

**THEME: INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY FOR  
SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY**

# **HSDNI'S 9TH SUSTAINABILITY COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE**

**SUB-THEMES: FOOD INSECURITY, GOOD GOVERNANCE, GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH,  
INEQUALITY & DISCRIMINATION**

# 2025

**DATE & TIME:**

9.30 am - 4.30 pm

13 & 14 May, 2025

**LOCATION:**

Toronto Metropolitan  
University, DCC, 7th Floor,  
Collab Space

**CONTACT US:**

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<https://www.hsdni.org/>



**Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## FLYER

- Flyer 03

## OUR ORGANIZATION

- Vision, Mission, Values, & Objectives 05
- Call to Action 06

## SCHEDULE

- Day 1 08
- Day 2 09

## DAY 1

- Session-1: Racism & Discrimination (BCS Session) 10-19
- Session-2: Good Governance 25-31

## DAY 2

- Session-3: Public Health (Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services Session) 25-31
- Session-4: Food Insecurity 32-37

# INTRODUCTION

The Holistic Sustainable Development Network (HSDN) International is a non-profit organization that creates, coordinates and disseminates research relating to sustainable development. Although we are based in Canada, we collaborate and work internationally, arrange conferences and seminars as well as publish research in our peer reviewed journals. Our aim is to disseminate relevant research and work experiences to the public and increase stakeholder participation in the practices and processes that impact sustainable development.

HSDN International, initiated in 2014 by the Environmental Policy Institute Graduate Candidates at Memorial University of Newfoundland, was pioneered by Jannatul Islam with the name “Worldwide Holistic Sustainable Development Cooperation (WWHSDC)”.

Afterward, Jannatul Islam moved to Toronto and continued the initiative under its current name, incorporating it into Canada under the leadership of Dr. Nasima Akter. The HSDN is defined by the motto “Live simply, live lively”. It is a growing organization of academics dedicated to increasing access to high-quality peer-reviewed literature on sustainable development. The HSDN is truly an international undertaking with executive members from Canada, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and Jamaica.

We create student clubs in potential locations to build the network and strengthen the sustainability movement. Currently, we have student clubs at the University of Toronto, Toronto Metropolitan University, and Bangladesh.

HSDNI runs and mentors initiatives that include Toronto Bangla School, HSDNI Academy, Community Exchange Network, The Trajectory of Sustainable Development (ISSN), PROYASHEE Foundation, Community Sustainability Global, and regular outreach activities year-round.

HSDNI has been organizing sustainability collaborative conferences periodically on current burning issues affecting community sustainability in different locations. In the continuation of this conference, the Student Club of HSDN International formed at Toronto Metropolitan University is hosting the HSDNI's 8th Sustainability Collaborative Conference-2024 for Future Sustainable Societies.





# HSDNI OVERVIEW

## VISION + VALUES

- Attain sustainable development goals through collaborative movement
- Complementary regard for human and environmental subjects

## MISSION

Promote socio-cultural, economic and environmental well-being for all from grassroots to global level

## OBJECTIVES

- **Generate Ideas** through local experiences and spread it globally
- **Identify and engage to the projects** related to the organization's goals
- **Accumulate efforts** to mentor or make projects successful within jurisdictions
- **Support** for class neutral development of policies
- **Communicating activities** of the organization and giving feedback to stakeholders
- **Expanding network** and cooperation worldwide to secure greater success in sustainable development





# **ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?**

**WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US AS A PARTICIPANT, A  
TEACHER, A STUDENT, AND A VOICE IN THIS  
MOVEMENT TOWARD HOLISTIC SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT.**

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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## DAY 1 SESSION 1

9:30 AM	EVENT START (REGISTRATION, SETTING TABLE & BREAKFAST)		
10:00 AM	LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	VIDEO PLAY	
10:10 AM	OPENING SPEAKER	DR. NANCY WALTON	Opening the conference
10:25 AM	WELCOME SPEAKER	DR. NASIMA AKTER	Introduction to HSDNI and future expectation of the collaboration and cooperation
10:35 AM	CHAIR	DR. SHAFI BHUIYAN	CHAIR'S OPENNING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKERS
10:45 AM	KEYNOTE SPEAKER	DR. HELAL HOSSAIN DHALI	Diasporas and the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism: The Role of Decolonial Education in Countering This Threat
11:10 AM	SPEAKER	Qazi Shafayetul Islam	Awareness and Attitudes towards racism and discrimination within Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Iranian, and Nigerian communities in Toronto
11:25 AM	SPEAKER	JANNATUL ISLAM & UMME TASNEEM HYDER	Education and Allyship to combat racism and discrimination
11:40 AM	SPEAKER	DR. MAHBUB HASAN, URBI KHAN & ANUIVA HASAN	Advancing Racial Justice Through Youth Leadership and Community Engagement - Insights From the Together End Racism Toronto Campaign.
11:55 AM	SPEAKER	ANCHAL BHATIA	Understanding Canadian policies to combat racism and discrimination
12:20 PM	SPEAKER	PRISCILLA MIUCCIO	Bridging Barriers: Addressing Healthcare Access And Vaccine Hesitancy Among Spanish-Speaking Seniors In North York

## LUNCH BREAK & NETWORKING

## DAY 1 - SESSION 2

1:20 PM	CHAIR	NEETHAN SHAN	CHAIR'S OPENNING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKERS
1:50 PM	KEYNOTE SPEAKER	DR. FAHIM QUADIR	Deconstructing the Myths of Good Governance: The West's Civilizing Mission and the Imperative of Linking Democracy with Social Development
2:10 PM	SPEAKER	AKM KHAIRUL ISLAM	The Bad Governance and Cronies in the Bangladesh State: The Political Economy of Neo-Patrimonial Plunder
2:30 PM	SPEAKER	DR. MAHATAB UDDIN	Protecting Farm Data under Intellectual Property Law
2:45 PM	SPEAKER	DR. REDDI SEKHARA YALAMALA	Leveraging Participatory and Collaborative Governance in Renewable Energy Partnerships among Indigenous Communities, Canada

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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## DAY 2 - SESSION 1

9:30 AM	Arrival & Morning Refreshments		
9:45 AM	VIDEO PLAY	LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
09:50 AM	OPENING SPEAKER	DR. ANDREW LAURSEN	Opening the conference
10:00 AM	WELCOME SPEAKER	DR. AKM ALAMGIR	Welcomes guests, requests Cliff to Chair, and introduce Courtney to Facilitate session
10:05 AM	CHAIR	CLIFF LEDWOS	CHAIR'S OPENNING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKERS
10:15 AM	KEYNOTE SPEAKER	DR. NATASHA BEAUDIN	Social Prescribing
10:30 AM	PANEL DISCUSSION ON KEYNOTE	DR. SANDER HITZIG, DR. BASAK YANAR, DR. ROSANRA YOON, DR. AKM ALAMGIR	Social Prescribing as Public Health in Community setting / CHC focus
11:00 AM	KEYNOTE SPEAKER	Dr. JAY SHAW	Role and contribution of Access Alliance in Community Development
11:15 AM	ACCESS ALLIANCE PRESENTATION	Dominika Kawecka Dr. Mandana Vahabi	Research impact report Compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and refugees living with cancer, mental health, and addiction disorders
10 MINUTE BREAK			
12:00 PM	SPEAKER	INDRANI PAUL	Paternal Mental Health In Canada: The Overlooked Crisis In The Perinatal Period
12:15 PM	SPEAKER	YAMINI BHATT	Mediterranean Lifestyle For South Asian Women: Acceptability & Challenges
12:30 PM	SPEAKER	ANOUSHKA ANOUSHKA	Cultural Competence Among Healthcare Workers Providing Intervention Care To South Asian Immigrant Women In Postnatal Period: A Rapid Review
12:45 PM	Q&A		.
12:55 PM	CHAIR FINAL REMARKS	CLIFF LEDWOS	Acting Executive Director at Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
LUNCH BREAK			
	POSTER PRESENTATION	ISAAC VERBERK MENSAH	Implications Of Urban Heat Island On Health Outcomes Among Urban Residents In Kumasi

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE



## DAY 2 - SESSION 2

<b>1:45 PM</b>	CHAIR	DIANE DYSON	CHAIR'S OPENNING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKERS
<b>1:55 PM</b>	KEYNOTE SPEAKER	DR. MUSTAFA KOC	Political uses of access to food
<b>2:20 PM</b>	SPEAKER	DR. CHETHIKA GUNASIRI	Leveraging Urban Agriculture to Address Food Insecurity Among Urban Poor Communities: A Case Study from Colombo, Sri Lanka
<b>2:35 PM</b>	SPEAKER	DR. AMANDA WEDGE	Technology for Food Justice: A web-based and mobile application for food bank users and food bank operators.
<b>2:50 PM</b>	PANEL SPEAKER	DR. SARA EDGE	Arrell Chair in Food, Policy & Society, and Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, Environment & Geomatics at University of Guelph
<b>3:00 PM</b>	PANEL SPEAKER	DR. SUTAMA GHOSH	Associate Professor in the Department Of Geography and Environmental Studies, Toronto Metropolitan University.
		Q & A	

*VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATE DISTRIBUTION AND CLOSING*



## **DR. NANCY WALTON**

Associate Dean, Student Affairs,  
Graduate Studies, Toronto  
Metropolitan University

Dr. Nancy Walton is the Associate Dean, Student Affairs in the Yeates School of Graduate Studies, and an Associate Professor in the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU). She previously served as Director of the School of Nursing, as Director of eLearning, and as the Chair of the TMU Research Ethics Board (REB). Dr. Walton also serves as the Chair of the Women's College Hospital Research Ethics Board and Deputy Chair of the Health Canada and Public Health Agency of Canada's Research Ethics Board.

She has a Ph.D. in Nursing and has completed the Collaborative Program in Bioethics at the University of Toronto. She has published and presented on priority setting and decision-making in cardiac surgery, research ethics board composition, ethical and legal considerations in research on children and adolescents, as well as the ethical concerns in the use of new mobile technologies in health care. She is the Canadian author of the textbook, "Ethics and Issues in Contemporary Nursing" (3rd edition) and is the co-editor of the textbook, "Leading and Managing in Nursing" (2019).



# **Opening Speaker**



Dr. Nasima Akter is an accomplished researcher and scholar in her own right. She has more than 26 years of progressive experience in community development & social work, project management and research relating to environment, health, & development. She has more than 35 publications in Peer reviewed journal. She was the head of Environmental Research of BRAC, the largest development organization in the world and taught at BRAC University, Bangladesh, supervised Master's thesis of international students at James P Grant School of public health at BRAC University, Bangladesh. Since 2010, Dr. Nasima Akter has been serving as the Executive Director of

Bangladesh-Canadian Community Services (BCS) located in Danforth Avenue, Toronto. Currently she has been working on several community engagement projects such as: Education & Allyship Program; Fighting Misogyny; Peacemaker initiative: to combat Islamophobia & racism; Mental health & wellness; Vaccine engagement for South Asians; Youth Engagement programs; Senior support services; Inter-generational initiatives and more. Dr. Akter holds a PhD in Environmental Technology & Management. She drafted the Hospital Waste Management Rules for the Government of Bangladesh and contributed too many more environmental policies of the country.



**welcome Speaker**



## DR. SHAFI BHUIYAN

Associate Professor and SBS  
Program Coordinator University of  
Memphis, TN, USA

Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan, PhD, MBBS, MPH, MBA. Dr. Bhuiyan is an internationally recognized leader in global public health and education initiatives, with diverse experience in both developed and developing countries. Associate Professor and SBS Program Coordinator, University of Memphis, TN, USA. Also, he is an Associate Professor of clinical public health at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Co-creator of MScCH pilot program for internationally trained physicians at DLSPH, U of T, co-founder of the innovative Bridge Training Programs for IEHPs and Inaugural Board of Directors of Association for Global Health (CAGH) and served in many more health organization. Dr. Bhuiyan holds positions as Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Community Services at Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada, and the Bangladesh University of Health Sciences.

He previously worked as a Scientist and Senior Health Research Manager for projects at OHTN funded by Ontario's Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care. He was instrumental in improving maternal, neonatal and child health promotion in Bangladesh as founding lead liaison of MCHTI development in Dhaka and the Maternal Child Health Handbook program in Bangladesh, which led to a UNFPA Fellowship for his MPH in Urban health study; MBA from Toronto Metropolitan University [TMU], Canada.

He also secured PhD and post-doctoral JSPS study award from the Govt. of Japan at Osaka University. Dr Bhuiyan received his medical degree from the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, an MPH from Mahidol University in Thailand, a PhD in Global Human Sciences from Osaka University in Japan and an MBA in Global Healthcare Management from the Ted Rogers School of Management, TMU Canada.



# Chair



## **DR. HELAL HOSSAIN DHALI**

Postdoctoral Fellow, UQAM, University  
Faculty (McGill University and Bishop's  
University in Canada, and Dhaka  
University in Bangladesh)

Dr. Dhali has been teaching at the post-secondary level at different local and foreign universities and working as a researcher at various national and international organizations in the field of Philosophy of Education; K-12 Education; Indigenous Education; Globalization, Global Education, and Social Justice in Education; Gender and Sexuality in Education; Inequality and Differences: Ethics, Culture, and Extremism; and Diasporas, Social Inequalities, and Equities. He has taught 14 courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels at various universities (McGill University and Bishop's University in Canada, and Dhaka University, BRAC University, and State University in Bangladesh) with a critical perspective and an interdisciplinary approach for educating more than 1000 transformative teachers in K-12 schools, development workers, and government officials. He has supervised about 50 undergraduate monographs and ten post-graduate theses.

He has also conducted more than five studies independently as a principal investigator (PI) or a lead researcher, and around ten studies as research consultant/associate/assistant.

### **Diasporas and the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism: The Role of Decolonial Education in Countering This Threat**

Right-Wing Extremism (RWE) is growing in the West and poses a serious threat, especially to diaspora communities, which are often targeted by hateful messages. In Canada, the rise in hate crimes highlights the need to understand how these communities view and experience RWE, as well as how to effectively address it. This paper looks at the views of three main diaspora groups—Asian, Jewish, and Muslim—regarding the increasing danger of RWE. It also explores how decolonial education can help challenge extremist beliefs, break down harmful narratives, and promote inclusive societies. By focusing on the voices and knowledge of diaspora communities, this research shows the role of education in fighting the roots of extremism and reducing hate-related violence. This discussion uses an intersectional and decolonial perspective to contribute to ongoing talks about policy, education, and building strong communities. It calls for a united and informed approach to counter RWE in Canada and beyond.



# **Keynote speaker**



## QAZI SHAFAYET

Coordinator, Research and Programs at  
Bangladeshi-Canadian Community  
Services

He started his career as a research associate in a research and evaluation division (RED) of BRAC Bangladesh (one of the largest NGOs in the world). He worked for BRAC for ten years in public health and research and helped BRAC develop national-based programs like national TB control, national nutrition program, maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases, and other public health programs by researching and creating policies. He had research experience for 18 years in Nepal, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Canada. He is good at quantitative and qualitative research and applies them in different settings. He works with immigrants in Toronto and their challenges in resettling in Canada. He works as the coordinator for research and programs at Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services in Toronto and also works for the Dementia Care Home, Sprint Senior Care. He also supervises the students from universities and colleges.

### **Awareness and Attitudes towards racism and discrimination within Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Iranian, and Nigerian communities in Toronto**

**Objective:** To explore and attitudes towards racism and discrimination within South Asian, Nigerian, and Iranian communities.

**Methods:** The qualitative study, conducted within a community-based research framework, included 412 respondents selected through convenience sampling. Data was collected from January to June 2024 using self-administered interviews and analyzed with SPSS 26.

**Results:** The study surveyed South Asian individuals, mostly Bangladeshi (62.1%), along with Nepalese (12.1%), Iranian (9.7%), and African Nigerian (16.0%) participants. Main sources of information on discrimination and racism were people (53.4%) and media (43.7%). Fewer reported personal experiences (33.0%) or community organizations (8.0%). Regarding good awareness towards racism and discrimination, overall, 42.7% of participants had good awareness scores (>4.5 mean score), with higher proportions among youth (54.9%), Nigerians (90.9%), Iranian (50.0%), and those using multiple information sources (62.3%). Lower proportion was noted in seniors (28.3%), Bangladeshis (33.3%), Nepalese (22.0%), and those relying on a single source (35.9%). Only 25.2% were familiar with relevant policies, with youth (32.4%) and Nepalese (40.0%) Additionally, 46.2% would seek help if faced with racism, with higher willingness in seniors (62.3%) and Nigerians (75.8%). Finally, only 33.3% felt comfortable speaking publicly about racism and discrimination.

**Conclusion:** Awareness of racism and discrimination was generally low, with Nigerian and Iranian communities faring better than South Asian communities. Also, young people showed the good levels of awareness. Many from these groups, except Nigerians, do not seek help after experiencing racism, often choosing to leave quickly and feeling sad about it.

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# Speaker



## JANNATUL ISLAM

PhD Student, EnSciMan, Toronto  
Metropolitan University, Founder and  
Executive Director, HSDNI

Mr. Jannatul is a Ph.D. candidate in EnSciMan in Toronto Metropolitan University and a community development worker. He is the co-founder of Toronto Bangla School that has been serving children for the last seven years to teach Mother Language and Culture to minimize the inter-generational gap. He founded Holistic Sustainable Development Network (HSDN) International that is striving for sustainability through collaboration and cooperation with likely minded individuals and organizations. Until now, HSDN International organized about 50 workshops and seminars and 8 international conferences. Moreover, this organization runs a journal named the Trajectory of Sustainable Development published its 13 issues. Mr. Jannatul also registered a federal non-profit named PROYASHEE to establish a model eco-village

for disadvantaged children and seniors who do not have anyone to take care of or care about. Since he enrolled in Toronto Metropolitan University in September 2022, he became president of the TMU Urban Water Student Leadership Committee, became a student member of the Centre for Studies in Food Security, and registered HSDN International as a student club in TMU to collaborate for sustainability.

### Education and Allyship to combat racism and discrimination

Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS) is a charitable organization serving the South Asian communities for the last 25 years. Funded by the Canadian Federal Government, BCS completed a youth-led project to combat racism and discrimination in the greater society. The project primarily recruited 10 ambassadors and 5 volunteers, while further volunteers were included in the project based on their involvement. The idea of this project is to train and educate the ambassadors and volunteers to work with the community, document their learning through digital toolkits, and promote allyship. This paper will present how the project was designed and the outcome of the project.



# Speaker



## UMME TASNEEM HYDER

MSc, EnSciMan  
Toronto Metropolitan University

Umme Tasneem Hyder holds a Master of Applied Science in Environmental Applied Science and Management from Toronto Metropolitan University. Her graduate research explored the growing reliance on bottled water in Canadian cities, titled “Understanding Bottled Water Usage in Urban Canada: A Tap Water Comparison.” Through this work, she examined perceptions of water quality and trust in public infrastructure. In addition to her academic contributions, Tasneem has delivered presentations on anti-racism, helping foster inclusive conversations within educational and professional spaces.



# Co-Speaker



## DR. MAHBUB HASAN

Social Worker, Educator, and Professor,  
Centennial College and Toronto  
Metropolitan University.

Dr. Mahbub Hasan is a dedicated social work educator, community organizer, and project management specialist with over 12 years of experience in academia. He currently serves as a Professor at Centennial College's School of Community and Health Studies and as an Adjunct Faculty member at Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Social Work. He also serves as a Program Advisor at Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services.

A lifelong learner, he holds a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and a Master of Social Work (MSW) from Toronto Metropolitan University. He also has a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Dhaka. His diverse training includes Project Management and Communications certificates from the University of Toronto.

Dr. Hasan teaches a wide range of courses, including Introduction to Social Work, Community Development, Community Engagement Practices, Power & Social Movements, and Social Policy.

Dr. Hasan's global experience encompasses human rights advocacy and community organizing, having worked with ActionAid, VSO, and Global Affairs Canada in countries such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. He possesses deep passion in anti-racism, community development, and social justice.

### **Presentation title: Advancing Racial Justice Through Youth Leadership and Community Engagement – Insights From the Together End Racism Toronto Campaign.**

This presentation explores the Together End Racism in Toronto (TERT) campaign, a transformative initiative empowering youth to lead racial justice efforts. It highlights how Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services (BCS) supported youth from racialized communities in leadership development and community engagement. Through a Project Evaluation, we have assessed TERT's impact in educating and mobilizing communities against systemic racism. Key insights will showcase youth-led strategies, successes, and lessons learned. This session aims to inspire actionable change through youth leadership in anti-racism advocacy.



# Speaker



## URBI KHAN

Investigative Journalist and  
Community Worker

Urbi Khan is an investigative journalist and community worker. Urbi is a Program Associate and Coordinator at Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS), working alongside her fellow presenters, Dr. Mahbub Hasan and Anuva Hasan. Urbi has worked on the *Fight Misogyny*, *Achieve Gender Equality*, *Resilient Youth for Change*, *Together End Racism in Toronto*, and *Women RISE* programs at BCS. Through these programs, she leads workshops on story writing, community journalism, and public speaking, fostering intergenerational connections and amplifying diverse voices. As a journalist, Urbi covers health, environment, and food security. Her work has appeared in *The Narwhal* and *The Local*, where she investigated the industrial use of the cancerous gas

ethylene oxide in Scarborough and Mississauga. Previously, she was a staff reporter at The Toronto Star, where she was one of the lead reporters on Ontario's nursing crisis series, Critical Care. Her bylines have also appeared in The Globe and Mail and UofT Med Magazine. Her work has also been featured on the CBC. She graduated from Toronto Metropolitan University in 2020.



## Co-Speaker



## ANUVA HASAN

Bachelor of Social Work program at York University

Anuva Hasan is a final-semester student in the Bachelor of Social Work program at York University, where she is also earning a certificate in Public Law. Passionate about community engagement and social justice, Anuva is actively involved in the Youth Leadership Program at Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services (BCS). Through initiatives like Resilient Youth for Change and the Together End Racism Program in Toronto, she has worked closely with youth and community members to promote anti-racism, advocacy, and leadership development. In addition to her community work, Anuva is the Vice President of Communications & Recruitment for the Moot Law Society at York University.



# Co-Speaker



**ANCHAL BHATIA**

Lawyer at SALCO

Anchal Bhatia (she/her) holds her Juris Doctor from the University of Windsor. From her first law job at the Legal Assistance of Windsor, she discovered her desire to work in the clinic system and the importance of community lawyering. Anchal not only works with SALCO clients on all sorts of legal matters (e.g. housing, immigration, employment, social assistance) but is also interested in systemic work through law reform and test litigation. She is grateful for the opportunity to advocate alongside our clients and community. She is looking forward to all the ways she can support the betterment of clients and the community.

### **Addressing Racism Against South Asians in Ontario**

Legal Support and Community Empowerment, explores the various forms of racism faced by South Asian communities in Ontario, including direct and systemic discrimination. It highlights the increasing prevalence of hate crimes and the socio-economic impact of racial biases. The session outlines key legal and policy regimes that exist in Canada and specifically Ontario related to Human Rights and Anti-Racism. For example, there will be a discussion on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Anti-Racism Act, 2017. Additionally, it provides guidance on reporting discrimination, navigating legal support systems, and how to advocate for their rights and seek justice through legal and community-based avenues.



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**Speaker**



Miuccio is the Program Coordinator at the Centre for Spanish-speaking People (CSSP), working with an average of 35 seniors—primarily Spanish-speaking participants— at the corner of Jane and Wilson, North York. In the intergenerational role, Miuccio organizes social, educational, and creative sessions that connect seniors with experts passionate about relevant and pressing topics. Sustainability is both a new and familiar concept for this community; while the terminology may be modern, the practices often reflect the enduring wisdom of our elders. For example, a friend's grandmother who saves butter containers for leftovers or reuses grocery bags

embodies principles of sustainable living. Miuccio's goal is to ensure that marginalized voices, such as those of seniors, are integral to shaping a sustainable and inclusive future.

### **Bridging Barriers: Addressing Healthcare Access and Vaccine Hesitancy Among Spanish-Speaking Seniors in North York**

Global public health challenges are exacerbated by technological, linguistic, and cultural barriers that limit access to critical services. At the Centre for Spanish Speaking People (CSSP) located at Jane and Wilson, a significant number of seniors—primarily newcomers or established immigrants—face difficulties navigating online appointment systems, accessing healthcare resources, and combating misinformation.

This abstract explores how these barriers intersect with media literacy and vaccine hesitancy within a vulnerable demographic. It highlights CSSP's strategies for fostering community engagement, providing educational sessions, and creating culturally relevant resources to improve health outcomes. The presentation underscores the importance of inclusive, intergenerational approaches to global public health and emphasizes the role of community-based organizations in addressing systemic inequities.



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# Speaker



## NEETHAN SHAN

TDSB Chair & Trustee and Former  
Councillor, City of Toronto

Neethan Shan is currently the Executive Director of Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) and the Chair of Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Neethan was one of the two first Tamil Canadians to be elected to any public office in 2006. He was the first Tamil Canadian and the first person from a South Asian country to become Toronto City Councillor. He was also the first person of colour and youngest person to become the president of Ontario NDP. These are amongst the many firsts he has achieved through breaking barriers and paving way for other racialized youth to follow.

He is a former Toronto City Councillor. From 2006-2010, he also served as a York Region District School Board Trustee. Neethan Shan began his career as a Youth Outreach Worker and further become a manager for youth programs in Malvern, where he developed and implemented over twenty programs in many different schools. He has served as a Math and Science teacher, a college professor, and is the former Executive Director of CanTYD and of the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians. During his ten years as Executive Director of CASSA, Neethan advanced the health equity agenda for South Asian communities, undertook a campaign to make municipalities outside the GTA become more inclusive, spearheaded the campaign to establish anti-racism directorate at the provincial level, and brought over 100 organizations from across Ontario under a solidarity umbrella to advance social and economic justice for all South Asians and all other equity deserving communities. Neethan's extensive involvement in the social services sector also includes work with Parent Action on Drugs, Malvern Community Coalition, Community Use of Schools Council, and Scarborough Youth Task Force, just to name a few organizations. Neethan Shan has a distinguished human rights advocacy record, receiving many awards including the Race Relations Award from the Urban Alliance for Race Relations and the Vital People Award from the Toronto Community Foundation. As a Toronto City Councillor, Neethan was Toronto's Youth Equity Champion and Newcomer Advocate.

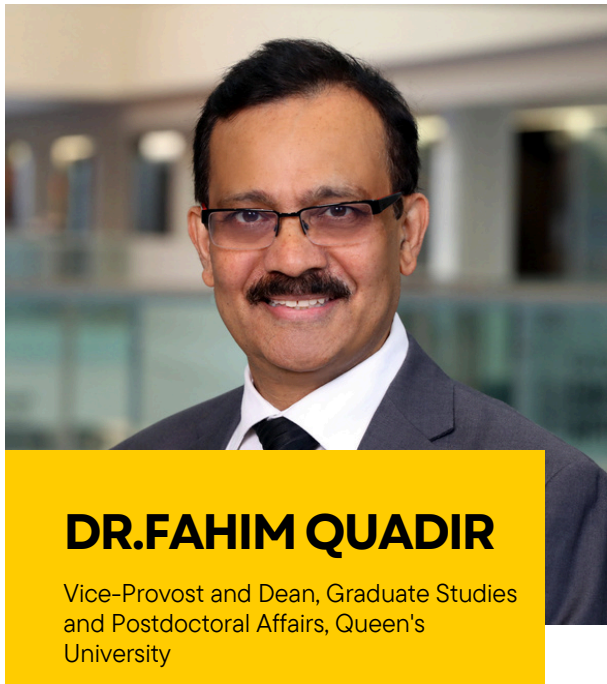


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# Chair



Dr. Qadir is the Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Education at Queen's University, where he champions innovation to advance graduate studies, enhance student experience, and promote research opportunities. He is committed to accountable service, inclusive programming, and fostering a culture of community, critical thinking, and global engagement.

Previously at York University, he served as Interim Dean and AVP Graduate, and was a professor and founding director of development studies programs. He has also held academic roles at Queen's, St. Lawrence University, Dalhousie, and the University of Chittagong.

An expert in International Development and Political

Economy, Dr. Qadir has edited five books, published widely, and received numerous awards, including SSHRC grants and a Fulbright Scholarship. He is a celebrated teacher and mentor, recognized with York's University-Wide Teaching Award in 2007.

### **Deconstructing the Myths of Good Governance: The West's Civilizing Mission and the Imperative of Linking Democracy with Social Development :**

For nearly three decades, the concept of good governance has dominated scholarly discourse, policy-making, and activism, shaping global development agendas and institutional reforms. The prevailing assumption is that good governance serves as both a prerequisite for economic growth and a foundation for fostering a just, sustainable, and inclusive society. This keynote address will explore the historical trajectory of the good governance paradigm, particularly its emergence as a donor-driven conditionality and its stated role in fostering democratic institutions. By delving into the democracy-development nexus, the talk aims to raise intriguing questions about the inherent limitations and contested promises of good governance. It intends to challenge conventional wisdom, offering a nuanced perspective on how governance structures interact with broader socio-political realities. Moreover, this discussion expects to shed light on the conference theme by illuminating the complex and often paradoxical relationships between governance, inclusion, diversity, and sustainability.



## **Keynote speaker**



## AKM KHAIRUL ISLAM

Faculty member, Pilon School of Business  
at Sheridan College.

AKM Khairul Islam is a faculty member in the Pilon School of Business at Sheridan College. Previously, he was also a faculty member in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. His areas of specialization include International Business, International Political Economy, and International Development. He has published journal articles addressing topics such as China's energy security challenges and strategies, good governance, East Asian economic development, and challenges and opportunities to democratic consolidation in the Philippines and Bangladesh.

### **The Bad Governance and Cronies in the Bangladesh State: The Political Economy of Neo-Patrimonial Plunder**

After gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh confronted two major challenges: firstly, consolidating the newly established democratic political system, and secondly, promoting economic development, which was necessary for rebuilding the devastated country after the independence war, reducing extensive poverty, and ensuring social development. However, despite some economic and social development successes in the last five decades, the country has struggled to establish good governance. Good governance is necessary to make the state institutions accountable, transparent, and responsive to citizen demands. Instead, the political processes created opportunities for self-interests or cronies to seize control of state power. Due to their vested interests, undemocratic behavior, and rapacious plunder of the national economy, the country is now experiencing serious economic, social, and political challenges and uncertainties.

The purpose of the study is to show how the weak and patrimonial nature of the state and the rise of cronies created considerable obstacles to developing a legal and rational political system and a free market economy, both of which are prerequisites for democratic consolidation and sustainable economic development.

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# Speaker



## DR. MAHATAB UDDIN

Adjunct Faculty-CDE, School of  
Environmental Design and Rural  
Development, University Of Guelph

Mahatab Uddin is an expert in climate change law, intellectual property law, technology law, and sustainable development. He is an Adjunct Professor and Postdoctoral Researcher at the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph, Canada, where he explores legal frameworks for AI-driven climate-smart agricultural practices. He holds a Ph.D. in Public International Law on Climate Change and Sustainable Development from Aarhus University, Denmark; an M.Sc. in Sustainable Development from Uppsala University, Sweden; and an LL.M. in Intellectual Property Law from Stockholm University, Sweden.

He is the author of *Climate Change Law, Technology Transfer, and Sustainable Development* (Routledge, UK, 2021) and the sole editor of *International Law, Climate Change, and Bangladesh* (Springer, Switzerland, 2024). He is an Advocate of the Bangladesh Supreme Court and the founding Executive Director of the Centre for Climate, Law, Sustainability, and Peace (CLASP) ([www.theclasp.org](http://www.theclasp.org)). His voluntary community contributions include serving as the General Secretary of the Board of the Bengali Information and Employment Services (BIES) in Toronto.

### Protecting Farm Data under Intellectual Property Law

This article explores the legal challenges of protecting agricultural farm data under intellectual property (IP) law, focusing on issues of data ownership and privacy in the context of climate-smart agriculture. As digital technologies, including AI and big data, play a crucial role in modern farming, the data collected—ranging from personal farmer information to farm-specific details—raises significant privacy concerns. Farmers worry about the misuse or unauthorized sharing of their data, especially with regulatory bodies or third parties. This paper examines the applicability of patent, copyright, and trade secret laws as potential means of protecting farm data. Given the intangible nature of data, the paper argues that current IP frameworks need adaptation to address the unique challenges posed by agricultural data ownership. By analyzing existing legal frameworks, this paper aims to propose solutions for better-safeguarding farmers' rights and interests in the evolving digital agricultural landscape.



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# Speaker



**DR. REDDI SEKHARA YALAMALA**

Former Mitacs Postdoctoral Fellow  
Dalhousie University

Reddi completed his doctoral program in Anthropology and conducted longitudinal research into Indigenous knowledge systems that interface with the matrix of Biomedicine and livelihoods. His research skills and expertise rely on quantitative and qualitative methodologies for measuring the impacts of community initiatives and large-scale Climate and global health projects among Indigenous communities across Canada and India. In addition, he authored several articles in International peer-reviewed journals and published a co-edited book with the Romanian Anthropology Special Volumes. In the past, he completed a Mitacs Globalink internship on Global Public Health Governance in India, and a Postdoctoral research on the growth of renewable energy and collaborative governance of large-scale partnerships among Indigenous Communities in Canada.

He has also worked on a range of international research projects that intersect with Global health initiatives on HIV/AIDS and Science, Technology Studies (STS) and Sustainable Development Goals. Recently, he has had two papers published with Canadian Science Publishing Journals and co-authored papers in Environmental Reviews and Conservation Biology. Moreover, he has made significant contributions to local communities by establishing community gardens, food security, while implementing climate action initiatives, and launching environmental campaigns across Nova Scotia and the Atlantic Maritime Provinces.

#### **Leveraging Participatory and Collaborative Governance in Renewable Energy Partnerships among Indigenous Communities, Canada**

This article discusses new pathways in attaining energy security and reconciliation through renewable energy partnerships with Indigenous communities. Indigenous power projects offer socio-economic opportunities and benefits to remote communities that could help them achieve sustainable energy and self-sufficiency. Many Indigenous communities in Canada are undergoing a transition from fossil fuels to a low-carbon economy. In addition, project stakeholders and right-holders using new-generation technologies have the potential to foster collaborative partnerships that could expand the North American grid. This empirical research relies on a three-year study exploring various issues of energy security and the advancement of reconciliation with Indigenous communities. We used semi-structured interviews and recruited Sixteen Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts. Findings demonstrate that revenue-sharing and benefits and the acceptance of energy projects are often interlinked with engagement, equity control, and ownership, as well as the development of positive relationships between industry and Indigenous partners. Furthermore, engagement, participation and relationship-building are common factors for energy businesses and partnerships that strengthen social outcomes and self-sufficiency. Hence, the energy transition will occur through engagement and inclusive participation in Indigenous communities when stakeholders honor treaty rights and ownership in energy projects across Canada.



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**Speaker**

# Day-2 14<sup>th</sup> May





## **DR. ANDREW LAURSEN**

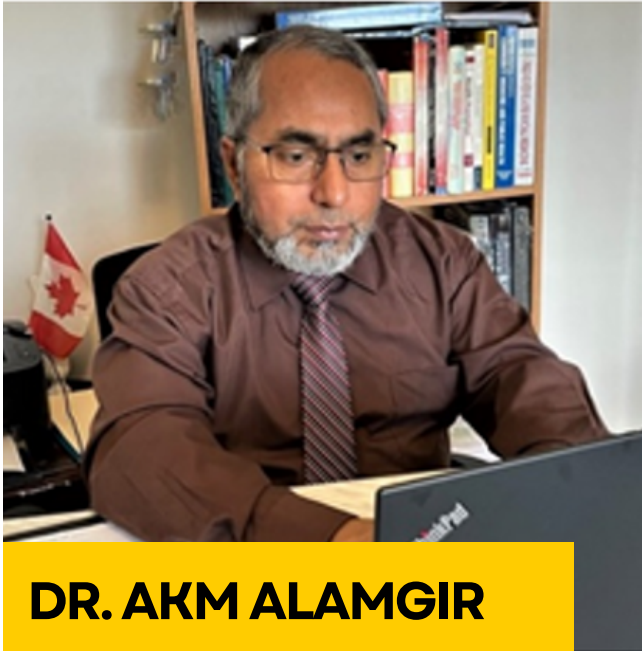
Graduate Program Director,  
Environmental Applied Science and  
Management, Toronto Metropolitan  
University

Andrew Laursen is a professor in Chemistry and Biology, and the Interim Graduate Program Director of the Environmental Applied Science and Management Programs at TMU. Since joining TMU in 2003, he has had the pleasure and privilege to supervise or co-supervise 39 Master's students and 3 PhD students. Andy is an ecosystem ecologist, and much of his work has focused on trying to restore function of human impacted aquatic systems. He has co-developed novel technology for aeration of aquatic systems to improve oxygen conditions and to enable healthier ecological processes, to improve habitat for aquatic organisms, to restore more natural biogeochemistry, and to suppress emissions of greenhouse gases from eutrophic systems.

Dr. Laursen's contributions to teaching and training have been recognized with Dean's Teaching Award (2015), Provost's Innovative Teaching Award (2015) and the Chancellor's Award of Distinction conferred on an educator recognized within the TMU community as an exemplary model of life-long career commitment to teaching and learning (2020).



# **Opening Speaker**



## DR. AKM ALAMGIR

Director, Organizational Knowledge & Learning, Access Alliance MCHCS.  
Adjunct Professor, School of Social Work,  
Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional  
Studies, York University, Academic Editor,  
PLOSOne Journals.

Akm Alamgir earned a Ph.D. degree in evaluation, a Master's degree in epidemiology, and a Bachelor's in medicine. He is the Director of Knowledge & Learning at Access Alliance (Toronto), an Adjunct Professor at York University (Toronto), and an Academic Editor of the scientific journal PLOS One. He is a mixed-method community-based researcher on social determinants of health. He generates knowledge, creates learning materials, and builds the capacity of the stakeholders to utilize generated evidence to make a change. His funded research projects are on racism, refugees, youth mental health, and gender-based domestic violence. Along with over 50 publications, he wrote a post-secondary textbook on community medicine and public health. He reviews manuscripts submitted to

the Journal of International Migration and Integration, PLOS One, and Health Promotion International. He was an “expert reviewer” of the Canadian government for the New Frontiers in Research Fund Transformation Competition applications. He worked as the Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine at Dhaka National Medical College, Bangladesh; and the Associate Dean of Health Sciences at the State University of Bangladesh



# Welcome Speaker & Discussant



## CLIFF LEDWOS

Acting Executive Director at Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

Cliff has over 30 years of experience in the community health services environment including governance, executive and senior leadership and project management. Additionally, he is versed in policy governance, critical thinking, innovation and change thinking and practice, health system (re)design, facilitation, resource development, and partnership building. Committed to health equity with a focus on systemically vulnerable communities and populations that include immigrants and refugees, Non-insured, youth and LGBTQ+. Currently, Cliff is the Acting Executive Director at Access Alliance, a Board member of the Alliance for Healthier Communities and on the Executive Committee of the Mid West Toronto and West Toronto Ontario Health Teams.



# Chair



## NATASHA BEAUDIN

Social Prescribing Project Lead at Alliance for Healthier Communities.

Natasha Beaudin, Social Prescribing Project Lead, Alliance for Healthier Communities, has worked in the community health sector for over twenty years. She is currently the Social Prescribing Project Lead at the Alliance for Healthier Communities. She previously worked as a health promoter at Centretown Community Health Centre in Ottawa. Her portfolio included food security, smoking cessation, stress reduction, and physical activity and led the social prescribing project at the centre. She also chaired the Health Promotion Network of Eastern Ontario (HPNEO) for five years. Her passions are health equity, the social determinants of health, and health promotion. Outside of work, she loves gardening, cross country skiing and playing with her kids.

### Health Equity Focused Social Prescribing:

Social prescribing is an approach that brings together the social and medical models of health by referring patients to local, non-clinical services that meet their interests, goals and gifts. Social prescribing integrates social support and care across the health system, helping people to reconnect to their communities. Natasha Beaudin, Social Prescribing Lead for the Alliance for Healthier Communities, will introduce the concept of health equity focused social prescribing, discuss how the Alliance is championing the social prescribing movement in Ontario, and share some initial results from the work.



**keynote speaker**



## **DR. SANDRA JUUTILAINEN**

Assistant Professor, School of Nutrition,  
Toronto Metropolitan University.

Dr. Juutilainen is Haudenosaunee (Oneida Nation of the Thames, Turtle Clan), and Finnish Canadian. She is an assistant professor, Indigenous health and nutrition, in the School of Nutrition at Toronto Metropolitan University. Dr. Juutilainen also holds an adjunct assistant professor appointment in the School of Public Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo. Prior to embarking on graduate work, she practiced as a registered dietitian (RD) in First Nations communities throughout Ontario and Yukon Territory. She was a co-chair of the Aboriginal Nutrition Network, a working group of Dietitians of Canada, and sat on many Health Canada working groups throughout her career as an RD. In addition, she had

the opportunity to focus on Indigenous health and wellness work at the provincial and federal levels in Canada. Her graduate work was completed in Finland at the University of Oulu with support from Finnish and Sámi colleagues.



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# **Speaker**



## **DR. BASAK YANAR**

Scientist & Assistant Professor, Division of  
Social and Behavioural Health Science,  
University of Toronto

Dr. Basak Yanar is a scientist at the Institute for Work & Health, and an assistant professor in the division of Social and Behavioural Health Sciences in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. She holds a PhD in organizational behaviour and human resource management from the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. Yanar's research focuses on migration, work, and occupational health and safety (OHS). She studies the working conditions of newcomers to Canada and the role played by employers, the settlement

sector and the OHS prevention system in promoting safe work integration of recent immigrants and refugees. Her current program of research explores workplace health and safety within the context of linguistic and cultural diversity and how employers can foster inclusive safety practices. As a social scientist with disciplinary training in organizational behaviour, Yanar is also interested in the psychosocial work environment and the ways organizations can promote healthier and safer workplaces.

Yanar is a qualitative researcher with a keen interest in collaboration with community organizations, employers and system partners in developing solutions to improve the health and safety of immigrant workers.

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# **Discussant**



## DR. ROSANRA YOON

Assistant Professor, Daphne Cockwell  
School Of Nursing, Faculty Of Community  
Services, Toronto Metropolitan University

Dr. Rosanra (Rosie) Yoon's (she/her) research area focuses on health services evaluation with a particular focus in integrated care for people experiencing structural vulnerabilities, substance use and mental health challenges. Dr. Yoon employs participatory and collaborative evaluation methods for system improvement through her Better Together Research Hub. As a nurse practitioner, her clinical area of expertise is in the areas of substance use, concurrent mental health conditions, trauma and gender-informed care. Bridging between community-based grassroots programs and larger systems – to collaboratively meet the needs of people and communities – is a core value that guides her clinical and research work. Her firm belief is that health is achieved through our communities where we all work, live, play and belong.



# Discussant



## DR. JAY SHAW

Tier 2 Canada Research Chair and  
Assistant Professor, Department of  
Physical Therapy at University of Toronto

Jay Shaw is the Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Responsible Health Innovation and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at University of Toronto. Jay has a cross-appointment to the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation where he supervises research-focused graduate students. He serves as Research Director of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Ethics & Health at the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics, and is adjunct Scientist at Women's College Hospital.

### The role of Access Alliance

Access Alliance plays an important role to help improve public health access and services for immigrants, refugees and residents without status. Beyond health promotion and primary care services, Community Health Centres like Access Alliance play an important community development role delivering critical, accessible services for people made vulnerable by systemic barriers while advocating for needed change. In this presentation Jay Shaw will discuss this role through the lens of social determinants of health and the importance of measuring service impacts and outcomes that ensure patient-centered, equitable, and anti-oppressive service for our clients and communities.



**keynote speaker**



## DOMINIKA KAWECKA

Master of Social Work student at York University

Dominika Kawecka is a Master of Social Work student at York University. They have a keen interest in working towards creative solutions to problems wherever possible, stemming from their background in the arts and experience working directly with families. With a background in Criminology and Social Work, Dominika has extensive experience with both qualitative and quantitative research, particularly regarding the sources and impacts of oppression on queer and disabled communities.

### Research impact report

Dominika will present Access Alliance's Research Impact Report. This report highlights our CBR framework, principles, and practices focusing on resources and toolkits developed; research we have conducted in the last 10 years; research that we catalyzed and used our CBR framework with our academic partners; research-like activities such as evaluation activities (internal and external); and research training that we have led. The goal of the report is to measure the impacts of the department in both research and advocacy and how they serve the missions of the department and Access Alliance. It also aims to determine if the department is meeting the needs and addressing the priorities of the communities it serves, and construct a set of sustainable goals for the department to guide its evolution and future impacts.



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# Speaker



## **DR. MANDANA VAHABI**

Professor, Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing and co-director of the Centre for Global Health and Health Equity, Toronto Metropolitan University.

Dr. Mandana Vahabi is a professor at Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing and co-director of the Centre for Global Health and Health Equity. Her research and scholarship focuses on health equity and social determinants of health, particularly in the areas of cancer screening, food security, mental and sexual health. Drawing on her extensive experience in social epidemiology and community health, she works closely with multidisciplinary teams and community stakeholders to develop research underpinned by the principles of cultural congruence and meaningful engagement. In her work with marginalized and vulnerable population she has also been involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of culturally appropriate health promotion interventions.

### **Compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and refugees living with cancer, and mental health and addiction disorders**

Dr. Vahabi will provide an overview of a community-based research project that delved into the compounded effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and refugees living with cancer, and mental health and addiction disorders. Historically excluded from mainstream studies, these vulnerable populations face unique intersectional social and clinical challenges that make them especially susceptible to the adverse effects of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Vahabi will share the team's findings, which shed light on the urgent need to address the disparities these communities face during times of crisis, asking: What happens to those who are at the intersection of social and clinical disadvantage during a pandemic?



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# **Speaker**



## INDRANI PAUL

Clinical Researcher & MSc Candidate |  
Mental Health, Maternal-Infant Health,  
Epidemiology

Indrani Paul is a clinical researcher and MSc student in Experimental Medicine at McGill University. With a background in public health and epidemiology, she specializes in data analysis, research methodology, and manuscript preparation. Her research focuses on mental health, maternal and infant health, vaccine studies, and epidemiology. She is passionate about leveraging research-driven insights to improve patient outcomes and public health policies

### **Paternal Mental Health in Canada: The Overlooked Crisis in the Perinatal Period**

Paternal mental health during the perinatal period is an often overlooked but crucial public health concern in

Canada, with significant effects on family dynamics and child development. National and international studies have revealed that paternal depression rates range from 5% to 10%. Additionally, CAMH found that paternal postpartum depression affects approximately 10% of men between the first trimester and up to one year postpartum. According to CAMH, men face a 24% to 50% increased risk of depression and a 10% to 17% increased risk of anxiety during this period. Consequently, nearly 22% of fathers in Canada experience high rates of both anxiety and depression at some point in the first year of their child's life. Furthermore, studies have identified several risk factors strongly associated with paternal mental health challenges, including unemployment, lack of social support, unplanned pregnancies, infant sleep problems, and substance abuse. Future research should focus on establishing comprehensive parental mental health support systems to address and mitigate these issues.

Access Alliance plays an important role to help improve public health access and services for immigrants, refugees and residents without status. Beyond health promotion and primary care services, Community Health Centres like



**Speaker**



## YAMINI BHATT

PhD Researcher | Urban Health,  
Cardiovascular Disease Prevention &  
Public Health Nutrition

Yamini Bhatt is currently pursuing her PhD in Urban Health at Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada, with a research focus on cardiovascular health and preventive strategies for cardiovascular diseases. She holds a PhD in Human Nutrition from GBPUAT, India, and has extensive research experience in traditional food practices, maternal and child nutrition, and public health nutrition. Her work integrates a multidisciplinary approach, combining epidemiological methods and community-based research to address health disparities.

### **Mediterranean Lifestyle for South Asian Women: Acceptability & Challenges**

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among South Asians, with women facing increased risk due to higher rates of abdominal obesity, body fat, and onset of gestational diabetes. Mediterranean lifestyle (MedLife) diet is one approach to addressing these factors, which includes a combination of heart-healthy diet, physical activity, and social well-being. However, the acceptability and utility among South Asian immigrant women is unknown which may be due to their underrepresentation in dietary trials and most cardiovascular research. This study will investigate the acceptability, perceived benefits, and barriers to adopting MedLife among South Asian immigrant women in Canada. A mixed-methods, cross-sectional design will be employed to explore perspectives through both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Findings will provide critical insights for developing culturally tailored lifestyle intervention, supporting sustainable public health strategies that promote cardiovascular health equity in multicultural societies. By addressing structural and cultural barriers, this research aims to inform policies that enhance the accessibility and relevance of MedLife for South Asian immigrant communities.



# Speaker



## ANOUSHKA

Nursing Student & Research Assistant |  
Culturally Responsive Care & Immigrant  
Health Equity

Anoushka is a fourth-year nursing student at Toronto Metropolitan University with a deep commitment to culturally competent and equity-driven healthcare. As a research assistant at Bridging Divides, she focuses on improving healthcare accessibility for immigrant communities, particularly in long-term care settings. Her work explores the use of language translation apps to bridge communication gaps and enhance the quality of care for older adults with diverse linguistic needs. Passionate about advancing culturally responsive healthcare, Anoushka plans to pursue a master's in nursing, aiming to drive meaningful change in immigrant health and healthcare equity.

### **Cultural Competence Among Healthcare Workers Providing Intervention Care to South Asian Immigrant Women in Postnatal Period.**

#### **Background:**

Culturally competent postnatal care is essential for addressing the unique needs of South Asian immigrant women in Western healthcare settings. However, research on healthcare providers' (HCP) delivery of culturally competent care and South Asian women's (SAW) experiences with postnatal care is limited. Systemic barriers, including racism, discrimination, and inadequate provider training contribute to disparities in maternal health outcomes. This rapid review synthesizes existing evidence on HCP and immigrant SAW perspectives regarding cultural competence in postnatal care, through an intersectional sex, race, and gender-based equity lens.

#### **Methods:**

Following the Modified Arksey and O'Malley framework, a systematic literature search was conducted to identify studies from Western healthcare settings examining HCP and SAW experiences in postnatal care. Thematic analysis identified key facilitators and barriers, with an intersectional framework applied to explore structural inequities in care access and delivery.

#### **Results:**

Only four studies met the inclusion criteria, highlighting a gap between available culturally competent interventions and implementation. Key barriers included language difficulties, limited provider training, and systemic biases. SAW emphasized the significance of holistic care, often neglected in contemporary postnatal practices.

#### **Conclusion:**

Findings highlight the need for intersectional, equity-based postnatal care, including policy changes, improved provider training, and culturally responsive healthcare models. Further research is needed.



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# Speaker



## ISAAC VERBERK MENSAH

Assistant Lecturer At St. Ambrose College  
Of Education, Dormaa Akwamu, Ghana

Isaac Verberk Mensah is an Assistant Lecturer at St. Ambrose College of Education, Dormaa Akwamu, Ghana. He is currently the Head of the Social Studies Unit of the Social Science Department. Isaac holds a Master of Philosophy (M. Phil) in Geography and Rural Development and a Master of Science (MSc.) in GeoInformation Science from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Ghana respectively. He also holds a Bachelor of Education in Social Science (Geography and Economics) from University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Geography and Rural Development at KNUST, Ghana. His Research interest areas include Climate Change,

Environmental Management, Urban Heat Island and Human Health, Food Security, GIS and Remote Sensing, Educational pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Education.

### **Implications of Urban Heat Island on Health Outcomes Among Urban Residents in Kumasi – Ghana**

This study investigates the perceived impact of urban heat islands (UHI) on the mental and physical health of residents in Kumasi. Using a cross-sectional, mixed-methods design, data will be collected from 600 randomly selected participants. The main focus is on the relationship between UHI exposure and health outcomes, with vulnerability-related factors considered as potential moderators.

Mental health will be assessed using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, while physical health will focus on conditions such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Data analysis will involve SPSS v25, including crosstabs, chi-square tests, and logistic regression. The study aims to inform stakeholders by recommending mitigation and adaptation strategies to reduce UHI-related health risks.



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# Poster presentation



## DIANE DYSON

Researcher & Public Policy advocate, past chair, Holistic Sustainable Development Network (HSDN) International

Immigrant demographics, poverty reduction strategies or affordable housing, pop-up shops and nonprofit advocacy are all in a day for Diane Dyson.

As a community-based social researcher, interested in issues of neighbourhoods and poverty, she was Director, Research & Public Policy at WoodGreen Community Services, a large neighbourhood-based multiservice agency and thought leader in Toronto. She was the community co-chair of the Toronto Network of the SSHRC-funded research project, Building Migrant Resilience in Cities.

Diane has led research on neighbourhood wellbeing, community hubs, the informal economy, employment precarity, immigrants, older adults, and housing. In earlier times, Diane was a research analyst at United Way Toronto, where she co-authored Losing Ground and worked on the Strong Neighbourhood strategy. She also worked at Ryerson University.

Diane's community contributions include work with Social Planning Toronto, the Toronto District School Board, People for Education, HSDNI and the Federation of Metro Tenants Associations. Having grown up in Montreal, Diane speaks a few languages.



# Chair



## DR. MUSTAFA KOC

Professor emeritus, Department Of Sociology and Director, Centre for Studies in Food Security, Toronto Metropolitan University

Mustafa Koc is an emeritus professor of Sociology and the Director of the Centre for Studies in Food Security at Toronto Metropolitan University. He has also been affiliated with the graduate programs in Immigration and Settlement Studies, Environmental Applied Science and Management, and Policy Studies at TMU. His research and teaching interests involve food studies, food security, food policy, and the sociology of migration. Professor Koc was among the founders of the Centre for Studies in Food Security, Food Secure Canada, and the Canadian Association for Food Studies. He has also been involved in various national and global debates on globalization, food security, and peace. Prof. Koc received the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Association for Food Studies (2017).

### Political uses of access to food

In the post-World War II era, the United Nations recognized universal human rights principles, including the right to food. Yet, millions of people have suffered as access to food has been used as a political tool by various governments to punish unfriendly regimes or segments of the society or force people to submit through trade sanctions, embargoes and famines. The responsibility to protect (R2P) has been a UN-endorsed commitment to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit. It, too, has been used selectively, and the suffering of many others has been ignored or legitimized. In this presentation, Mustafa Koc underlines the importance of implementing universal principles to defend human rights, global peace and security.



**keynote speaker**



## **DR. CHETHIKA GUNASIRI**

Institute for Future Initiatives (IFI),  
University of Tokyo, Hongo, Bunkyo-ku,  
Tokyo

Chethika Gunasiri Wadumestrige Dona is a JSPS Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Future Initiatives, University of Tokyo, Japan.

Chethika's primary research interests include nature-based solutions, urban agriculture in urban planning, urban water resources, the water-energy-food (WEF) nexus, and climate-resilient cities.

### **Leveraging Urban Agriculture to Address Food Insecurity Among Urban Poor Communities: A Case Study from Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Urban areas are dynamic spaces with diverse social groups, including the urban poor, one of the most vulnerable populations.

Their well-being is crucial for achieving urban sustainability. In cities, access to food depends on commercial supply chains, creating a significant risk of food insecurity, particularly for low-income groups. Urban agriculture offers a promising solution to address this issue, especially as urban poverty and population growth become more concentrated in developing regions. This study explores the potential of urban agriculture to mitigate food insecurity among urban poor communities, focusing on an underserved settlement in Colombo, Sri Lanka. A survey of 166 residents revealed that 78.3% are interested in farming. A Binomial Regression model indicated that residents' age and education levels significantly influence their willingness to engage in urban agriculture. Despite high interest, the primary challenge identified was the lack of space for farming. These findings highlight the need to target specific demographic groups and address barriers to successfully implement urban agriculture projects. This case study provides valuable insights for leveraging urban agriculture to combat food insecurity, promote inclusivity, and foster sustainable urban communities in developing countries.



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# **Speaker**



## DR. AMANDA WEDGE

Manager, Social Innovation Research  
Centre, Centennial College | President,  
Scarborough Food Network

Dr. Amanda Wedge received her Ph.D. in History from the University of Toronto. She has experience working with individuals experiencing food insecurity through her former role as Scarborough Food Network Coordinator, and through her current role as President of Scarborough Food Network. Amanda is also the Manager of the Social Innovation Research Centre at Centennial College, and leading the project “Technology for Food Justice.”

**Technology for Food Justice: A web-based and mobile application for food bank users and food bank operators.**

Centennial College in collaboration with Scarborough Food Network and various community partner

organizations is working on a 3-year long SSHRC funded research project titled “Technology for Food Justice: A web-based and mobile application for food bank users and food bank operators.” The project seeks to address the diverse needs of food bank users’ while considering the overall demand for timely, organized, and accessible information about food banks and associated supports in Scarborough. The project is also addressing food bank operators’ need for a platform that enables collaboration, communication, and coordination of resources. Our research team is currently working to create a web-based and mobile-friendly application that targets the needs of those who have difficulty navigating, as well as managing information about food banks in Scarborough.



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## **DR. SARA EDGE**

Associate Professor in the Department Of  
Geography and Environmental Studies

Dr. Sara Edge is the Arrell Chair in Food, Policy & Society, and Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, Environment & Geomatics. Sara's research program is dedicated to working with community groups, governmental organizations and other stakeholders to strengthen equity and justice in sustainable, resilient food systems. Her work places particular focus on the lived experiences of racialized peoples, immigrants and newcomers in accessing food in diversifying communities. Sara strives to help amplify marginalized voices and cast attention onto novel examples of community self-determination, food sovereignty and entrepreneurialism in an effort to help identify alternative food access pathways.



**Panel Speaker**

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## **DR. SUTAMA GHOSH**

Associate Professor in the Department Of  
Geography and Environmental Studies

Recently, Dr Ghosh has completed a research project as a PI titled, Exploring Resilience Among International Students from India attending Community Colleges in the GTA (SSHRC#896-2016-1004). Currently, Dr. Ghosh as a PI is working on another SSHRC funded project titled, COVID-19: Challenges and Resilience of International Students and Local Institutions in Canada's Medium-Sized Cities: A Case Study of Greater Sudbury, in Northern Ontario. Since May 1st 2021, Dr Ghosh has begun a 3 year term as an Associate Professor and Member of Graduate Faculty in the Department of Geography and Planning, University of Toronto.



# **Panel Speaker**

# THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

**DATE & TIME:**

9.30 am - 4.30 pm

13 & 14 May, 2025

**LOCATION:**

Toronto Metropolitan  
University, DCC, 7th Floor,  
Collab Space

**CONTACT US:**

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