

Transcript for Ageism and intersectionality webinar

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Muriel Howden:

Today's Webinar topic is Ageism and Intersectionality.

My name is Muriel Howden.

I am the executive assistant and senior outreach advisor for RTOERO. I will be moderating today's session and providing active offer for any participants who wish to ask questions or have information relayed in French.

Throughout the Webinar please feel free to use the Q and A feature to submit your questions for the panelists.

Content repeated in French

Before we begin the Webinar today, we would like to play our respect to the Indigenous lands that connect us across Canada.

I am speaking to you today from the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, which is now home to many diverse First Nations Inuit and Metis peoples.

We acknowledge, recognize and honour the ancestral traditional territories on which we live and work and the contributions to all Indigenous Peoples to our communities and our nations.

Content repeated in French

Thank you. Miigweech.

Thank you all for joining us today.

So our speakers are Varsha Naik, who is the executive director of Regional Diversity Roundtable and Taranum Khan, who's the coordinator at Regional Diversity Roundtable.

So I would like to remind you to submit your questions in English or French using the Q and A box.

If your question is directed to one panelist in particular, so to Varsha or Taranum, please include that in your question.

The chat will not be monitored, so please ensure that questions are entered to the Q and A feature.

Content repeated in French

And now let's begin Varsha and Taranum the floor is yours.

Varsha Naik:

Thank you, Muriel, and thank you the retired teachers of Ontario for inviting us to engage with you on this wonderful webinar and on a very relevant issue of ageism and intersectionality.

I am going to begin by saying what is ageism and why do we need to speak to this issue?

Ageism is the pervasive system of prejudice and discrimination that marginalizes people based on their age.

And this can be perpetuated through stereotypes of both youthfulness as well as advanced ages or senior or older people.

And through these oppressive policies and practices that subordinate and many times in the far extreme, exclude older people or younger people from workplaces, from opportunities, from situations and broadly in the community.

Ageism can impact many different groups, and it is not particular only to seniors.

So we need to be mindful that ageism is overarching all ages.

And just to give you a little bit of a snapshot of why and who does it affect?

Ageism, and on your screen you will see the demographic data that between projected to grow significantly from 12% to doubling it to almost 22%.

And it is not about somebody being too young or somebody being too old.

The spectrum that ageism impacts and affects is at all levels and all through.

Who does it really affect?

Ageism affects everyone.

Everyone.

Children who are young enough to understand what this issue is all about as well as those who are older people, cultural groups, religious groups, gender groups are all impacted.

So looking at the issue of ageism, we need to keep that broadly understood that nobody is outside the box of being either an ageist or being a victim of ageism.

So you can either perpetuate ageism or you can be experiencing ageism.

And from a very young age, children can internalize and use the stereotypes that they grow up with.

They learn from, they see and they experience in their own decision making and that guides their feelings and behaviour towards people that are of different ages.

So how one treats seniors versus how one treats adults versus how one treats a younger individual are all impacted by what we grow up with, what we learn and what we see in and around us.

And how do we draw on these age stereotypes to perceive and understand ourselves?

Of course, we all make meaning out of what we see, what we hear, what we interact with, what we experience, and that lays the foundation for the issue of ageism as well.

What can be result of the self directed ageism?

It can be at any stage and at any age, and it intersects and it exacerbates other forms of disadvantage, including those related to gender, sex, religion, disability, ability and many, many more.

Now for today's session, we are going to keep it to a few key themes because we have limited time and we want to engage a little more around understanding and unraveling this issue of ageism and how we address ageism.

So we are going to focus primarily on race and culture.

We are going to primarily focus on ability.

We are going to talk about gender and gender identity, and we are going to talk about family structures.

And if time permits, we will go deeper into some of the other intersecting identities.

Where do we see ageism?

Ageism is all around us.

Ageism is for us to notice, for us to understand and for us to challenge.

It exists in our institutions, in our organizations, in our communities.

It also exists in our families and our relationships.

It is not a particular realm or a particular issue or a particular group that is impacted by ageism.

Ageism lays the foundation to go deep in the psyche of those who experience it and in the psyche of those who exercise it.

And therefore we need to understand the issue of ageism well.

And we need to definitely ensure that we do not patronize.

We do not stereotype.

We do not create and perpetuate the issue of ageism.

We need to be aware, we need to be informed, and we need to be consciously mindful of how we intersect with this issue of ageism.

Again, a demographic that we have on the slide here, it's about young folks, and how do we label them?

The unemployment rate is fairly high in the young folks and where we should be tapping on their energy, where should be tapping on their resources and their skills.

That's a group that gets disadvantaged purely because of ageism.

Looking at the demographics and the fastest growing demographic is, of course, older adults, 60 and over.

And we are going to see that upper trend of the increased in the demographic population of older seniors as we go from 2021 on to 2050.

And the population of the new and the young is going to continue to decline if we do not put interventions in place to correct the issue that we are faced with.

Today, we see one in five senior who lives with poverty in our province of Ontario, and I know there might be people joining from other parts of Canada or even from other parts of the globe, you need to be mindful of where, what your demographic looks like in your community.

Why is ageism a problem?

Well, half of the world's population is ageist, and that is a fact that we cannot hide from.

Data is not that clear.

And it does not un-peel the layers of identities in that demographic data.

So this aggregated data is a gap in understanding ageism as it intersects with other identities.

And we definitely want to look at that issue.

If you see the chart on the screen right now, there are only two components of identities that are reflected in this chart.

Gender and again, the more traditional gender assigned roles, male versus female and the various age groups.

And as you see a range of issues unfold, we see longevity.

We see lifespan decrease.

We see the imbalance in the demographic proportions of both males and females as the age progresses.

And there are underlying and foundational issues that we need to address, and all of these are tied not only to ageism, but ageism is a huge contributor.

Health and wellbeing are impacted when people experience ageism.

And we are going to talk a little more at length about this.

Ageism can change how we view ourselves.

It can erode solidarity between generations.

It can devalue or limit our ability to benefit from what younger and older populations can contribute to making our society, our province, our nation operate at its maximum capacity.

It can impact our health, longevity and wellbeing, while also having far reaching economic consequences.

And there are historical, social and political issues that continue to impact the issue of ageism.

Again, we want to ensure that we do not lose the resources that we could use better in trying to address the issue of ageism and the impacts of ageism.

Today, we are going to engage in this conversation collectively, and I'm now going to invite my colleague.

Taranum to take us through to the next slide.

Taranum Khan:

Thank you, Varsha.

So on the screen, the obvious image is that of intersections of a highway.

The word intersectionality stems from the Latin word intersect.

It centers interconnectedness, togetherness, interrelatedness and interdependence.

Intersectionality is defined as an analytic flow framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

The term intersectionality was conceptualized and coined by Kimberly Williams Crenshaw in 1989.

Whereas the word was used in a scholarly article to critique antidiscrimination theory and how it fails black women due to their overlapping identities.

She explained it further with an analogy of a busy intersection where traffic flows from all sides and the person standing in the middle of that intersection is in danger of being hit.

Her connotation of the term was noticed and appreciated by the academia, which resulted in its use to examine various concepts and broadening of the scope through the lens of intersectionality.

The term continued to tug and unpeel at theories over time, but has gained the spotlight since 2017.

It's around lunch time right now, so let's use food as an example to simulate our thinking.

Soup.

A simple and common food used by most of us.

I invite you to think of the multiple ingredients that are cooked together to make a perfect bowl.

It is full of flavours, the right balance of salt and sweet, finally followed by the heat of the spice.

To me that is, intersectionality, the coming together of feelings, sensations, memories, culture, and more.

The experience of age discrimination may differ based on other components of a person's identity.

For example, certain groups of older people may experience unique barriers as a result of the intersection of age with gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, culture and language.

But I would like to bring forward a code by our very own Varsha Naik, which states don't get lost in the vortex of complexity.

With that, I hand over the nextslide to Varsha to take us forward.

Varsha Naik:

Thank you, Taranum.

The conversation on intersecting identities as they interact or as they cross over with the issue of age and ageism.

We cannot not address the big one that is in our communities that is in our faces and which is significantly pervasive and prevalent in our society today.

The issue of racism and we cannot not include culture when we talk about race because again, a lot of it is intertwined.

For many, the issue of race and culture is synonymous.

They cannot separate the two.

But I want to bring the conversation to acknowledging that academics have defined race and critical race theory, and people have challenged that theory.

People speak about the issue of addressing racism actively.

But for today's conversation, we are not going to talk about only Kimberly Crensha or we are not going to talk about Derek Bell.

We are not going to talk about any of the other academics, but we are going to definitely unpeel and understand how the socially constructed notion of race has deeply entrenched our society, deeply entrenched our mindsets and deeply impacted our behaviours and our practices of both acceptance or exclusion.

And in worst case scenario, violence.

We've seen the impact of racism when it intersects with age and ageism play out constantly.

Constantly.

The creation and the recognition are the acknowledgment of the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the globe.

And then this is a global issue.

It is not only an Ontario issue, but we are operating in Ontario, and what hits home is primary for us.

So looking at the issue of race and culture as it intersects with age is what we are going to talk about.

Let's take a couple of examples.

The experience of age discrimination may differ based on other components of one's identity.

Example, certain groups of older persons may experience unique barriers as a result of the intersection of age with gender, disability.

And that played out.

In COVID-19 looking at the pandemic.

Looking at the inequities that have been emerging around race, around culture, how people are either accepting to take precautions to safeguard everyone in the community or are excluding because of mistrust.

Issues of race are playing out at multiple levels.

Young folks and young black males looking at young Asian males looking at young females and their body image, looking at culture of whether you are Middle Eastern or whether you are Arabic or whether you are a hijab wearing Muslim or whether you are a Liberal Muslim or whether you are an Indian.

Looking at the issue of culture, the issue of age, an issue of racism as it intersects with ageism is a huge, huge, huge barrier that we need to be taken care of and we need to unpeel.

It is a key influencer.

One cannot say I am not part of a race just because we are open to all.

Accepting all does not mean that we do not take pride in what we are.

There are a lot of unconscious biases that play out as far as racism and culture intersecting with ageism on Earth are presented and our health for people to one either witness, either observe, either stay silent, either take active actions and so the influence is key and we need to understand it.

People who experience racism, they are traumatized.

They are traumatized for years and not just years.

For generations.

That feeds historical context of racism as it intersects with ageism, young black youth and the issue that has come up with black lives matter.

Looking at issues of feminism and not including racialized women in that conversation at the get go.

Race and culture play out at every ism.

You name it, it plays out.

And we want to be mindful as we understand it.

And we need to remember that, and I'm giving a quick example, I think right now with COVID almost coming up to a conversation around do we open up fully?

Do we have a hybrid model of operating as an organization?

What do we need to change?

Do we open up our restaurants?

Do we open up our festivals and events?

Let's take a concrete example of a 55 year old woman who is alleging that she refused a job as a waitress because she has experienced ageism and sexism both.

And is this real?

Is this perceived?

Is that just a myth?

Absolutely not.

It is very real for this particular individual who's 55 looking for a job, who does not get it, and a restaurant that hires older male in that same establishment and serves as either chefs, either maitre'd or at the reception and looking at young waitresses and say, we are spanning the age gap.

We have young folks and we have old folks does not negate the fact that this 55 year old woman has been discriminated against.

So the issue of ageism, with race and with culture and gender is a real real issue that we want to be mindful of and that we cannot cannot negate.

Taranum, take it away.

Taranum Khan:

Thank you, Varsha.

Varsha was just touching upon the gender piece and let's explore gender identity as a signed identifying and transforming.

Dimensions of gender.

People tend to use the term sex and gender interchangeably, but while connected, the two terms are not equivalent.

Generally, we assign a newborn sex as either male or female in countries.

A third option is now being offered.

Some places still don't.

Based on the baby's genitals.

Once a sex is assigned, we presume the child's gender.

For some people, this is cause for little, if any, concern or further no, because their gender aligns with gender related ideas and assumptions associated with their sex.

Nevertheless, while gender may begin with the assignment of our sex, it doesn't end there.

A person's gender is the complex interrelationships between three dimensions, body identity and social gender.

A person's gender identity can correspond.

Two are different from the sex they are assigned at birth.

Social Gender.

How we present our gender in the world and how individuals, society, culture, and community perceive it, interact with and try to shape our gender.

Social gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to inverse conformity to current gender norms.

This includes gender expression, which is the way we communicate our gender to others through such things as clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms.

It also includes how individuals and communities and societies perceive us, interact with us and try to shape our gender.

Social gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those who try to enforce norms.

Each of these dimensions can vary greatly across a range of possibilities and is distinct from but interrelated with the others.

A person's comfort in their gender is related to the degree to which these dimensions feel in harmony.

Let's speak about conference.

Gender congruence is the feeling of harmony in our gender, experiencing comfort in our body as it relates to our gender naming of our gender that adequately corresponds with their internal sense of who we are expressing ourselves through clothing, mannerisms, interests, activities, being seen consistently by others as we see ourselves.

Finding congruence is an ongoing process through each of our lives as we continue to grow and gain insights into ourselves.

It is most often found through exploration.

For some, finding congruence is simple.

For others, it is much more complex, but the fundamental need to find gender congruence is true for all of us.

And any degree to which we don't experience, it can be distressing.

Transitioning is a term commonly used to refer to the steps a transgender, a gender or non binary person takes in order to find congruence in their gender.

A transition is taking place, but is often other people, parents and other family members, support professionals, employers, etc.

Who are transitioning in how they see the individual gender and not the person themselves.

For the person these changes are less of a transition and more of an evolution.

Instead of transitioning, a more apt phrase is pursuing congruence measures with age and ageism as identifiers.

We also want to flag the relevance of gender and gender identity as it contributes to the challenges one encounters through their life.

Varsha, would you like to take the next slide, please?

Varsha Naik:

Absolutely.

Thank you so much, Taranum.

The other piece that we wanted to bring to today's conversation is about ability, and we are not just talking about physical disability or a visible disability.

We are talking about all aspects of ability and be that social, be that moral, be that spiritual, be that physical.

Looking at learning disabilities, looking at some of the other hidden disabilities.

But let's open up the conversation to include any ability or disability that we can be presented with.

And how do we address this issue?

First and foremost, let us be informed.

Let us build on our awareness and understanding of the issue of ability as it intersects with age, a schooling child who is having learning disabilities and the system, the education sector, and the system supporting it is one conversation.

But a senior who's living alone and family being at a distance or have moved on with their lives in a single individual living by himself or herself or themselves and having to cope with the challenges of the day to day life.

What does that mean for that particular individual?

How do we bring care and inclusion for that senior?

So looking at the issue of awareness building is critical in responding to ability as it intersects with age, access, access to opportunity, access to services, access to resources, access to situations that call for additional supports, and all of those need to be tied back into the conversation on how ability or disability impacts and intersects with age and what and how supports do we need to create as an organization that is committed to serving retired folks.

So yes, at retired Teachers of Ontario, a large number of members going to the senior category, those who are 55 and over or 60 and over or even much older.

But at the same time, we cannot negate the fact that we are part and parcel of a community.

We are part and parcel of society.

And how do we continue to build our awareness and understanding on the issue of ability and disability as it intersects with age is a critical component of this conversation today.

And we are going to respond to some of your questions now, as I call Taranum back to take us to the next conversation.

Taranum Khan:

Family, as you can see on the slide for some, a blessing and others not so much.

Specifically when looking at it from the crossroads of whether and how one is accepted or not.

Having a family that offers care and support without a paternalistic approach is desirable and one that enforces its own perception not so much.

If we are not mindful, ageism can easily creep into our subconscious and influence personal health beliefs and behaviours to impact family and relationships.

Our ideas of aging don't grow in a bubble.

We learn them from our family, community and culture.

Aging scripts can be positive or negative.

They can play a role in whether one remains healthy and active throughout the full lifespan or declines into dependence as one ages.

Family aging scripts can also determine what happens is a family member needs assistance due to an endless injury or permanent functional challenge.

We all know that transition is a part and parcel of life.

Roles change, such as parents to grandparents, spouse to that of a widow or partner to a caregiver more often than not.

Not unknowingly or knowingly we perform multiple roles all at the same time.

Personally, I strongly believe that age is how one feels inside and is not defined by a number.

You being a community of Canadian educators may have read Margaret Lawrence's Stone Angel and how Hagar Shipley defies aging and refines it more as a willpower and perseverance.

Varsha, please take the next slide.

Varsha Naik:

Thanks, Taranum.

And the next big piece that we wanted to bring to you is the issue of classism.

The halves with the have nots that make up our community and society be comfortable with the challenged and disadvantaged is what we need to be mindful of as we again speak to the issue of ageism as it intersects with classism.

And in classism I specifically wanted to touch upon a few things.

There are many who have wealth which is inherited.

Nothing wrong in that.

Nothing wrong in a family being well off.

But how does that particular family recognize its privilege that it carries with having that wealth?

Was it really completely without any bias that it was earned?

Absolutely not.

Many times generational wealth does not come without a cost, and we need to be mindful of that conversation as we talk about ageism.

Whether you are a young adult who is earned your millions through the tech industry, whether it's your earned privilege, what are you giving back in terms of your peers, in terms of your older adults, in terms of your young gendered females?

You talk about the issues that emerge with ageism and classism is significant.

Again, opportunities that seniors have to either health care to the needed in our support.

Home care.

You talk about social isolation, you talk about exclusion.

You talk about the complexity of having to work even when you are 70 or 75 because you can't make the rent otherwise, or you can't continue to sustain yourself.

So looking at issues of classism is another whole piece around how operation intersects with the issue of classism and ageism.

And we need to understand that oppression is also layered, and we need to understand that cross sections that Taranum earlier spoke about with the Kimberly Crenshaw's example, that it almost hits you and classism is another issue that hits people of all ages.

Whether you have something, you are resource it enough or you are going to lack the resources and supports because you are struggling and you are disadvantaged.

So the issue of marginalization is laden with the issue of classism and ageism, and we need to be mindful of how we address it.

Taranum, is it me next, or is it you next?

Taranum Khan:

It is me next.

And talking about we've talked about few key issues that intersect with ageism.

Let's now look at how do we challenge ageism?

And I've seen a few questions.

I was only able to respond to a couple of answers, but I'm going to get to the other questions and answer soon.

But I want to address the issue.

The challenging ageism, again, is everyone's responsibility.

It is not only about one particular organization or one particular subgroup or one particular age group to speak about and challenge the issue and work towards finding a solution.

Yes, legislatively, we are well suited.

We have the human rights code.

We have the Charter of Rights and Freedom, which are foundational documents would give us the leveraging point, but our mindsets, our behaviours, our lack of understanding of how systems can be oppressive.

Lack of our comfort around challenging inequities continue to play a huge part in how we do not adequately challenge the issue of ageism as it intersects with many other identities.

And we definitely want to ensure that we do this mindfully, that we do this thoughtfully and that we have both policies, but our practices that align in creating the feeling of belonging and the feeling of inclusion.

And we definitely want to speak about a few strategies that we can implement in our day to day.

One is as an organization, retired teachers of Ontario primarily serve those who are retired.

But how do you span that and how do you bridge that gap of leaving the young folks out?

Can we hire them?

So looking at creating intergenerational initiatives is a strategy of addressing the issue of ageism.

Having a conversation such as today where we are tackling the issue, we are talking about it, we are raising awareness of the issue, is another strategy, and you need to continue to build on that.

Looking at the intersecting issues around ageism.

Are we creating some mindful interventions?

Are we being strategic both as a community, as a province, as a nation, to take advantage of all the capacity that we have, or are we leaving people behind because we exclude them?

We are inequitable or we have closed mindsets, and that is what we want to leave you with, to mull on, to say value the various lived experiences that people bring to this conversation of ageism and intersectionality and advance the issue of challenging ageism.

Muriel, I'm going to give it back to you.

Muriel Howden:

Thank you so much, Varsha.

Oh, my goodness.

Thank you, Marsha and Taranum, for such a wonderful presentation.

So just a few reminders very quickly before we go to the questions.

We're very fortunate.

We have a bunch of great questions waiting for us.

We will not type the answers to your questions because we are actually extremely fortunate to have Varsha and Taranum answering your questions live today.

So with that, I want to remind you that this session is recorded, it will be shared.

It will be translated.

So that will be coming soon as well.

You can submit your questions in English or French using the Q and A box.

And again, if your question is directly specifically to team specifically to Taranum or specifically to Varsha, make sure you include that in your question.

(Content repeated in French)

Let's start with the first question.

Maybe I will send this one to Varsha.

I'm going to send the first question to Varsha.

So the question is as follows.

A like your perspective that ageism is something that affects both the young and the old.

One way it affects the young is that a free or low cost national child care program is viewed as a public expense that we cannot afford.

While old age programs are viewed as something seniors have rightly earned.

What are your thoughts on that, Varsha?

Varsha Naik:

Thank you, Muriel.

And I think, great question.

Again, the value that society puts on somebody who's done their bit of work, they've earned a living, they paid their taxes.

Now they are at a retirement age.

They have earned to be taken care of.

So again, the values that we put on who deserves supports and who is not, you know, it's not our responsibility collectively to support.

So the national child health and looking at old age supports from that bias perspective of what is valued, what is my collect or what is my, you know, federal or provincial responsibility versus what's an individual family responsibility you have your child, you take care of your child.

The mindset is that we don't need to create.

We are giving free education.

We are already doing something to support a child, and that mindset needs to be challenged.

How do we define one more than the other?

And that bias and that inequity lens that continues to play out needs to be addressed and needs to be reflected in how we advocate collectively for issues.

Because remember, those who are young today are going to be tomorrow's adults and the day after tomorrow's seniors, and they are going to continue to be invested in the...

So what they experience, they will carry forward.

So if we want to create a community that cares, we want to invest at all levels and stages and ages for programs that support and guide and mentor and advance their wellbeing.

So for me, it's about addressing inequity again and challenging it absolutely.

Muriel Howden:

Thank you, Varsha.

I'm going to send the next question to Taranum.

And Taranum I will read the question first.

So here's the question.

Ageist stereotypes are often expressed as though they are a compliment.

For example, this person looks good for their age.

Or isn't that amazing that this person is still doing such and such at their age?

How can we address the ageist comments and building understanding?

Taranum Khan:

Great question.

Thank you so much.

I would give you a three step action plan for this.

First, recognize it.

And in the question, you're already doing it.

To create awareness it requires understanding.

So that's the first step, recognition.

Second step: speak up.

The person who is indulging in that act, may be doing it unknowingly.

So make them aware.

Speak up that you are actually doing something which comes in the category of a micro aggression.

So that would be your second step.

And the third is to ask, how would you like to be treated like that?

So I'll tell you a personal example.

My mom got really sick and she was hospitalized and one of the nurses while trying to help her, now stop behaving like a child, which was really it shocked me to say the least.

So I mean, yes, you are, you're supporting a person, but that does not give you the privilege of treating them poorly.

And again at the same time, patronizing.

So that is where that is what it comes down to.

So this would be your three steps formula and most importantly, be inclusive.

So that will be my pointers.

Muriel Howden:

Wonderful.

Thank you, Taranum. Before we go to the next question, Varsha, do you think you couldn't share your screen so that we actually are lucky enough to see your wonderful presence a little bit bigger.

Wonderful.

Thank you for that.

So I have one more question.

I think I'm going to send it to Varsha.

And then the following one.

I actually will be calling the chair of the board Rich Profit and our CEO Jim Grieve.

But for this one, Varsha, what do you think?

What can I do if someone else is acting ageist and I guess in all context, in personal life, in family, at work, what's your advice?

Varsha Niak:

So again, it's contextual, right?

So how you address it first and foremost.

When you see somebody exercising or acting out a discriminatory practice, whether it is ageism or racism.

The first action that you do need to take is to say, I'm going to call this behaviour out. I am not going to let this slide without being questioned or challenged.

Now there are context.

If you are in a public space, you are not going to embarrass the other individual by calling out in an insensitive manner.

So what they do is to check that person up, talk to them, strike a conversation, and then gently say, if I had seen something like this in another setting, this is what I would do.

If the individual is smart, they will pick up on the lapse that they have, you know, committed, or they've taken a step in the wrong direction.

They will retract.

If you are in a workplace and you see another peer or a College take on an action that is ageist, I would walk up to that colleague and from peer to peer or from supervisor to a staff, that conversation needs to be had because that creates an environment and a climate that is not healthy and not productive.

So to talk about how and where you need to be mindful of where you are going to interject yourself and how you are going to interject yourself.

Addressing it is not an option.

We all need to address it.

When we encounter an issue of inequity and issue of discriminatory practice, an issue of prejudice you need to challenge.

You need to question.

You need to step in and address it.

The how has to be seen.

And again, as you become more comfortable addressing these issues, you will respond much more appropriately and aptly.

And you will do this with sensitivity.

Sometimes people discriminate because they are ill informed.

They are not even aware of their personal bias.

And many times they are well aware of their bias, but they feel they can get away.

So never let an instance go without putting yourself in the middle there.

To support, challenge, interject, question, advise, guide, coach, there are a variety of options that you can pick and choose from.

Muriel Howden:

This is amazing.

This really what you're saying is this is really how you create that culture of openness and discussion, right?

That's great.

So for the next question I'm actually on, obviously Varsha and Taranum are welcome to speak to it too, but I'm going to welcome Jim Grieve our CEO and Rich Prophet the chair of the board, and I'm going to read you the question and then I will let Jim take it away maybe.

So how can I help make my community more age friendly?

Jim Grieves:

Great question.

I'm loving this conversation, all of it, and especially the words from Varsha just a moment ago on say something or do something, take action, appropriate action.

But take action.

It's the same with making a community kind of an age free zone.

I have the good fortune of having worked with the early years and now with the awesome years.

And it's true of all both those ages that communities need to be respectful and open and accessible for the very young and for those who are seniors and aging.

There are many neighbourhoods and communities and municipalities across this country that have taken age friendly design into account for the last several years, probably the last decade, and are making great gains, making sure that there's accessible walkways, that there are appropriately sized playscapes for young children, making sure that the edge of a curvate the intersection slopes down so that there's no big jump off the bottom if you're using a Walker or a wheelchair.

Those are just some of the simple things, and it's really more being observant as a community member saying to yourself,

Where are there opportunities for this municipality or even this neighborhood, or even in front of my own house?

How can I make sure that those who are very young or those who are a little on the older end of the spectrum can be safe, can be accepted as they walk past or walk through.

There are umpteen ways.

There are whole organizations dedicated to age friendly right now.

Just look on the website.

You'll see that there are communities like Thunder Bay and Kingston and even Toronto and Peel that have done great work every time there's a change in the road pattern or a change in the sidewalk system, there are opportunities to embed sensitive pads at the intersection so that those who are visually impaired can know that they're coming to the edge.

And the same is true for those who are hearing impaired, getting an opportunity to have a bit of a louder audible sound when the light is in your favour.

There are just so many other areas that can happen.

I'm glad to see that across the country, many municipalities are doing that.

Looks like Varsha wants to say something too.

Muriel Howden:

Go ahead, Varsha.

Varsha Naik:

Thank you, Jim.

I think you touched upon a very valid point and many cities, you're right.

Many of the regions across our nation are engaging in building age friendly cities.

But I think the structural inputs that people are doing even in the core design work is absolutely critical and needed.

But I think let us not keep it only to building age friendly city.

We need to live to be age friendly.

And how do we interact?

How do we create programs?

How do we have practices and policies across the city?

Is our Council understanding the need to be age friendly?

Are our political leaders attuned and on the same platform as the rest of the community that is advocating for age friendly cities.

And so we need to look at the various points that make up the city.

And, yes, structures, landscapes, all of that is very important, very critical.

Especially as I said, the population of seniors is going to continue to keep growing.

That's the projection that we know are going to come through and are we prepared for it?

But we also not forget that there are other ages and stages.

And how do we create that bridges of intergenerational work as a community is equally critical.

Jim Grieves:

This is why I like working with Varsha.

Good team.

Muriel Howden:

This is amazing.

Fantastic.

Well, the next question actually is very much in that line because it's really between, and maybe, Jim, we can keep you a little longer because I suspect you'll have something to say on that.

But it's really between the, you know, the questioning and actually moving to action.

So I'm gonna read Louise Q and A because it's actually worth reading and discussing.

So many letting go of the old ?

And almost every piece of our lives. I have heard that ?

Can process and address empathy for one issue a person and act upon what they see.

But when we go to two issues, empathy decreases as well as caring and willingness to act.

As soon as we bring larger groups, how then can expectation be that generations will move towards more caring of others and act in changing racism, ageism and all the other issues brought to our attention?

Awareness is great, but actions are needed.

Many feel over challenged and seem to be pulled back rather than going forward.

So here's the question.

How do we move forward to the stormy waters that we have not planned for, especially in our retirement?

So what would you say?

And Taranum,

of course, you are welcome to your comments on that one.

So it's really more going from this awareness to action and especially in retirement years.

How do we move?

So it's really I'm asking Taranum, Varsha, and Jim. Shifting to the action.

Varsha Naik:

Taranum, do you want to go first?

Taranum Khan:

Sure, Varsha.

So talking about action.

Action starts with advocacy.

Challenging the status quo.

Making sure the perceptions that people are engaging in are questioned, addressed and then there's a plan.

There's a plan where we see intergenerational engagement so that those bridges, the wealth of knowledge that people, older adults are bringing can seep into the younger minds, and then that interconnection, then that integration can happen.

There is value.

And honestly, I do see that there is this shift in mindset because we are recently seeing more intergenerational projects coming into shape and fruition, and there is data now being collected, but definitely more work is required.

And I'd ask Varsha to go about and give us some strategies that she feels could actually benefit.

Varsha Naik:

Thank you.

Um, what I would say, Muriel, is that you definitely want to create opportunities with academic institutions that are local, that you want to create the not-for-profit sector that is local, and you want to engage the public and government bodies to work collectively on creating older adult initiatives.

Cities are now very collaboratively creating older adult initiatives, and those are a must.

You definitely want to ensure that your older population sees that they are valued, that they have avenues in which they can participate.

So not just as a service recipient but as an active member of the community.

Are we optimizing and are we utilizing all of their knowledge, all of their life's wisdom, all of their skills, all of their life experiences to build on initiatives that will advance where we need to go as a collective group?

I think if we fraction away saying we want to only create one program for 60 to 70 and we want to create another program which would be home care bound, etcetera for 75 plus and over.

Those are needed because there are individual needs that it meets.

But as a community, what are our needs as a community, what will we create as a thriving community that takes pride in valuing all its residents?

So whether it be a young student in a school or a earlier student who's just beginning that life journey or it's a senior in a residential home and who needs supportive care, or whether it is an independent adult or a senior who is able to volunteer and give back in the community.

But we need to create initiatives that create opportunities for people to see themselves fitting in.

So whether it's an older adult advisory committee as a city that we create, which takes the needs into account, which takes the abilities or assets, what assets does a community have in terms of its strengths, in terms of its challenges and its opportunities?

And is it taking advantage of all of those?

A needs assessment is another component or a strategy that we need to implement that will give us the results where we want to go.

Muriel Howden:

Wonderful.

Jim, did you want to add anything?

Jim Grieves:

One of the reasons I love working with RDR and with Varsha and Taranum is because they not only give you the words about how you go about creating action and that's Louise's question is, how do you move from this sort of deeper understanding and awareness to actually move into action?

And when I think about the populations that we are were treasured to have actually across this country, especially in the GTA, but not exclusively because I worked in Ottawa and out west as well.

The issue of access in order to understand is the important one.

And I'm thinking of a project that we did in Malton, which is an area in Varsha's area, the RDR area, where we were doing an appreciative inquiry as to what works in our community.

And then we followed up with what doesn't work in our community.

There had to be probably a hundred different languages spoken in that community.

So we did it through a photo wall, a photo essay.

People went out without language and took pictures of what works for seniors in this community, for example.

And then a couple of weeks later they did exactly the same thing with the cameras and what doesn't work.

What's a problem, what's a hazard, what's a risk?

And to me, that's the kind of accessibility you want to give people regardless of language.

So that when you put a curated show of these pictures together, you have a really clear idea without the use of language, of what's working and what's not working.

That's just a quick example. I also know that, you know, this is hard stuff to learn to get your head around, and it's hard to deal with sometimes because it goes right against what you've ever learned or have been taught.

And I hope the people in learning this and in building their awareness through reading and webinars like this suspend those feelings long enough to really deeply think about what's the message that's being delivered.

Maybe I don't like the words I'm hearing, but maybe I need to think about why they're delivered that way a little more.

And so those are just some thoughts that come to mind.

Muriel Howden:

That's wonderful.

Thank you so much.

Thank you Jim, Varsha and Taranum for that.

So maybe I'll send the next question to Taranum.

Taranum, a question came and it's how can we tell if a comment or interaction is ageist?

I know Varsha touched on it earlier, but how can we be sure?



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together
Ensemble pour
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Better lives for Canada's education
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Taranum Khan:

Well, first of all, it's that feeling you can sense certain, it rests in emotional intelligence, right?

The way you are being spoken to, acting as if you're talking to a little child where we slow our speech with you can tell a person is engaging in a behaviour which is not appreciated.

So in this context, it is a feeling.

It's an emotional intelligence response where you know that the statement or the comment is not something is not being presented the way it should have been.

Let's say that way.

So first is that.

But then there are giveaways.

Certain words the way the vocabulary is being used.

For example, if it's a nurse helping a senior an example will be so we are going to get dressed now.

So the terminology is a clear indicator.

So look out for terminology would be the second one.

And sometimes people do it unintentionally.

And again, I'll go back to my first point.

So if you see that happening, question it.

Question the intent.

Muriel Howden:

Yeah, that's such a great point.

Thank you, Taranum.

So the next question.

So just so you know, we have a few more minutes and so we'll take a few more questions.

It's been incredible.

So hopefully we're going to fit a few more.

So next question I'm sending to maybe Varsha question from Nadine.

Can you share more specific examples of strategies to address ageist or even racist or classicist behaviours?

Varsha Naik:

Absolutely.

So one strategy that we've actually implemented to very good practice used in the region of Peel.

So let me pull that one up.

We have created a community collaborative that is meeting and advancing the work on antiracism, antiblack racism and systemic discrimination.

So we are naming the work that we want to do.

So begin by not shying away from taking a positive step to say I am going to name the issue.

Yes, racism exists in my society.

Yes, racism exists in my neighbourhood.

Yes, ageism is a lived reality for many in my community and I'm going to call it out.

And so begin by naming the issue.

Create a like minded voices to come together to address and advance the issue.

So the strategy is begin with a collective impact framework.

Look at is this going to serve one individual?

Serving one individual is not minimal, it's significant, but it's going to stay with that one individual.

How does the community benefit from learning about what is happening?

And so the collaborative work is one strategy that you must take on and name it.

What are we working towards?

Are we going to reduce racism?

Are we going to reduce instances of ageism being reported?

Are we going to focus in on the education sector where ageism is experienced daily by young folks?

Are we going to focus on recreational facilities for seniors which are discriminatory in terms of their access and their use, which are not AODA compliant.

Any of those what are your achievable outcomes that you are working towards?

So looking at one of that strategy and concretizing that strategy is name the issue, identify the objective you are working towards and get collective voices to work towards bigger changes. I think individual level change are important, but community change makes the thing go further and it is sustained longer.

Make sure that your efforts are sustained.

One of efforts, one of projects don't tend to last.

They tend to wither and fall by the wayside when the next issue or priority emerges in the community.

So build sustainability into your action plans.

That would be another strategy and I'm hoping Nadine finds that helpful.

You can always write to us if you want some more support or some more examples.

Muriel Howden:

Fantastic.

Thank you, Varsha.

And we'll share again your address on the website for sure.

I'm going to go to Taranum for Brenda's question.

And then after that, I will call our CEO again, Jim Grieve for the last questions and for the final word.

So Taranum, Brenda's question is and we go back to ageism of course.

How do you challenge ageism in a respectful manner when the industry is mostly made up of young people and you're constantly overlooked for promotion in the industry?

As a young senior, I have lots of skills and experience to share that are transferable skills. I'm able to do the job as well as the young person.

Plus, my education is current.

So what would you say to that?

Varsha Naik:

Challenging ageism comes with being aware of how you are being pushed to the side away.

So when you realize first of all, there are regulations around it.

So that would be the first step, because if you are experiencing it in an employment situation, then there are regulations that you can have a conversation with your supervisor, have a conversation with the HR, point out your concerns, do it in a very respectful and sensitive manner.

However, when people are made aware of a situation that youth are looking at from a different perspective, they will understand that you are aware.

You will not let somebody take advantage over you.

So that would be your first step to it.

Having that conversation would also ensure that you are not only making them aware, you are reinforcing your belief in your abilities, in your strengths.

And if that employer does not see the value that you're bringing to the organization, then it's a time to question your own commitment to that organization.

Maybe you need to reflect on what organization would be more feasible to contribute to rather than staying in a place which does not recognize your strength and skills.

So that is what I would do and ask you to look at.

Muriel Howden:

Fantastic.

And it's true.

You're right.

As Jim was saying, awareness is key and having the delight and fortune to speak to you and to Varsha takes part of obviously raising this awareness.

So I'm going to call our co Jim Grieve for the last question.

As a matter of fact, they're all quite, I'm going to combine them together.

And the questions are what is RTOERO doing to address ageism and intersectionality?

Gail's question is what would be one achievable outcome that we at RTOERO can do as an organization to address ageism and intersectionality.

And then one question in the middle of all this from Janice, which I'll put in the middle of this.

But I'll let you, Jim, address ageism and intersectionality versus how can we encourage the government to train more gerontologist, which I know is a topic dear to RTOERO's heart.

So I'll let you answer Gail's question first,

Jim, and I'll let you.

Jim Grieves:

Why don't I just take a run at all three in one fell swoop.

First of all, for ageism and intersectionality, you've come to the right place.

We're an organization that is filled with very young, young minded, young at heart seniors who are unbelievably motivated and active.

They've grown up, many of them as what we would call Boomennials.

They feel that righteous ability to advocate for themselves and an expectation that they will advocate.

Our members aren't anything but shy.

So when it comes to advocating for age friendly communities, anti ageism, the intersectionality, our members are more than happy to step forward.

They do step forward respectfully, but with insistence as well, which is just born of being sort of boommennials.

And it comes along with that territory.

We're also very much a learning organization.

We're committed through our strategic plan to diversity, equity, inclusion, and racism and the oppression, making sure that the issues of intersectionality are at top of mind.

And we're doing as much as we possibly canto build that awareness and really to empower that advocacy among our members.

And we've started slowly.

We've done that with staff and with the board.

We're about to move to work with the committees and with our 51 districts as well.

So those kinds of issues, I think, are the proactive stance that members like those who are asking these questions are looking for. In terms of advocacy around Geriatricians or geriatric medicine.

It's one of our key, Vibrant Voices initiatives.

These are advocacy initiatives.

We've been after the federal and all provincial governments on the issue of Geriatricians.

I think there's something like 315 Geriatricians for all Canadians.

More than half of them are in Ontario.

And is it enough?

No chance it's enough.

So RTO has step forward, and we're sponsoring, we just sponsored two summer internships in geriatric medicine this summer, courtesy of the National Institute of Aging.

We're pressing scholarships all the time that are focused, hopefully on the health of seniors.

So we're as proactive as we possibly can be.

And believe me, September the 20th between now and September 20th, we're going to be extremely active in speaking to every federal MP across the country about our issues, our big issues of environmental sustainability, geriatric medicine, and good grief.

We don't have a senior strategy in this country, so we are pressing them to answer to that.

You know, I don't know whether you'd like me to sort of wrap up at this point.

Yeah, I will let you wrap up.

Muriel Howden:

It was amazing.

I'm just going to say big thank you to Varsha, Taranum, and the floor is yours, Jim.

Jim Grieves: ccv

Thank you.

Well, n , Muriel, you have done a superb job.

Thank you for shepherding all of the questions, and it never, ever gets tired of working with Varsha and Taranum.

They've been long standing friends and colleagues for both, as I said, longstanding, many, many years.

And their presentation today certainly sparked all kinds of questions, but it struck some nerves as well.

I think people really needed to hear some of the strong message that you've delivered.

And I really appreciate the fact that you've been part of this and thank you so much.

We have recorded this as you know, and everyone who's participated will get a copy of this recording in the next few weeks.

Very good news.

Please share the link with anyone you want.

Rewatch it if you wish, but share it with anyone you certainly choose to do so.

So the week after Labor Day school begins, not for all of us, but for you.

If you want to come back, we're doing another webinar called Self Care through the Retirement Journey, and this takes place on Thursday, September the 9th at 01:00 p.m..

The registration link will be coming out a little bit later this week and we expect to have a vast number of people are joining us on that.

So again today Varsha, Taranum, thank you so much for dealing with ageism and intersectionality.

And Muriel and all the people in the background who made this happen and particularly the several hundred people who joined us today.

Thanks so much.