

# A Workshop on Microaggressions & Allyship for the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

February 15, 2021

Social Accountability & Community Engagement Office

Indigenous Health Professions Program

Equity Team OPVPA



# Today's Agenda

Introduction

Presentation on Indigenous History & Context

Presentation on Allyship & Microaggressions

Break

Breakout Sessions: Case Studies

Debrief

Wrap Up & Resources



# Land Acknowledgment

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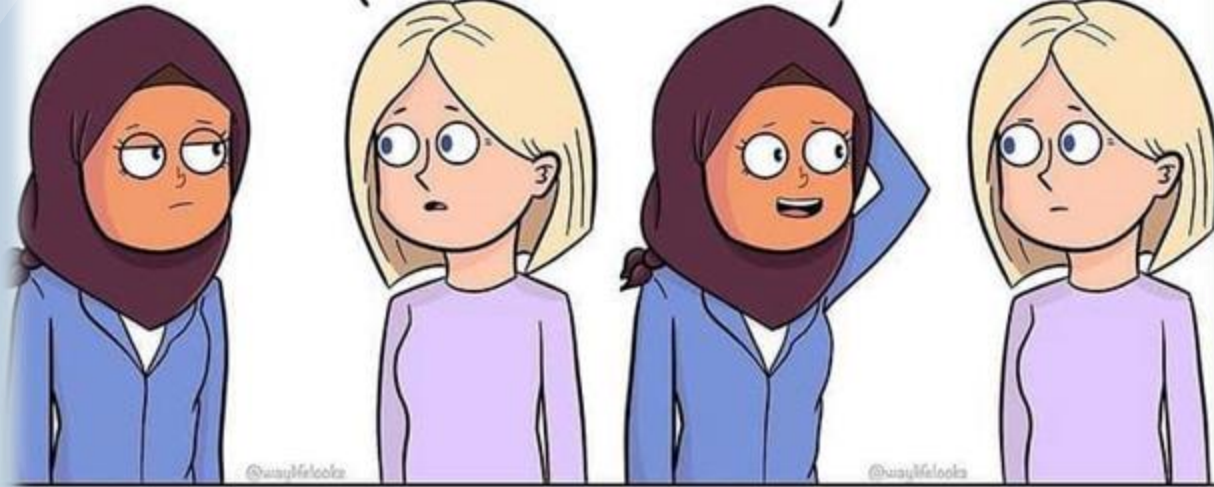
- We are here in **Tio'tia:ke** (Montreal) on the unceded territory of the **Kanien'kehá:ka**. The Kanien'kehá:ka, also known as the Keepers of the Eastern Door, are one of the nations that make up the **Haudenosaunee Confederacy** here on **Turtle Island** (North America). The two closest Indigenous communities are **Kahnawake** and **Kanesatá:ke**.
- Learn more about the land you are on and have been on here: <http://native-land.ca/> and commit to supporting Indigenous resistance and thrival.



the\_indian\_feminist

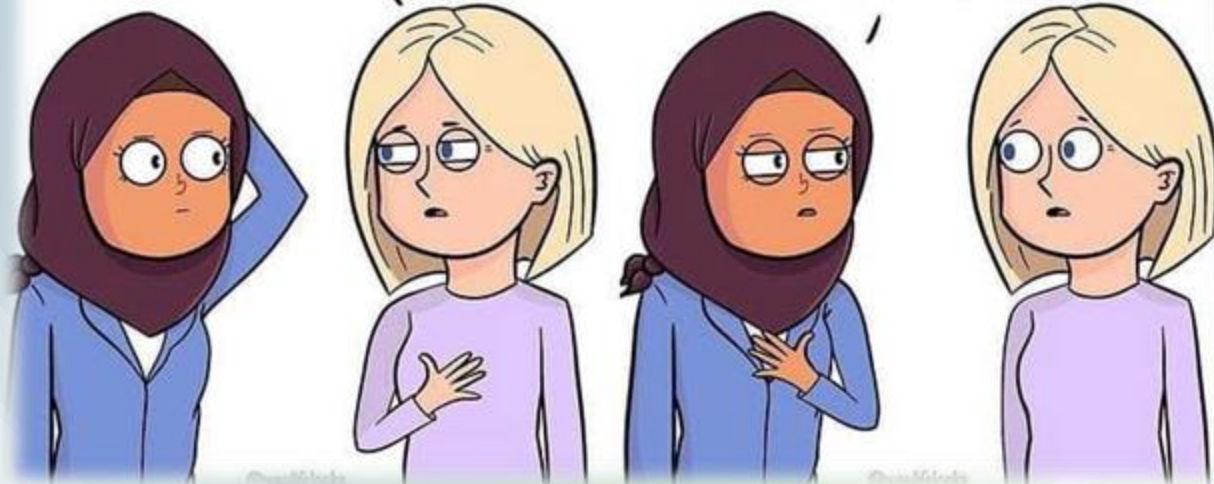


Wow, your English is incredible...! Oh, thanks. Your English is incredible too..!



Well of course, I was born here...

So was I ...






# Defining Microaggressions

- Coined by a Black, Harvard University psychiatrist, Chester Pierce, in the 1970s to describe **seemingly minor but damaging put-downs and indignities** experiences by African Americans
- Derald Wing Sue, Chinese professor of counselling psychology at Columbia University, expanded the term to cover:
  - brief and commonplace
  - verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities
  - intentional or unintentional
  - communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group

# MICROAGGRESSIVE GREETING CARDS (ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER EDITION)


YOU MUST  
GET A's  
  
ALL THE  
TIME!

YOU ALL  
  
LOOK THE  
SAME

  
YOU  
ARE SO  
EXOTIC

@okhappydeni

YOUR  
ENGLISH  
  
IS GREAT!

WHERE  
ARE YOU  
  
REALLY  
FROM?

YOU'RE THE  
  
MODEL  
MINORITY



# Forms of Microaggressions

- Verbal
  - "I don't believe in race"
  - "You only got the admission/scholarship/award/promotion because you're Asian"
  - Repeatedly misgendering a patient/student/coworker/peer
- Behavioural
  - Denying medication to a Black female patient because you assume she is exaggerating her pain
  - Dismissing a fat\* patient's concerns by immediately linking them to their weight
  - Talking slowly to a deaf or an autistic patient/student/coworker/peer
- Environmental
  - Your curricula devalues Indigenous perspectives of health and wellness
  - Having only gendered washrooms
  - Your building/office is not accessible

\*reclaimed term as a neutral, non-medical, physical descriptor of body size



# Types of Microaggressions

- Microassaults
  - Intentionally behaving in a discriminatory way without intending to be offensive
  - i.e. using language like "gay", "crazy", "bipolar", "handicapped" or as a "joke"; telling a student with a disability "you can't handle med school"
- Microinsults
  - More subtle yet still harmful comments/actions that are unintentionally discriminatory
  - i.e. "they only got the job because they checked all the diversity boxes"; "wow you are so articulate"; "your afro/dreads/braids are unprofessional"
- Microinvalidations
  - Denying or undermining the experiences of a certain group of people
  - i.e. "you're exaggerating"; "they were being too sensitive"; "being 'triggered' isn't real"; "it's not about race"; "I don't see colour";



# The Impacts of Microaggressions on Health

- Research conducted on people of color has found that they experience subtle racism as more difficult to deal with than traditional racism (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1998; Salvatore and Shelton, 2007; <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01995/full>)
- Center for Health Journalism
  - Researchers at Columbia University have found that the experience of racism can result in traumatic stress. This stress is linked to negative mental health outcomes, such as depression, anger, physical reactions, avoidance, intrusion, hypervigilance, and low self-esteem.
  - One recent study showed that Native Americans diagnosed with type 2 diabetes experienced racial microaggressions from their health care providers. Among those sampled in the study, a correlation was found between microaggressions and self-reported histories of heart attack, depressive symptoms, and prior-year hospitalization.
  - Data show that perception of racial discrimination is associated with reduced trust in physicians as well as reduced adherence to medication among African-American adults suffering from chronic disease. Lack of trust in providers due to discrimination is also related to lower levels of cancer screening among lower-income and African-American adults.
- "Systemic anti-black racism is making us sick, both mentally and physically as black people; resistance to anti-black racism can contribute to wellbeing; and we must value Afro-centric approaches and perspectives, values and practices, in order to improve health and wellness." - Dr. Onye Nnorom



Break!



## Case Studies - 30 min

1. Join your breakout room (facilitators will be placed in each room)
2. Discuss the first case scenario
3. Discuss the second case scenario

# Breakout Room Ground Rules

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Acknowledge

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No Blame

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Respect

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Individual Experience

---

Share the Air

---

Not Experts

---

Ask for Help

# Strategies



What to do when you witness it or when someone discloses this to you?



How to prevent saying it?



What to do when you say it?



What to do when you are targeted?

# Strategies

- When you witness it
  - Address the person who said it: "I used to say that too until I learned it can give off the message that..."
  - Check in with the person who was the target afterwards
- When someone discloses
  - Ask what they need (someone to listen; support to report to HR, etc)
  - Don't make promises you can't keep



What to do when you witness it or when someone discloses this to you?



# Strategies

- Pause before making personal comments
- Learn about your own biases
  - Ask someone to hold you accountable (not an underrepresented person)
  - Take Harvard's Implicit Association Test
  - Clock your body responses to certain people/situations (are you more defensive or annoyed by certain people?)
- Diversity your professional, social and online networks
- Educate yourself with workshops, articles, books and podcasts
- Practice micro-inclusions



How to prevent saying it?



# Strategies

- Apologize
  - Even if it was a "joke"
  - Even if you didn't intend to offend and feel defensive
  - Even if no one challenges you on it
- Know that the person may not want to talk about it or explain to you why the message was hurtful – you can do the research without involving them
- Develop your awareness of biases and discrimination
- Be open to feedback



What to do when you say it?





# Strategies

- Respond now, later or never
- Use humour to call it to attention
- Use scripting
- Use the R.A.V.E.N. approach by J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III:
  1. Redirect the conversation
  2. Ask probing questions
  3. Value clarification
  4. Emphasize your own thoughts
  5. Next steps



What to do when you are targeted?

# R.A.V.E.N. Approach to Addressing Microaggressions

## by J. Luke Wood & Frank Harris III

- **REDIRECT** (intervene)(correct)(pull aside)
- **ASK** probing questions for clarity
  - *“I think I heard you say...what did you mean by that?”*
  - *“I want to make sure I understand what you were saying, were you saying that...?”*
- **VALUES** clarification
  - *“You know, in this department, we work hard to create a space that is safe and welcoming for all students.”*
  - *“What you just said is not in alignment or consistent with our institutional values that prioritize equity and inclusion.”*
- **EMPHASIZE** your own thoughts and feelings
  - *“When I hear your comment, I think/feel...”*
  - *“Many people might take that to mean...”*
  - *“In my experience...”*
- **NEXT** steps
  - *“The next time you encounter this situation, you may want to consider doing...”*





## Resources on Microaggressions

- [Disability Microaggressions – Ableist Things People Say](#) by Sheri Bryne-Haber
- [How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions when They Occur](#) by [Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#)
- [Microaggression and Allyship Campaign: #UofTMedCARES](#) by [University of Toronto](#)
- [Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send](#) by [University of California](#)
- [Turn Microaggressions into Micro-Inclusions](#) by [eLearning Industry](#)