

A journey from head to heart

An approach to achieving racial justice

BY WALID CHAHAL

DIVERSITY Thunder Bay (DTB) is pleased to present Shakil Choudhury, who will be the keynote speaker for our 17th annual event for the elimination of racial discrimination.

Shakil Choudhury is an award-winning educator, consultant, and author with over 25 years of experience in the field of racial justice, diversity, and inclusion. He coaches executive teams and has worked with thousands of leaders across sectors in Canada and the United States to help improve their equity outcomes.

Shakil also facilitates dialogue processes to resolve inter-group conflict, having led projects internationally as well as with organizations in Canada.

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

Every year, Diversity Thunder Bay honours United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, held on March 21. We invite prominent speakers to help with the on-going racial justice dialogue in our community, thereby advancing the work and struggle of DTB to reverse the us-and-them dynamic as well as strengthen issues of equity, safety, inclusivity, and well-being in our city.

We mark March 21 to remember the 1960 Sharpeville massacre where 69 unarmed and peaceful demonstrators were killed by South African police as they protested the state's unjust and discriminatory apartheid laws.

Since proclaiming the day in 1966, the UN General Assembly called on the international community to re-double its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. Racial laws and practices have been eradicated in many countries, but despite the progress, racism continues to exist and to impact negatively on the



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

lives of individuals and ethno-cultural, racial, and religious groups across the globe.

Shakil Choudhury is the author of *Deep Diversity: A Compassionate, Scientific Approach to Achieving Racial Justice*. Written in an accessible, storytelling manner, many have called it a “break-through” book on issues of systemic racial discrimination due to its non-judgmental approach that integrates human psychology with critical race perspectives.



Shakil Choudhury will be the keynote speaker on March 22, for Diversity Thunder Bay's event for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

In this exclusive talk on ‘Deep Diversity: A Compassionate Approach to Racial Justice and Equity,’ Choudhury will explain a host of related areas including why, despite our good intentions and being fair-minded, our unconscious mind and social and psychological processes may frequently favour those most “like us,” creating hard-to-see discrimination that becomes systemic. As a result, Indigenous Peoples and many racialized groups are unable to get ahead in the workplace, schools, and society at large.

He will address what organizational and community leaders need to become aware of when trying to support equity and inclusion, and how the dynamics of power, privilege and marginality intersect with social identities.

Participants will learn how predominant the unconscious mind is in human interactions and how this contributes to micro-inequities and structural discrimination. Choudhury calls it a journey from head to heart.

He will also discuss the systemic nature of racism — especially how it impacts on Indigenous Peoples and racialized groups — and other forms of oppression, which require leaders to become system thinkers.

The key to systems thinking is pattern recognition, which requires the ability to identify recurring behavioral patterns that reinforce subtle, institutional discrimination, so that they can be interrupted.

Please join us on Wednesday, March 22, from 12 noon-1:30 for Choudhury's presentation which will help us better understand racial justice and equity, overcome individual and systemic bias, and become a systems thinker regarding racial justice and equity.

Walid Chahal is the co-chair and a founder of Diversity Thunder Bay, and continuing lecturer in sociology at Lakehead U. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.