucto Halifax which is the traditional unceded territory of the Maliseet, whose ancestors, along with the Mi'kmaq and Passamaquoddy First Nations signed peace and friendship treaties with the British crown in the 1700s, and that these treaties were assigned by 150 years before the end of slavery, in this region we now call Canada. I also wanted to acknowledge the continuing challenges and harm and trauma that we are experiencing. Most recently the discovery, the, I guess, public discovery of the 215 children. I think that information was always around, but the state and those who are decision makers chose not to listen and wanted to keep that hidden. The terrorist murders that happened in London, Ontario, which is where I was raised, and the continuing ways that Black, Indigenous, and people of colour are harmed on a daily basis. This is colonialism - this is the very structure of colonialism, this continued violence.

In terms of belonging and inclusion, I think we really need to question what we're actually being included in. So this is why you hear a lot about challenging pink washing, why there's a lot of people who believe that there's no pride in policing. I'm one of those people. Because if you are - if we are considering our inclusion into systems that perpetuate harm, hold up harm, continue colonialism, continue

the harm around anti-Black racism, then what exactly are we being included in, and why is that a measure of success? Why is that okay? Why do we want to be part of an agency that, for example, policing and RCMP, that continue to target women for sexual abuse, target LGBTQ2 people for sexual abuse, continue to gas light and undermine Black and Indigenous people? why is that -- you know, why do we believe that that agency can be corrected, and would be better with our inclusion?

Belonging really comes with a commitment, unreserved, to accountability. And so to belong in an agency or a group or in an employee group or at work means that people are also committed to being accountable in those relationships, right? So you're creating a relationship, one that allows you to be reflexive on misgendering someone, deadening someone, perpetuating racial stereotypes, so like "you don't look queer" or "oh my gosh it must be so brave of you as a Black person to be gay". As if these colonial notions of gender are the only kind of understanding of sexuality that we as Black people have, especially in this after life of slavery, right? Black people who have been connected to the transatlantic slave trade have not lost their connection to their traditional Indigenous beginnings just because of slavery. And that means we haven't lost our ancestral knowledge around sexuality and gender. And so when we perpetuate these colonial assumptions that Black people are the most homophobic people in the world - which really comes out of slavery right, as a way to make sure the colonial state will be propped up - then we're perpetuating this harm towards Black people. So belonging is really about making sure there's accountability and self-reflection, so you can create a community that's about recognizing how we move in the world distinctly.

inclusion doesn't have, for me, doesn't have that sense of critique to it, because it's about having a seat at the table, being invited to the table, but never being part of the decision of if you ever really *wanted* to sit at the table, or if you wanted to sit on the ground, or if you wanted to sit on a blanket, right? Like, it's already predetermined what the structure would be. So these are just some of the ways I think differently around inclusion and belonging. I'll stop there.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you, Dr. OmiSoore. I like how you brought in self-reflection and accountability that people need to think about when we think about belonging. Next, Percy, if you can mention what do you think, or how would you describe the difference between inclusion and belonging?

*[Percy Lezard's mic cuts out]*

**Sandeep Nair**

Yeah, sure, I'll come back to you Percy. Sonia, if you can tell us, if you can describe.

**Sonia Sangha**

Hi, everyone, can you hear me?

**Sandeep Nair**

Yes.

**Sonia Sangha**

Yes. Okay. Great. Thank you. Sandeep, thank you for the warm introduction, and hell everyone, so i'm Sonia Sangha pronouns, she, her, they, them, and I'm one of the equity diversity and inclusion leaders for IKEA global, and I come to you today from the "Dish With One Spoon" territory of Tkaronto. So I was thinking about this question, and we use these words interchangeably sometimes, and

even as we are evolving into belonging at IKEA, we are in that transitional place where they are interchangeably used sometimes.

So I think to start, it's really, what is the purpose? When we think about what we want to achieve when it comes to all of the diversity that we may have in our organizations that we have attracted, and that we are wishing to retain, and would like to attract more of. And with all of these uniquenesses and with co-workers coming together within organizations, what do we want to do with this? What really comes next? And how do we ensure that LGBTQ2+ co-workers feel that sense of belonging. So I think it's important to define it.

So inclusion, it's a choice. It's a choice that each one of us makes. Do we want to include someone else, or others? Or do we not? Right? All gender expressions, gender identities, sexual orientations, into pre-existing systems and structures, right. Will we include others or will we not? And we can feel included, and I think all of us have felt included in different situations, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we feel like we really belong there.

I think the term diversity, inclusion and belonging was defined as diversity and inclusion captures your head, and belonging really captures your heart. And that belonging, it's a feeling. It's a feeling that we never forget. It's a fundamental human need. It transcends language, culture, identities, and it's something we all desire to feel like we're wanted and also needed. And then I think as you said, we all have moments where we don't feel like we belong, and we carry those feelings for a long time. Whether we've been bullied in school, or we've moved to a new community, or a new country. And, you know, we may have had to hide parts of ourselves when it comes to gender identity and sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and that is absolutely exhausting, and even more so from an intersectional

perspective. We've all had those moments. And belonging, it can feel really powerful, it's really the moment where people can flourish, and really come together. And I think from an organizational perspective, it needs to really be enforced by culture within an organization, to be seen and valued. And I think this is the only way within an organization, co-workers can come together and really thrive and see the full potential of a diverse co-worker base and actually retain that diverse talent, which is really the goal for organizations.

And on the last part, it's about intentional acts and creating a welcoming and safe environment. Systematic change can seem so large, and daunting for any individual, but it's on that interpersonal level where we can influence and create change. So, you know, I think it's that we want to be a part of something, and we want to feel like we really matter, whether it's with one other person, it's with a team, a brand, or an organization.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you. Thank you, Sonia. It's rightly said. Like you said, inclusion definitely is an intentional act of making something feel a sense of belonging, and even the aspect, if there was somebody who had a serious belief in school, that's something they carry for a very long time. Even one small act of not feeling included in an organization or not feeling like you belonged in a place would trigger a lot of unpleasant incidents for a lot of people. So Percy, just checking if your mic is working.

**Percy Lezard**

Can folks hear me? Okay, perfect. Well that definitely contributed to me not feeling like I belonged and was included in this space and place.

**Sandeep Nair**

Sorry about that.

**Percy Lezard**

Indigenous folks, if you say sorry, you can then follow it up with behaviour change, and I task that with everybody here. And I mean First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Afro-Indigenous folks and Black folks and Indigenous because let's not be dismissive, Black folks are Indigenous as well.

I want to let you know, I carry with me grief and trauma and it was already mentioned today by my relative and kin Dr. OmiSoore Dryden about the 215. That is a 90-minute drive and my relatives went to Kamloops Indian Residential School. And my relatives have been impacted. Also what I carry with me is the grief and trauma of having news blips across social media about how Chantal Moore did not get the justice they deserved and that we're continued to be seen by the nation state as disposable. How Barbara Kentner's family will not be able to see their children and grandchildren grow by just walking. So those are the things I carry with me today, and I carry with me grief. As I'm in mourning for my late younger sibling, Fabian J. Williams, who died medically similar to Joyce Echaquan, being refused medical support and services for who they are as an Indigenous Sqilxw. So those are the things I bring with me, and this is what I have to labour.

And in terms of relationality, I just want to acknowledge my Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, gender diverse relatives and kin who are here today to share time and space. I want to give my thanks and raise my hands up to Blu for opening this space in a good way with a good heart, and the opening words with Dr. OmiSoore Dryden for that.

So if you haven't connected, I've been talking about the ways in which people can be included, and belong. Black, Indigenous, and



racialized folks have been triggered. Why? Because hate, and Islamophobia do not belong on treaty territories. Do not belong. Okay? And if you think, what can I do? Well, much like we have started with one little incident of putting our pronouns in our chat, and I see that participants have also put their pronouns. That's one intervention, for harms against folks like me, who are Mnimcelx - I'm going to centre my language first - Mnimcelx is non-binary, right. Or people intervening when somebody misgendered me here, and reminded folks that my pronouns are they/them/theirs, that we have the capacity to interject in every single aspects of our lives, because what i share as I lecture - oh yeah I'm also a professor, but that is not what I see as success - the success for me is that I have relatives and kin who have attended this session, who hold me accountable when I'm in these colonial spaces and places. That that's not my work. That's not success. The success is the relationships I have, how I engage in relationality with the Indigenous, Afro-Indigenous, Black peoples - who were brought to these territories not by their choice - with them, in accountable, transparent, affirming ways. That's not even talking about systems and structures.

Systems and structures, my university included, occupies the traditional homelands of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee. So until those institutions acknowledge that they exist at the death and forced removal and dispossession of the original people of those lands, and furthering anti-Blackness, then it's not ever going to be a space that's about inclusion or belonging. It's going to continue to be spaces and places that continue to cause harm, right? What else... you know, one of the things -- I saw some of the questions, and people being redirected to Q&A. I- yeah, I think that's all I'm going to say for now. Because there's a lot.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you. Thank you so much for that, Percy. And, yes like you said, there is no place for hate in these territories. So that's a very strong and powerful statement. Thank you.

On that note, I still want to go ahead with you, on the next question. The work and the activism that you do., and you do create cultures of healing, and so are there any teachings from Indigenous communities you feel create spaces of belonging if they were honoured in the workplace specifically?

**Percy Lezard**

So, hang on, folks. This is not going to be pleasant. If these things were actually actualized, I can't name the former employment. I'm going to keep it general, because I have two active grievances against a former employer, an employment setting. If they had been actualized, then my Indigenous specific, Two-Spirit, non-binary, disabled hire would be continually held at said institution, generic institution. I wouldn't have had the medical implications that I had from being in that former institution. I wouldn't have had the experiences I've had in institutions.

Let's go back. It just can't always fall on Indigenous people to come and smudge away settler occupier guilt, and occupation, and extraction. So, if you go back to 1969, a response from Indigenous folks against Chretien and Trudeau Sr. in their white paper policy, folks responded with a red paper policy. That was a gift and labour of many who gave to many systems and structures on how to be a good neighbour instead of an occupier, settler.

Then you have the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, right. Hundreds and hundreds of hours of multiple people to share with non-First Nations, Métis, Afro-Indigenous, Black folks on how to be in treaty, be a good neighbour with Indigenous folks, right. And then,

even then, 6,000 stories over seven years about the atrocities of this country's ongoing colonialism of the Indian residential school epidemic that is still being felt today of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Okay. Then you fast forward even further to 2013, where the commissioners, along with our knowledge keeper here, Blu Waters, travelled the territories and gathered the experiences of Indigenous women and Two-Spirit, trans and Indigiqueer folks, and I want to remind folks, when you willingly write "MMIWG" you actively erase and dismiss from the narrative the experiences of Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer and trans folks from the gender based violence experience. So it came with that. So that's a lot of things that Indigenous folks have done and laboured.

So I want to know what folks here are going to do to actively uphold those things to ensure that your First Nations, Métis, Indigenous, Afro-Indigenous, Black colleague, community member, is going to be safe. So there's not something that I can do or am going to offer, because me being here let's Indigenous folks, that they have the capacity to be within these systems and structures, but that it's not going to be a safe place. Because EDI, let me be frank, EDI actually is silos, and Sarah Ahmed writes a lot about this complaint - #feministkilljoy - when it actually moves away from human rights, and that was very strategic on systems and structures to move away from human rights. So maybe this is not the answer people were seeking. Maybe people wanted me to perform Indigenous, but me being here is Indigenous excellence, okay? So, yeah.

So you can take that up. You can be upset at Percy, but why are you really upset? Because since time immemorial, Indigenous people have been always welcoming into the circle, always creating space by the council fire, always wanting to role model non-interference by being a good neighbour, and being a good relative. So when are folks

going to take up the bundle, and be responsible for your part of being welcomed into the circle, being welcomed to the fire, and having access to bundles like myself, Blu, and your First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Afro-Indigenous, Black person in your workplace, okay?

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you. Thank you so much for that Percy, thank you for being honest, for opening up about your truth, and like you said we need to take the action to make sure we are doing the right thing. Thank you.

On that, Dr. OmiSoore Dryden, in terms of your book *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*, we challenge the idea of queer inclusion. So could you tell us about where you see traditional LGBTQ2+ inclusion initiatives fail to produce workplace and economic justice.

**Dr. OmiSoore Dryden**

Thank you, and I also want to thank Percy, because a lot of what they just offered actually connects to this very question. You know, I think we need to really think about these silos, this idea that if you're LGBTQ2+, then that means you're not racialized, you're not Indigenous, or that if you are racialized then you can't possibly be LGBTQ. And this idea comes out of these really ridiculous questions that happened in the '80s when white feminists would say to Black women: "what's most important to you, your race or your gender?". They thought that these were reliable, decent questions, perfectly okay questions. And we see that again in LGBTQ2+ pieces.

So some of the issues that we have with LGBTQ2+ in the workplace, here I need to reference the work of Dr. Malinda Smith who wrote, I think it's called "Equity Matters", it just went out of my head right now. Someone can Google that, please, and put it in the chat. Dr. Smith spoke about hiring, and equity hiring. And she focused on

universities and colleges, which can apply to any workplace, and what their research demonstrated is that white people benefit the most out of equity hiring. So when the category is women, white women, white cis women benefit. People with disabilities, white people with disabilities benefit. When the category is “visible” minority, white looking and white passing people benefit, and if there's a category inLGBTQ, white LGBTQ people benefit. And then if employers have the whole well they're equally situated, then we will hire the person who is currently not represented in the workplace, which is a ridiculous way to go about this, because it really is, again, about quotas. And this is what inclusion works to. many presidents of universities and other organizations will look at the ethnoracial diversity, for example, in one's community, and then say we only need 3% of “visible” minorities in the workplace, and then we will have made our equity goal. And we have never suggested that minimum requirements should come with minimum efforts, right. We've never said those things.

And so when we think about inclusion, again, I don't think we should be all about inclusion. I think there's a way in which there's a patronizing response to being hired: “so you are the only Black queer person in the office, you should be thankful that you still have a job”, “why are you out here talking about anti-Black racism?”, “why are you talking about anti-Black homophobia?” This is an experience I'm having with Canadian Blood Services right now, it's public so I can name them, where they'll say to the person - the victim of harassment, the victim of racial harassment and abuse - that you have brought that upon yourself, and so we're still stuck in these kind of silos of how even to respond to the intersecting way that the poisoned environment or the chilly climate at work will impact our participation and involvement.

There's a reason why we stop going to staff meetings. There's a reason why we stop going to staff events. Not just - I mean, pre-COVID, and post COVID - there's a reason why we don't do those things, because they're not safe spaces to be, and because we're considered to be the native informant, the human zoo, right. So we have these things in North America where you could go to the human zoo and touch the hair of, you know, the coloureds, and poke at them and prod at them because it was such a fascination. So we don't go to these employee appreciation pieces, because we're not often appreciated in those spaces, because we're thought to be too difficult by saying "I know I got this job, I got it because I deserved it, not because of whatever stereotype you have around affirmative action or employment equity. But that does not mean that I've lost my right to say you are not treating me appropriately in the workplace".

And so I think about all of the gifts that Percy just offered us today, and I know people are like, you know, again, Canadian Blood Services has said, "we're not responsible for all the racism in society". This is a direct quote, and I was like how about being responsible for the systemic racism in your own agency. How about holding your employees responsible for the intersecting forms of harassment and discrimination, and exclusionary behaviour that happened in the workplace. So that means dealing with the intersections of racism and homophobia; of racism, homophobia, and misogyny; of cisgenderism and heterosexism. I know these are big academic words but they actually have an impact in the workplace and it means doing that intersectionally. And this is where inclusion, at its most kind of normative, basic form, doesn't address that. Because they stop at, well, we needed ten queer people, we have nine, plus a transperson, we think, but they're all white, so that's good, and now we're going to have all these Black straight people, oh, the Black

person is also a queer, lucky for us, we've made our ten, right, and then it stops at that without what belonging does, what accountability does, what holding their staff accountable means, having good leadership means. The impacts of colonialism and anti-Black racism and homophobia happening in society also happen in the workplace.

So how are we better accountable to our colleagues, and therefore to ourselves? And that requires more than having policy on the books but no impetus, no commitment to actually holding people accountable. And that means people may lose their jobs, and being willing to say I'm sorry, what you did is inappropriate, and you can't work here anymore. As opposed to saying to those of us who are harmed, they didn't really mean it, it's an interpersonal discrepancy, so maybe if the two of you go to some sort of mediated conversation, we can continue moving forward the way we've always moved forward. That's how inclusion works. That's not what belonging is.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Dryden. I should say both your points and Percy's are very strong. Coming to Sonia, I know we heard from both of them, and I know you have the difficult job of putting theory into practice. Now if you could share, how would you create spaces of belonging when you're working with thousands of communities in the workplace who may have different ideas of what belonging, for specifically say LGBTQ2+ people look like?

**Sonia Sangha**

So that's extremely challenging. There's over 170,000 people, co-workers for IKEA, across the world in 30 countries, right, and it's not just a matter of stores, it's the entire supply chain, and all of our suppliers as well. so it's extremely challenging, but that's why we

have to simplify it, you know, exactly what is our stance on human rights? when thinking about different policies and harassment policies, thinking about what is belonging, specifically for LGBTQ2+ people and co-workers, as well as the communities that we operate in across all of these organizations. And really about anchoring it at all levels, whether it's through leadership or the entire co-worker base as well. And, you know, the work is always evolving. It's absolutely continuous.

So to provide some background, ikea is 77 years old, and the vision has always been to create a better everyday life, which is also always evolving, including customers, co-workers, and communities. And it's the shared vision and value system, right, working towards creating greater belonging as well. In fairness, and what do those equal opportunities look like regardless of background? And being an international retailer we have strong global human rights policies and internal codes of conduct, but we also have an equity plan, but it's not just an equity plan that we created globally, it was really co-created with all 30 markets equally participating in what that looks like, and what are the needs in each of the markets as well, to really ensure we understood and captured those needs. And that it's, you know, it could be in this plan, it could be through leadership, but that every single co-worker plays a really critical role. What can each person do? What should they do? And acting in a way that they can contribute. So it became more of a call to action over the years. And LGBTQ2+ inclusion, it's been a global focus for IKEA for many years, that's always evolving. And we believe it's the responsibility of every single co-worker believing in and wanting to work for a culture of belonging, and that co-workers of all gender identities and sexual orientations should feel welcomed and valued. And we expect this from the co-workers regardless of what country we're operating in, and that these practices should be embedded in recruitment and



selection, on-boarding and onwards. And that will enable us to attract and retain diversity and talent, as well as our customer base as well.

so, again, it's about the 30 countries coming together representing the needs in each area, in each type of IKEA organization, and sharing those local practices, inspiring one another. Because they really learn more from one another than they would from a global approach that's been created as well, that varies. And then we work with global expert partnerships, as well, centres of expertise, but also encourage on a country level with IKEA Canada that, you know, has this partnership with Pride at Work, and as well as other partnerships.

And then the countries also came together to create specifically, aside from the equity plan, an LGBTQ2+ inclusion plan as well, to really establish the right mindset to support infrastructure, and as well as inclusive behaviours for belonging. And then globally, local laws are not inclusive in all of our markets, and they're not fair, and they violate human rights for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations so we work with public and different teams on a public level to support those countries in advocating for that change, depending on those legalities and sociocultural and workplace situations, and really advocate.

We also celebrate and create awareness for IDAHBT on a global level in all 30 countries that we operate in, internally, and externally, and we recently just this year, we started to fly the progress flag across all our units around the world, in countries where we can't fly them externally, and then as well starting to fly them internally as well, and creating products within our range, because we do have a large product range, and working with the store rainbow bay where 100% of proceeds all around the world went to national NGOs working

towards LGBTQ2+ inclusion and belonging. And then, you know, when it comes to training, and an actual learning offer, I think a mistake that is sometimes made is trainings are created and they're offered, and it's an hour, or it's a day, but this is something that has to constantly be evolving, otherwise just offering it once in awhile, or once online, it can be more harmful than it can be good. It really stops at creating awareness without an opportunity to really think about, well what are actions? What can I do, how can I be challenged and how can I work towards being an ally. And then working on embedding these learnings through various aspects of the co-workers journey as well.

And then we've created trainings at this level that go beyond just awareness or unconscious bias, but really working with exploring each of our own privileges, and building our own diversity competence, as well as belonging. And all leaders are also responsible for their own competence development in this area, as well as identifying barriers in their countries, and within their organizations. We've also recently launched a global trans inclusion guideline as well with support of countries, and LGBTQ2+ co-workers within the countries as well, and specific tools for HR leaders, and managers to also lead and support inclusion and belonging. you know, things like employee resource groups. They can be really difficult when you have so many co-workers, and especially co-workers that could be part-time or seasonal, or working weekends and evenings. So we've recently tried to see how, through these challenges, we can actually bring people together to have conversations, to share and to listen, and to really think about how they can support and become allies as well.

So in the end, with such a large organization, it's really about connecting with the countries, and co-creating whether those policies look connected to who we are as an organization as well.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you, Sonia. I think some other things that definitely stuck with me was how each co-worker, each person has to contribute to creating a sense of belonging and inclusion, and also believing in it and wanting to do or take an action. I think that's a very strong thing that everybody needs to do. It's not just about, okay, I am inclusive or having just a thought of being inclusive is not enough, you have to want to make an effort on that. And finally I think it's important you brought up the power that an organization has where they can harness the power of business to create a positive change globally or across the country.

In terms of evolving and training, I think that's very important organizations to understand that it's not a check box where they do one training, once a year and think, okay, they are done for the year in terms of creating awareness, which is not true, because training, or the best practices constantly evolves. So there's a need to constantly engage in making sure that there is an awareness of training done for employees. And thank you for your continued partnership with Pride at Work Canada. We're very glad to have the organization as part of our Proud Partners. Thank you.

So for all participants of this session today, I do see there are a lot of questions on the Q&A function. Please feel free to drop your questions using the Q&A function, I'm sure we would all love to get to know about what our wonderful panellists have to say. Please, only questions explicitly related to the subject matter would be addressed during the session, and those related to personal identities or history of the panellists will not be taken.

Percy, a question for you specifically, so I know that you have also done a lot of work on disability justice. So often includes work being LGBTQ2+ communities and disability communities are looked at separately despite lots of overlap. So what creates belonging for LGBTQ2+ people with disabilities?

### **Percy Lezard**

There's not one answer. There's thousands of ways that workplaces are inaccessible, and are ableist. The first thing that I always hear back is that it's going to cost too much money, right. Everything that we're speaking about is steeped in capitalism. I recognize that multinational corporations are trying to be a good neighbour and be a good relative, but they're still corporations for profit, and they're still displacing Indigenous, Black, Afro-Indigenous folks from their homelands to be able to provide us with this desk, right, or my shades.

Having a disability justice framework means, back to the metaphor that has been shared by Dr. OmiSoore Dryden about coming to the table or the circle, it's folks actively looking for who is not here? How are people going to actively, not give up, because you don't lose anything, white supremacy culture doesn't lose anything for white people, right? It just means you want my active participation in colonialism, right? Because I'm complicit. I'm working in three areas that continue to cause harm to Indigenous people. I'm a social worker - social work is a colonial project. I'm a researcher - Indigenous people have been researched to death, and I'm an educator in the university system - where, as per the TRC section, Truth and Reconciliation Commission on education, multiple universities ran - that's very ableist - moved, rushed, to slate hires five Indigenous people, and that's it. we're done, right?

The multiculturalism of the '70s is still a terrible framework. I talked about it earlier. The thing about institutions and human resources, put the human back in human resources, right, first and foremost. Also exceptionalism, that workplaces feel that they only need one native, they only need one Black person, they only need one Two-Spirit or sexual diverse person, or trans person, or disabled person, right? What happens if you're not - I'm not saying I'm exceptional - but what if you're not Percy Lezard? Then institutions say if you as an Indigenous disabled person can't be a Percy Lezard, then we're not going to hire you, we're not going to keep you, we're not going to provide the supports to ensure you thrive here. So I think these for-profit spaces and places really need to dismantle exceptionalism, really need to think about who's not in the circle, and stop setting up tv tables and sticking me in the garage, thinking that I actually have a seat at the table, okay? Stop, stop, stop, stop. And when you do feel as if you are ready to share bread, break bread, share water, right - I'm under a boil water advisory, that's why I keep drinking water - actually give power and decision making to those around the table. And not based on profit margins. What type of work culture do you want to create? What type of work culture are you going to contribute to? Is it going to be the same old, same old, neoliberal, colonial, for-profit over human rights? Ask yourself, and at the end of the day if that's what you're doing, then be forward, and upfront, because I got to pay my bills, and as you can see on reserve living means I don't have walls, and I don't have insulation. Welcome to the third world in a first world country, folks.

So who's not at the table? It's going to cost money. Disabilities doesn't always equate to wheelchairs. It equates to many different things, and what are the ways in which you're going to foster - because I think as a social worker it's unethical, or as a helper it's unethical, to say that this time and space is going to be safe for

people, it's not, okay? How are you going to contribute to a brave environment, where people with intersecting identities can say, ah, I actually need a single-stall washroom. I can't not go to the bathroom for seven hours. I need to have a space where I can stand and do what I need to do that needs room. Oh, I need a particular type of desk that I can stand and sit, right? So just offer those things.

What I appreciate about, because it's job talk season for precarious folks like me, what I find about COVID - which reminds us who the haves and have nots are even more so - the one thing about accessibility is that we're able to reach people internationally for this conversation, and because it's job talk season, means I don't actually have to send to the administrative contact person, "where is the location of the nearest single stall washroom?", "where is a space that I can smudge?", "who is the knowledge keeper Elder that can open in a good way that's not engaged in binary languages, and misgendering, and has the capacity to understand that I will not be wearing a skirt, and won't skirt shame me?" And where I can actually have a conversation, does your online platform have access to captioning? Because as a hard of hearing person, I need to have access to what you're saying to be the best candidate, your top candidate, to be in a position to be offered a tenure track position. So that's one of the things that I can appreciate about what life looks like now.

Everybody here has had to live under the conditions I have since 2005. If folks know me, I'm not a hand shaker, I always waved and people got offended. I always was wiping surfaces down, as someone who lives with an immune disorder, right. So welcome to the life of many disabled folks, and one thing that is harmful, the narrative of well, when things go back to normal - that scares me. Why? Because my accommodations will then be denied, right?

Because up until this current workplace, I've never had my accommodations met, even through the arduous process of getting multiple medical certifications at my cost. I think unions need to do a little bit better, because they think of employment, that they don't have an intersectional lens with race and ability and what it means to be trans-identified in the workplace to be able to support me.

Because a lot of the time at a former workplace that I had to spend with my union was educating them on the ways in which intersectionality impacts the ways in which my workplace was not safe, and it was actually violent around ableism, around gender diversity, and around indigeneity. They could only do one thing, they didn't have the capacity to do all three or four aspects of the way in which I actively, every single day experience discrimination. I think I'll just stop there, and let somebody else carry it forward.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you, Percy, and I really hope when we do go back to a post pandemic normal people still take notes in terms of how to make sure that we are using some of the best practices and accommodating the needs of all individuals or everybody that they need to be speaking to and addressing. I do have a question for you on the Q&A Dr. OmiSoore Dryden. it's addressed to you.

So how would you advise a company that's stuck in inclusion and has yet to facilitate belonging? For example they have mandated company-wide DEI values and goals, but culture within certain teams are still oppressive. So what company policies or processes can be enacted to help move this from being just inclusion and mediation to helping an employee feel like they belong and provide justice?

**Dr. OmiSoore Dryden**

Thank you so much, yes I've been looking at the questions. Thank you again, Sonia and Percy, for your offerings. You know, I think the work, when we think about equity, diversity and inclusion, becomes performative. I think this is what Percy and I are speaking to, and Sonia is offering examples of how it's more than just performative, that it's actually trying to do some interventions. But if that equity, diversion and inclusion in a North American setting, or in Europe does not include the realities of colonialism and anti-Black racism, then it's just performative.

If it doesn't engage across the globe, centring anti-oppression or anti-racism, then it's just performative. So what do I mean by that? In North America and Europe, we hear this language about being colour blind, because somehow identifying and acknowledging a person's indigeneity, ethnoracial identity, that acknowledging gets twisted as being racist, right? Or that, you know, we're being objective, we're just hiring the best person, but we see there this difference, this separation, between equity and excellence, that somehow if we are including equity, that we have somehow compromised excellence. And so when that is the belief, trust that those decisions are propping up and supporting systemic discrimination, period. Period.

So if the company is engaged in equity, diversity and inclusion in a transformative or productive way, then they understand that discrimination happens. It is part of the code of nation states, it is a thing that is real. It is not something that happens between me and somebody else as, you know, the incident might have happened between me and somebody else, but it speaks to a larger systemic structure that allowed one person to decide to be discriminatory to me, because they felt supported to act in that behaviour in the workplace. They would not have acted like that, in that behaviour, if



the workplace had a strong anti-colonial policy or protocols, because anybody they had witnessed acting in that way would have been actually held accountable in an effective manner. And so they'd be like, oh, I really can't be out here wildin' and working this way, because I will lose my job. There would actually be consequences.

And so when I think about the workplace, I think about harm reduction, really pulling from the work around safe drug use, where harm reduction is based in non-judgmental support. and understanding that we need to minimize the harm that's happening. So in the workplace, it's not me that needs to be reduced in any way, but it's the racism, the homophobia, the systemic discrimination of the workplace that needs to have a harm reduction model. And that's the best we can think of in a capitalist system where we have companies that are all about making coin, right? Not coin for us, we're making money just so we can buy food, have a place to live, and maybe send our kids to school if we have children, or maybe something that's pleasurable, because we should also have pleasure in our lives. That's why we got to work. But the companies that are making billions and billions and billions of dollars, during a pandemic, in that system, what would harm reduction look like for them to make sure that our workplace is less harmful? And we also believe that work is a great place to be. We talked about how school wasn't a great place to be, because there's bullying. I would call that racist homophobia - I would call it the racial homophobic colonial abuse that it is. We now call it bullying, because it's easier to say, but let's understand it comes from systems of abuse.

So why do we think the workplace is a fun place to be? Why did we believe that? That is a fiction. And because that is a fiction, this is why we need to be really careful about getting caught up in the tropes of the rainbow, right? Because - and we can see that, right, we

can see that in various agencies that pull out the rainbow while at the same time saying to you in coded language: stop talking about your partner, get over the fact that people are deadening or misgendering you. Stop asking for accommodations: "I have a colostomy, I have Crohn's disease", "why do you need to do number two at the workplace, can't you hold that until you go home?"

These things that work to undermine your presence in the workplace that are called gas lighting. So you leave and you say is that just me, am I going crazy, what's going on. So the harm reduction needs to be of the corporation so that the harm we receive in the workplace, which will happen, will be diminished. And then the other piece that workplaces need to do, especially universities and colleges, whenever you have a job posting, and you have shortlisted only white people, only straight people, then you need to scrap that hire and start again from the beginning. That is what accountability looks like. You can't say, oh, we just picked the best people, and they're all white. That is not excellence. That is using white supremacist logics, so whiteness, as a measurement of who is excellent, right? Which is why when one or two people sneak through, they're not excellent, they're exceptional, okay?

And so, you know, for the regular jobs, when you only have white people who are the last - the three you're going to invite for an interview, or the five you're going to have for an interview, or the two you're going to have for an interview, and they're white, you have not done a good assessment of the applications that have come into your workplace. Or you have not properly advertised those jobs, and therefore - and done that purposefully in order to make sure that you curate an all-white shortlist. So that is actually how affirmative action works, that you can go into a department, and there only be

white people. That's affirmative action at work. That is not excellence at work.

If we looked at equity and excellence, then we would have whole shortlists of queer, trans, Black, Indigenous and people of colour. Right, that would be the entire shortlist, and then you'd be like oh, I think we have some cool people here, and we're going to make our company all the better for it. And so yes, if your company is, like, everybody has to go to equity, diversity and inclusion training and it's 30 minutes on a Friday afternoon, and you have to show up and have your camera on so we can see that you're showing up, and they say, we need to have ten more people of colour, or, you know, they give you the kind of equity, diversity and training where it's like: don't ask people if they're married, don't assume what somebody's gender is just because of how you think they look.

That's not equity, diversity and inclusion, right? Equity, diversity and inclusion centres: we are combatting and responding to how systemic oppression structures our country, structures our city, structures our continent, and we're combatting that by centring that anti-oppression and anti-racism in equity, diversity and inclusion, is about disrupting those systems so all of us have a less harmful experience at work. But we really need to disabuse ourselves of this idea that work is a fun, loving, safe space to be. Because school wasn't that, so why do we think work is going to be that. And equity, diversity and inclusion needs to start with those realities, and then work to reduce the harm so that our experience at work is better.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you. Thank you for that. I know we do have a lot of wonderful questions in the Q&A, but time constraints - if it's left to us we could keep talking about this topic for the whole day. Sonia, before we close a question for you. In terms of closing, what would be the one

thing that you hope people leave knowing about belonging, specifically?

**Sonia Sangha**

Hmm... yes, so I'm just listening. So I just wanted to thank Dr. OmiSoore and Percy for all of this knowledge and perspective, as well today. So thank you, extremely valuable. And, yeah, I think even just based on this conversation, really taking the time for the pause and really being humbled and really learning, you know, the systems that we're working in, even from these giant organizations, that it really does require a pause, and this opportunity to take in and hear different perspectives and to really learn. And then to see what is the way forward, and what are our own personal actions, and as organizations.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you. Thank you for that, Sonia for being humble and acknowledging that.

**Dr. OmiSoore Dryden**

I just have one more question. So I worked at York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in the early '90s, and I saw this question of how can businesses have more diversity in candidates - so we were doing this in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. I was doing it in the 90s but people were doing this beforehand. Back in the day we would reach out to community newspapers, and community - now we would call it community listservs or community pages or things like that, and be in conversation with community members to say, you know, this is how we're developing this job, this is how we're doing this work, that kind of thing. But there are community business associations or community groups or agencies that would post your job. But understand don't bring somebody - you know, bring somebody into your job, and if you bring that Black person into your job, that Indigenous person into your job and they're the first Black or

Indigenous person, first Black queer person, first queer Indigenous person - your job doesn't end at them starting their job. Your job is now getting harder, because all of those issues of systemic racism, or systemic homophobia that just didn't come to your attention before will be raised, and you have a responsibility to make sure that that new employee is protected on the job.

**Sandeep Nair**

Thank you so much for that, Dr. OmiSoore. Unfortunately that is all we have time for today. Thank you so much for all your participation and for being honest and sharing. Thank you everyone, all participants. I hope to see all of you again soon. Over to Terri.

**Terri Eklund**

Thank you, Sandeep. Thank you to our panellists, as well as to Elder Blu for starting us off today. I want to acknowledge these spaces are work, they're work for all of you, and we appreciate you contributing, and sharing, and for us to learn from you. Thank you for recentring the public discovery of 215 children lost because of the residential schools, the Islamophobia attack on a family in London, and I also want to acknowledge the queer bashing of a man in Toronto that happened over the weekend. Some of us belong to some of these communities. Some of us belong to all of these communities, and we carry those with us, as we work and live and love and laugh and all of those things. I've heard folks say, how could this have happened? 215 children were found. How could this have happened? and it's not past tense. It is happening. And I think our panellists today have helped acknowledge that work is being done in this space, they've offered us meaningful suggestions for our workplaces, but we're not denying or debating that the racist homophobic, transmisogynist systems that enabled things to happen then continue to happen now. They're in our workplace policies, they're in our hiring practices, they're in our places and our spaces, and so I

thank you all for your contributions today, and for all of you who attended, we've been challenged to take our reflections and turn them into action. Think about what it is we're going to do. Take this into our communities that we serve.

So thank you all, again. Throughout the presentation I know there's been a lot of chat, a lot of thanks sent to everyone. Luis has also posted links to resources from our panellists, as well as folks that they've mentioned. So thank you all for that. We'd also like to wrap up here and thank our sponsors again.

**Percy Lezard**

We actually - I want to interject.

**Jade Pichette**

That's what I was doing as well.

**Percy Lezard**

If Blu was asked to open they actually need to close this space.

**Terri Eklund**

Yes, for sure. Just wanted to quickly - I don't know if Jade you're going to put up this slide and then I'll hand it over to Blu or if we want to go to Blu first.

Great. So I think it was mentioned in the chat as well, we are offering e-learning. So if you're in that space of bringing some learning into the organization, Pride at Work Canada offers this discount here, so you can write down that code, or maybe we can add it in the chat. Then like I said at the beginning, this is the start of ProPride, so we encourage you to register for more events through Pride at Work Canada's offering over the next few months. So thank you, and thank you for reminding me, we'd love to hear from you, Elder Blu, again.

**Elder Lauren Blu Waters**

Thank you. Thank you so much. So we started today in a good way by acknowledging the land, and then acknowledging those who have been here since the beginning of time, but what I didn't mention to you was those that are waiting to come. So not only do we acknowledge the land and all those that were here before us, those that are here, but also those ones that are yet coming. They sit and they wait and they watch, and they watch what we do to see is this going to be a safe space? Is this going to be an inclusive space? Am I going to be respected when I come into a human form from a spiritual being? So I wanted to remind us about that. We have to be mindful in all that we do. Because not only are those ones that are gone before us watching us, the creator, all of creation, but those little ones are watching us as well, waiting, waiting to come to this space as a human being, to be birthed into a human body. And so be mindful of your words. Be mindful of your actions. And as we came together today, we acknowledge the land first. And so moving forward, it is a good understanding that as we acknowledge the land, we have to put the 2S in front of our acronym that describes our identity, that diversity, because we cannot acknowledge the land without acknowledging the first people that were here, and including those gender-diverse, non-binary, trans, Indigenous people that have existed on this land long before anyone else did.

So I would encourage you and your agencies, and your work spaces to make sure you put that 2S in front of that acronym. So it would be something like 2SLGBTQQIA+, because we have to acknowledge the people if we're acknowledging the land. So for each and every one of you, as you continue your journey today, as you continue to sit in circles, remember to be a good ally, and to be an ally doesn't mean you get to say you're an ally, it's those that you are trying to form those allyships with that get to determine if you are an ally, which

means you have to be actively involved, you have to be included, you have to have reciprocal conversation, and reciprocal commitment. So remember that as you move forward, that claiming to be an ally, determining to be an ally is not up to the individual, it's up to those who you're forming those allyships with.

So let's walk the talk that we say, and be who we say we're going to be, and remember to do everything with kindness, gentleness, compassion, and most of all humility. Don't look to be thanked for what you do, just do what you have done and remember to pray for those 215 little children that didn't have the opportunity to be who they were, to become who they were meant to be, to be able to be with their families and their loved ones, families, that are biological families that are chosen and family of the heart. So remember those little ones, and make sure that we move forward in a good way. So for that I say thank you to each and every one of you.

Hiy hiy, miigwech for staying to the end, because when you open you have to close, and thank you, again, to ProPride for inviting me here today to be able to do this work with you, and to give you an understanding so that you can form meaningful allyship, thank you, hiy hiy, miigwech, have a beautiful day.