

Wente to speak at celebration

BY LISA BECKWICK

DIVERSITY Thunder Bay is proud to present Jesse Wente, an Anishinaabe writer, broadcaster and chairperson for the Canada Council of Arts who will be the keynote speaker for Diversity Thunder Bay's 15th annual celebration for the elimination of racial discrimination.

Wente is an outspoken advocate for Indigenous rights and First Nations, Metis and Inuit art. In this exclusive talk, Wente will look at the ongoing movements for racial and social justice and what the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed about where we are now, as well as what it has taught us about how we need to move forward.

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 celebration event.

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 United Nations 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.



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

The 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.

Indigenous advocate promotes necessity of diversity, inclusion amid COVID-19

Born and raised in Toronto, Jesse Wente is Ojibwe and is a member of the Serpent River First Nation. He is best known for his 24 years as a columnist for CBC Radio's Metro Morning and is an advocate for aboriginal arts, most notably on screen.

Wente draws attention to the imagery used by Hollywood in portrayals of Indigenous peoples and stresses the need for a culture to have influence on their own depiction. His pieces on The Revenant, Beyonce and sports mascots were among the most shared on CBC.ca.

As Wente said, "You can't expect society to change if you have the same storytellers." Wente

was recently appointed chair of the Canada Council for the Arts. He is the only First Nations person to ever hold the position. Playback Magazine named him the trailblazer of the year for 2020, and he was also included on Maclean's Magazine's Power List for 2020 and Toronto Life's list of the most influential Torontonians of 2020.

Diversity and inclusion is not a choice — it's a necessity. A self-described 'Ojibwe dude' with a national and international lens, Wente encourages audiences to consider diversity and inclusion into the future view of their organization, industry, and country.

Wente's presentation will speak to the impacts of COVID-19 on how we understand inequalities as well as how this should inform our solutions and pathways. He will explore the strength of solidarity movements and how they can help on the pathway to reconciliation. Wente's presentation will be followed by a short question period.

Please join us on Wednesday, March 24 from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. for Wente's insightful presentation on diversity and inclusion and what we can do as a community to initiate positive change as we move forward. This is the first year that the Diversity Thunder Bay is offering this presentation in a virtual format, free of charge.

To reserve your ticket, go to www.diversitythunderbay.ca or @DiversityThunderBay on Facebook.

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. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.