

Raptors 'superfan' Bhatia to speak on discrimination

Diversity Thunder Bay celebration breakfast March 19

BY LISA BECKWICK

DIVERSITY Thunder Bay is proud to present Nav Bhatia, Toronto Raptors superfan and businessman, who will be the keynote speaker for Diversity Thunder Bay's 14th annual Celebration Breakfast.

After overcoming significant prejudice and obstacles as a Sikh, Bhatia operates successful business enterprises and holds the coveted title of "superfan" of the Raptors.

He will be focusing on "the power of diversity" and how we can make Thunder Bay a more welcoming community.

Diversity Thunder Bay is a community-based organization whose mission is to work towards an equitable community free of racism and discrimination of any kind.

Every year, Diversity Thunder Bay honours the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held on March 21 by hosting a breakfast celebration.

We mark this day to remember the 1960 Sharpeville massacre where 69 unarmed and peaceful demonstrators were killed by South African police as they protested the country's unjust apartheid laws.

Since proclaiming the day in 1966, the UN General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries but, despite much progress, racism continues to exist and to affect the lives of individuals and ethnic and religious groups worldwide.

Racism violates our human rights and our communities suffer from the injustice.

Toronto has been named the most multicultural city in the world, yet many of the immigrants to the city still encounter racism long after they've arrived.

Having immigrated to Canada from India with a mechanical engineering degree in 1984, Bhatia also experienced racism.

On his first day of work as a car salesperson, Bhatia had racially



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Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

offensive jokes and name-calling directed at him because he was wearing a turban.

Rather than fight back with insults, he made a choice and took the positive route by letting his hard work do the talking. He sold 127 cars in just 90 days, which is a record that stands to this day.

Bhatia soon became the manager and today owns that dealership along with two others in Ontario.

As the official Raptors superfan, Bhatia can be seen sitting seen courtside, cheering enthusiastically or sharing words of encouragement with players on both teams. Through his love of basketball and his business, Bhatia looks to

change the perception of Sikhs to the mainstream audience.

He also believes in giving back and has started the Nav Bhatia Superfan Foundation which is a non-profit foundation dedicated to raising money to build basketball courts and camps for kids in Canada and across the globe.

Every year he spends \$300,000 of his own money to send kids — mostly from immigrant families — to Raptors games.

In 2016, Bhatia became an official ambassador for World Vision's Rise Up! Daughters of India campaign, having witnessed first-hand the bias against females in India.

Please join us for Nav Bhatia's inspiring message of the value of diversity.

Diversity Thunder Bay's 14th Annual International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Celebration Breakfast will be held on Thursday, March 19 from 7:30-9 a.m. at the Victoria Inn.

Tickets are only \$30 and can be purchased online at www.diversitythunderbay.ca.

Lisa Beckwick is the Director of Organizational & People Development for St. Joseph's Care Group, is co-chair for the Celebration, and has been a member of Diversity Thunder Bay since 2005.



ROBIN GARTNER/MYCITYLIFE.CA

Raptors "superfan" Nav Bhatia overcame racism at his Toronto workplace and eventually bought the company.

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