

Danesh promotes connection over division

BY WALID CHAHAL

DIVERSITY Thunder Bay (DTB) is pleased to present Roshan Danesh as our keynote speaker for our 19th annual event for the elimination of racial discrimination. The event will be in-person at the Italian Cultural Centre.

Danesh is a renowned lawyer and educator with more than 20 years of experience advancing Indigenous rights and reconciliation in Canada. He has represented Indigenous nations in complex negotiations, served as special counsel to the minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, and advised the government of British Columbia on the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Globally, Danesh has contributed to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, designing innovative peace education initiatives that have reached hundreds of thousands, including in post-war regions.

A Harvard Law School graduate, he has taught at universities across Europe and North America and has written or co-authored more than 20 articles and books. He co-authored the national bestseller *Reconciling History: A Story of Canada* (2024) with former federal cabinet member Jody Wilson-Raybould.

Diversity Thunder Bay is a community-based organization whose mission is to work to-



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

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

wards an inclusive, equitable community free of racism and discrimination of any kind. Every year, near March 21, Diversity Thunder Bay honours United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We invite distinguished speakers to make a meaningful impact on the ongoing community dialogue on racial justice, aiding Diversity Thunder Bay's mission to bridge the "us-versus-them" divide and promote equity, safety, inclusivity and well-being in our city.

We mark March 21 to remember the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, when 69 unarmed and peaceful protesters were killed by South African police while demonstrating against the oppressive and discriminatory apartheid laws. Since the United Nations General Assembly declared this day in 1966, it has urged the global community to

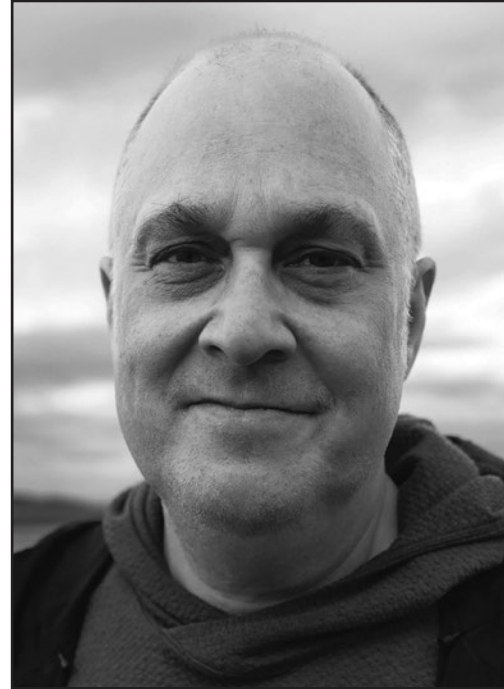
intensify efforts to eradicate all forms of racial discrimination.

Although racial laws and practices have been abolished in many nations, racism persists and continues to harm individuals and ethno-cultural, racial, and religious groups worldwide.

We are living in challenging times, marked by the rise of far-right authoritarian nationalist movements in Western countries. While these nations often claim to uphold democratic ideals of rights, justice and equity, their actions often contradict these principles.

These turbulent forces in many Western nations are shaping political discourse, deepening divisions, and exacerbating tensions nationally and globally. Collectively, these forces lead to a rise in various forms of discrimination, marginalization and inequality, and Canada has been unable to protect itself against the influence of these powerful forces.

Although Roshan may not focus on specific international issues, his expertise in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and Indigenous rights and reconciliation offers valuable insights that can guide our efforts to combat racism, all forms of discrimination, and promote eq-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Roshan Danesh will be the keynote speaker on March 19 for Diversity Thunder Bay's event for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

uity within our community.

This exclusive talk is entitled "Reconciling History and the Challenge of Building Community." Drawing on examples from reconciliation efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and other regions, Roshan will explain how addressing injustice and conflict requires an "inside-out" approach where individuals and groups foster outlooks and worldviews that promote connection

and unity instead of separation and division.

For Canada, this perspective highlights our current position in the journey of genuine reconciliation and addressing the legacy of colonization, while also emphasizing the actions each of us can take to dismantle both visible and invisible divisions that exist between and among us.

Please join us in person at the Italian Cultural Centre on March 19 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., for Danesh's presentation, "Reconciling History and the Challenge of Building Community." His talk will deepen our understanding of the root causes of racial issues and guide us in deciding the most effective approaches and strategies — both individually and collectively — to overcome personal and systemic racial biases and achieve racial justice and equity.

Search for "Thunder Bay Presents Roshan Danesh" on the Eventbrite.ca website for details on the event.

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