

Summary of Inclusion Perspectives Webinar Series

by the CARL Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group

June 2024

www.carl-abrc.ca

First Panel Featuring Black Librarians

April 28, 2021

[Recording](#)

Moderator:

- Dominic Silvio, Librarian at Killam Memorial Library, Dalhousie University, and member of the CARL's EDI Working Group

Speakers:

- Yemisi Dina, Chief Law Librarian Osgoode Hall Law School, York University
- Norda Bell, Associate Librarian, York University Libraries
- Mandissa Arlain, Library Technician, Toronto Metropolitan University Library (Formally Ryerson University Library)

Key Themes:

Being a Black Librarian in Canada

Being a librarian is a well-paid profession. It includes job security and access to many benefits. Librarians have access to information, and information is power. The profession strives to ensure more equitable access to information for all, and that is good. What did not work in Canadian librarianship is the acknowledgement of the different realities lived by each person. Black librarians deal with microaggression and are not able to grow professionally. Systemic barriers and anti-black racism need to be acknowledged. Leadership needs to acknowledge and state that anti-black racism takes place in libraries and towards library employees. Black librarians are hyper careful with their languages and how they are perceived in the workplace. There is a need for transparency, even in HR. One way to achieve transparency is to ensure multiple stakeholders are present, and not simply the leaders and employees, when matters of conduct and performance are at play. As a Black librarian, colleagues may see you differently than you see yourself. Universities are cultural spaces that support white supremacy. There is a lack of opportunities for Black librarians which prevents them from upward mobility.

Furthermore, being a Black librarian is to be vulnerable by talking about these subjects. Since the murder of George Floyd and other major events, the impact is much greater as a Black librarian since once you enter a library that Black identity does not leave you. Black identity must be acknowledged and most of all, it must be heard. We must look

with a critical lens in libraries, which has not been done yet. This type of conversation does not happen in Canada. What needs to change is acknowledging the black experience.

This discussion should happen at a higher level and not fall to the BIPOC Librarians. We should continue having these tough conversations.

Required Changes in Systems and Policies to Improve Libraries for Black Librarians

Leadership tends to remain silent on such matters, and this culture trickles down / permeates throughout the organizations. To dismantle policies and a system that has been oppressive for 500 years will take a lot of time. Policies are not race neutral and we must unpack all the issues in librarianship. We must be critical of the EDI committee, especially when BIPOC librarians are made to feel pressured to join such committees. Indigenous and Black librarians are required to be part of these committees to the detriment of them focusing on their own work. In the past, libraries were a white male institution, so there's a lot to dismantle, but most would acknowledge the racist policies.

We must also do an environmental check in the organization, checking the hiring process and the retention rates as well.

Ways to Attract and Maintain Black Librarians

Recruit and actively seek those who are working in the library. "Make visible the invisible." There's still a financial barrier. A scholarship for Black students should be created, and also for them to network. Mentoring is helpful but to a certain point. When a white librarian is mentoring a Black student it could induce assimilation which is a type of racism. It's important to be careful and not be performative since once they join a library they won't know what they will face, and what challenges they will need to overcome. Must look at who makes the policies and who has the power to lead real change. Must question if EDI committees have the power to make changes, and if not, employ the support of leadership to actually make the changes needed for an anti-racist organization.

Achievement Culture in Librarianship

There's a high bar of achievement due to the pressure placed on Black librarians to push themselves and excel.

We must accredit foreign degrees, address that barrier, especially at CARL.

Final Thoughts

Calling out truths that make those in power uncomfortable should not be met by a punitive response. Library policies and practices are not race neutral, and even in our present day, they continue to privilege whiteness at the expense of 'the other'. Countering dominant white narratives in librarianship by first naming and unpacking their impact on both BIPOC and white librarians is critical to dismantling and eliminating these beliefs and behaviors.

Meaningful change will come from the choice to actively see, and also, by those in leadership having a vested interest in making the invisible -- visible, and vice versa. Black librarians, depending on context, are made to feel both, invisible in times of recognition, professional growth and promotion; yet hyper visible at other times, typically in times where consequences are being levied, or *performative responses* to EDI concerns are seen as beneficial. It's going to take a lot of time and deliberate effort to unlearn and undo centuries of oppressive beliefs and practices that served to ultimately promote some and undermine others.

Perhaps starting with the question of who has the real power, who are the real decision makers, and is there BIPOC representation in those groups? Who has most influence over the culture of these libraries, and who controls, and is willing to expend resources to address EDI issues in honest and progressive ways. Yes, members of EDI committees can research and discuss solutions and make recommendations, however, in many cases they remain reliant on library leadership to have those recommendations realized. The text edited by Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight, titled *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory* is a tool we in the profession committed to EDI might want to commit to reviewing as one of many steps forward in furthering our understanding of librarianship from a critical race theory lens.

Recommended Reading:

Leung, S. Y., & López-McKnight, J. R. (Eds.). (2021). *Knowledge justice: Disrupting library and information studies through critical race theory*. The MIT Press.

<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11969.001.0001>

Second Panel Featuring Racialized Library Colleagues

June 29, 2021

[Recording](#)

Moderator:

- Maha Kumaran, Librarian at the Education & Music Library, University of Saskatchewan; Co-Chair, Visible Minority Librarians Network of Canada (ViMLoC)

Speakers:

- Afra Bolefski, Head, Social Sciences Division, Associate Librarian, University of Manitoba
- Allan Cho, Research Commons Librarian, UBC Library
- Lei Jin, Electronic Resources Librarian, Ryerson University
- Cecilia Tellis, Head of Design and Outreach, University of Ottawa

Key Themes:

A Need for Systematic Changes in Libraries

Our current EDI structure in Canadian Librarianship was created without considering marginalized groups, and this needs to change. A system of oppression and inequalities can be redesigned, and we need to recognize ourselves as designers who have the power to disrupt it. White supremacy culture expresses itself interpersonally and structurally in our institutions. It is important that institutions acknowledge that racism exists, and only then will they be able to work towards tackling inequity and the root of racism. There also needs to be transparency in salaries and equity, particularly in regard to racialized librarians. The issue of “racial pay gap” is related to other things such as little transparency, promotion, and tenure.

Diversity sometimes becomes a buzzword rather than leading to transformative change.

Affirmative action is not discussed much in Canada. For example, the racial politics of citations and citation segregation at conferences resulting from established patterns of racialized professional socialization.

Critical examinations need to be done within library structures: internal audit of the structures and policies. For example, hiring policies, especially for internal hires. Does it advance diversity or the opposite?

Ways to Recruit and Retain More Racialized Librarians in Canadian Academic Libraries

We need to reconsider the representation of hiring committees, cut out subjective criteria and challenge biased comments. Institutions should be informed of the benefits of hiring a diverse workforce.

Rooney Rule, which requires that at least one minority must be interviewed for every senior position, needs to be considered in libraries, conferences and grants.

A chief diversity officer in senior administration charged with developing relevant programs and recommendations may help address the heart of the issues rather than having university task forces.

In library schools, more outreach to diverse populations in undergraduate programs is required, and pipelines from undergraduate to MLS programs should be developed.

A toolbox for library staff to increase awareness of how diversity would benefit organizations (making some relevant training mandatory) would be helpful.

Other suggestions include ensuring that visually minority librarians are represented at career fairs and conducting a retention survey of minority librarians to identify what would help them stay in their positions. This can be included in the annual review process.

Institutions should invite speakers from groups like ViMLoC to encourage racialized librarians to join the conversation and develop a support network.

ALA accreditation

Develop a Canadian accreditation system to replace ALA accreditation. Library schools may consider offering online courses for foreign trained librarians or a fast-track degree of one year like Western Ontario offered.

Leadership for Racialized Early Career Librarians

Suggestions include: vocalizing your interest in taking leadership roles; applying when the leadership opportunities come up; including a goal of leadership in your annual performance review document; taking relevant professional training and looking for opportunities when you can exercise leadership skills.

Early-career racialized librarians may not always think of leadership because they usually face many cultural and/or racial barriers, plus the lack of knowledge of the organizational structure and culture. There is a mold for who fits into leadership positions and that mold needs to be broken.

Other recommendations include: job-shadowing, building up personal confidence, building up your own understanding and style of library leadership.

More broadly we need to develop a leadership program for racialized librarians in Canada.

Final Thoughts

For library administration, some recommendations about listening to your racialized librarians include designing processes that ensure equitable representation in decision making, allowing for different approaches of communication, acknowledging that they are giving preferential treatments to white colleagues, recognizing the unintentional bias and avoiding using subjective assessment.

Canadian librarianship is 90% white which fails to reflect the communities we are serving. That is one reason why LIS and LIS publications are facing identity challenges.

Recommended Reading:

Cho, A., A. Bolefski, C. Tellis, L. Jin, and M. Kumaran. "Designing the Diversity of Canadian Libraries: Excerpts from the CARL Inclusion Perspectives Webinar by Racialized Library Colleagues". *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research*, vol. 17, no. 2, Dec. 2022, pp. 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v17i2.6799>

Third Panel Featuring Indigenous Library Colleagues

November 24, 2021

[Recording](#)

Moderator:

- Camille Callison, University Librarian at the University of the Fraser Valley

Speakers:

- Jessie Loyer, Librarian, University in Calgary, and Director of the Prairie Indigenous Relationality Network
- Mikayla Redden, Information Services and Instruction Librarian, University of Toronto
- Sheila Laroque, Indigenous Studies Librarian, University of Saskatchewan
- Kajola Morewood, Indigenous Initiatives and Services Librarian, Okanagan College

Key Themes:

How did you come to choose this career, what surprised you and what lifted you up?

Common Themes: Connection to community, honouring teachers and people who supported, importance of connecting to other Indigenous librarians.

Systemic Changes that Need to be Made in Librarianship

There is a need to decolonize collections and subject headings.

Recognize that Indigenous librarians have interests and knowledge in many areas, not just Indigenous-specific issues.

Indigenous Cultural Competency Training is necessary; could be on-demand or asynchronous and should be customized for libraries, discussing the role of libraries in colonization, followed by opportunities about how the workshop or training has resulted in action.

Recognize that there is disparity and divide between types of libraries, for example academic libraries and tribal libraries. Leaders need to be thoughtful about how institutions can contribute to broader issues and community.

Ways for Indigenous Knowledges and Practices to Factor into Performance Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure Processes

Recognize the service tax on Indigenous people when one person in an institution is expected to do all the work with Indigenous communities, work around Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous cataloguing, Indigenous services and languages; everything becomes their responsibility.

Recognize that the rate of burnout among Indigenous Librarians is high; there is overload on service commitments that impacts the librarian's ability to contribute to all areas needed for promotion.

Recognize that work with Indigenous Communities is impacted by lived experience and that research is impacted by life circumstances, as this needs to be taken into consideration. For Indigenous librarians, who we are and what we do cannot be separated. Research is not always objective, it's subjective for us.

Recognize that different types of scholarly work need to be valued the same as peer reviewed. Storytelling, for example, is just as important a method of scholarly work as other more traditional methods. Peer-reviewed articles should not always be the gold standard.

Recognize that the amount of time dedicated to discussing Indigenous perspective and Indigenous research methodologies varies widely in MLS/MLIS education.

Recognize that Indigenous communities have been studied a lot but very little of the research has benefit to the community. It is difficult to ask people you've built relationships with for their time for something that does not have benefit to them.

Recognize that relationship building is not quantifiable in performance reviews.

Recognize the emotional labour that Indigenous librarians do.

Ways to Ensure that People are Walking the Talk on Reconciliation

Think about the culture of welcoming and include visual things, processes that are welcoming and less punitive. Think about how to create a welcoming place vs a culture of surveillance.

Acknowledge and compensate for emotional labour like sharing circles, counselling and teaching to a hostile environment. Provide formalized debriefing for librarians who are asked to provide teaching and training that can be spiritually and emotionally harmful. For example, working on cultural competency for people who do not want to hear it. Make sure this work is compensated fairly.

Make sure to take the appropriate action like thinking ahead when a new person comes into a new workplace - what as an institution are you doing before they arrive to make it a welcoming place? Who do you connect the new person with? Where is the support for Indigenous employees? What is the culture of our office, the time it takes for socialization and building relationships with colleagues?

Encourage Indigenous staff members to try things outside of Indigenous related work. Allow people to do the work they are interested in and do not assume that Indigenous librarians want to work solely on projects related to reconciliation.

Ways to Encourage Non-Indigenous Librarians to take on Work Related to Indigenous Matters

Find good role models. If an Indigenous colleague needs help, offer to collaborate.

Have conversations and consults with Indigenous librarians.

Do your research and read things like the TRC recommendation from CFLA.

Provide meaningful employment for Indigenous librarians because relationship and community building takes time and is difficult if you are on term or contract.

Fourth Panel Featuring Library Colleagues with Disabilities

June 8, 2022

[Recording](#)

Moderator:

- Katya Pereyaslavka, Student Outreach & Engagement Librarian, Western University and Member, CARL EDI Working Group

Speakers:

- Brooke Hiemstra, Library Accessibility Services Assistant, University of Guelph
- Stephen Spong, Director, John and Dotsa Bitove Law Library and Copyright Officer, Western University
- Irene Tencinger, Liaison Librarian, Wilfrid Laurier University

Key Themes

(Re)framing Disability and Accommodations

Disability is often perceived as a trait that is permanent and limiting. An inclusive design approach sees disability as a mismatch between an individual's needs and the design features of a product, system, service, or environment.

Accommodations generally involve altering an environment or format, or using equipment to support an individual with a disability. Accommodations are necessary as spaces, services, etc. have not been designed from the outset for individuals with varying abilities.

Lack of understanding about accommodations

Many able-bodied people don't understand what accommodations are and what they are intended to do. There is often a misguided belief that it is unfair to provide accommodations, as these provide people with disabilities with an unfair advantage. This shows a lack of awareness of the many barriers faced by people with disabilities, particularly when disabilities are invisible. Requiring certification or proof of disability, year after year, places a burden of proof on the person with the disability and assumes bad faith on the part of the person with a disability.

Framing Accessibility and Inclusion as Compliance Work is Problematic

Accessibility and inclusion work is often referred to as "compliance work", i.e. the need to comply with accessibility legislation. Compliance and accommodation are problematic constructs of our ableist society, where exceptions are sometimes made

for those who do not “fit the mold” and have needs that may differ from those of the “able-bodied” majority.

Legislative Requirements Are Not Enough

Meeting legislative requirements is a *minimum* and does not indicate that an organization is inclusive. Organizations should continue to review their policies and procedures relating to accommodations and supports for people with disabilities on an ongoing basis. It is important that organizations recognize that each person is unique, and their disability may not be predictable or stable. Over time, their needs may change, and employers should be adaptable and flexible to change.

Inclusive Initiatives Often Miss the Mark

Initiatives created to support inclusion may not always achieve intended goals. For instance, organizations often ask applicants to self-identify or submit accommodation requests when applying for a job, with the intent of reducing or eliminating barriers to success. However, the information provided by the applicant may end up being used by members of the hiring committee to screen out applicants. Anecdotally, applicants who request accommodations often do not proceed to the next stage in recruitments.

Choosing Not to Self-Declare

There is tremendous pressure to adapt and fit into ableist society. The “gold standard” for people with disabilities is to perform as able-bodied people. This makes a certain amount of code switching necessary. Often, people with disabilities choose not to disclose their disability or request accommodations when applying for jobs as hiring processes are inherently biased. There is a great deal of stigma associated with disability.

Discrimination in Job Postings

Institutions need to think differently about job postings and the hiring process if they hope to attract and hire diverse candidates. It may be very difficult for a person with a disability to prove that they are the best candidate for the job if they can't fulfill qualifications exactly as they have been posted. It's important not to self-screen, and to believe in yourself. It's better to meet with the interview panel and to articulate how you will be able to fulfill the requirements so that people don't make assumptions about what you are / aren't able to do.

Involve People with Disabilities in the Development of Policies and Procedures

Often, the perspectives of peoples with disabilities are not considered when developing structures, policies and procedures within an organization. Organizations should involve people with disabilities in discussions about how to best serve their needs and should ensure that they play an integral role in designing structures, policies, and practices so that they can meaningfully contribute at all levels. Involving people with disabilities in planning and decision making will help to ensure a sense of

belonging, and that the organization is a place where every individual feels empowered to speak up, make change, and shift the culture.

Accessibility is an Ongoing and Iterative Process

EDI work requires constant engagement and relationship building. Processes must be revisited and must continue to evolve to meet ongoing needs. Accessibility work is never “done”. Flexibility, creativity, and keeping an open mind are key.

Universal Design Benefits Everyone

Universal design principles benefit everyone. The rising tide lifts all boats. Making interview questions available to everyone in advance of the interview helps all candidates. In contrast, new buildings with beautiful but inaccessible staircases prioritize aesthetics and able-bodied wants above the needs of people with disabilities. In the context of COVID, rather than requesting an accommodation to work from home, extending this flexibility to everyone benefits everyone.

On the Topic of Leadership

It is important for people with disabilities to build a supportive professional network. This is especially important when pursuing leadership opportunities as the higher you go, the fewer colleagues you will have with disabilities. The pressure to conform will increase as you move further into leadership roles, though this is changing slowly but surely. As a leader with a disability, it is important to advocate for yourself and for others, and to be more vocal about your disability. Visibility and advocacy are important. This also means being prepared to engage in difficult conversations.

Final Thoughts

Keep an open-minded good-faith approach to accommodations and to building a more inclusive environment. Don't be afraid to make a mistake or to say or do the wrong thing. It's better to make a mistake and be open to reviewing the process and to working with stakeholders, than to do nothing. Actively work to recognize your privilege and your ableist assumptions. Avoid being defensive or reactionary. Be willing to learn and expand your perspectives. Consult with people with disabilities – center their knowledge and involve them in discussions and decision-making. Ideally, invite people with disabilities to lead the conversation, and encourage allies to provide meaningful support and share the burden of the work.

Fifth Panel Featuring Colleagues from the 2SLGBTIAQ+ Community

January 24, 2023

[Recording](#)

Moderator:

- Ebony Novakowski (she/her), Copyright Officer of Red River College Polytech

Speakers:

- Donna Langille (she/they), Community Engagement and Open Education Librarian, University of British Columbia Okanagan
- Billy J. Choi-Gekas (they/them), Circulation Supervisor, John W. Graham Library at Trinity College, University of Toronto
- Michael David Miller (il & he), Associate Librarian, McGill University

Key Themes:

The decision to come out (or not) in the workplace

The decision to come out or not in the workspace is a personal one and dependent on your own capacity. It's really important to look at the work environment and decide whether or not it feels safe for you to share your identity as a member of the 2SLGBTIAQ+ community. It is important not to make assumptions that the spaces you are entering in your workplace and/or institution may not be on the same page in terms of safety, and culture of safety for 2SLGBTIAQ+. In general, libraries are more open than other workplaces in society, but even within these workplaces, it's important to carefully navigate spaces to avoid harm. You should not feel pressured to share your identity at work if you aren't comfortable doing so. Some workplaces are more open than others, and one thing to look for is if there are affinity or dedicated spaces for 2SLGBTIAQ+ at your university. These are really valuable spaces to help develop community, networking, and be safe in a space together. Additionally, finding allies who will like you for who you are, will listen and provide support can be helpful. Finding opportunities within your work to incorporate 2SLGBTIAQ+ identities into it, such as acknowledging that many events are focused on students, and how to create those for staff can help to make space for your identity as well.

Brave and safe spaces

It's important for everyone working at all levels in the library to contribute to making spaces safer for 2SLGBTIAQ+ colleagues. Spaces can never be completely safe, but the work in creating spaces safer is something we should all be working towards. This will also help with retention. Being brave as an ally means understanding that there will be things we try that don't work but that we shouldn't be afraid to fail. We need to give ourselves space to make mistakes, learn through failure, and remember that we're asking colleagues in the 2SLGBTIAQ+ community to be brave and show up every day in spaces that might not be safe for them.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a phrase coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, is a complex concept but connects with this conversation. Most people have many different identities that change and evolve over time. People who identify as 2SLGBTIAQ+ also identify with other groups (e.g. Black, Indigenous, etc.). It's important to acknowledge that individuals can hold privilege as a result of some of these identities (e.g. white, male) but not others (e.g. queer). For example, queerness does not absolve whiteness. Intersectionality is at odds with society which generally operates in binary frameworks (e.g. male / female; black / white) and thinking from an intersectional lens can help to be subversive to the binary frameworks of society. It's also important to consider that identities change and evolve. Engaging with the literature of intersectionality is really important and crucial, as intersectionality is part of the foundations of our environment.

What allies can do

Allies should actively engage in PD opportunities, to continue to learn and unlearn. For example, as the language around queer identities continues to change, evolve, and expand, it's not enough to attend a single training session.

Allies need to use their privilege and power to support positive changes to workplace culture and practices. For example, they can help to make the language of 2SLGBTIAQ+ normative - one of the first steps in making spaces safer. They can also provide support for enacting policies, such as advocating for family benefits that include non-normative family structures. Some 2SLGBTIAQ+ folks may need support and advocacy from their non-2SLGBTIAQ+ colleagues to speak to leadership and take a stand.

What library leaders can do

Library leaders can ensure that support for 2SLGBTIAQ+ initiatives is part of strategic planning, and provide the resources (i.e. the time, money, administrative support, etc.) needed to support these initiatives. They can help to create space for PD opportunities and involvement at all levels of staff (including student employees) and help to communicate the importance of this work. This is work that should be done by everyone - not just a few people in the organization. They should ensure that staff have time to do their work, and that this is part of the “regular” work and not something they need to do off the side of their desks. Leaders must also ensure that they have consulted with the right groups to make sure that they are following protocol and getting consent to do this work. Leaders must continue in their own learning and continue to examine their own privilege and practices. They must actively invite opportunities to partner with other campus partners and provide support and opportunities for 2SLGBTIAQ+ folks to find community as part of their onboarding. 2SLGBTIAQ+ leaders must be brave and speak up.

Other suggestions for making library spaces safer and more inclusive

Some additional suggestions for making library spaces safer and more inclusive include:

- making the use of pronouns (on name tags, in Zoom calls, etc.) a regular practice to avoid misgendering;
- actively reaching out to find folks who are, or are interested in, engaging with these conversations;
- organizing events (e.g. coffee hour socials; a picnic) where colleagues can come together in a safe way. Networking has become even more important during the pandemic as people have felt more isolated than ever before.

Final Thoughts:

It's important to remember that trust and relationship building is necessary for meaningful change to happen. Both trust and relationship building are crucial to creating inclusive spaces and take time and effort to develop. EDI work is heavy and emotional work, particularly for those who identify with a marginalized or under-represented group. It is unsustainable for only a few people to be doing this work and should be distributed among as many people as possible. This is work that all of us should be engaging in. We will all benefit from safer spaces, and there is always a place for everyone to contribute. However, it's important to make sure that work is done in consultation with community members.

Recommended Reading:

Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces: A new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice. In *The art of effective facilitation*. Stylus Publishing.

<https://www.anselm.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Center%20for%20Teaching%20Excellence/From%20Safe%20Spaces%20to%20Brave%20Spaces.pdf>

Sixth Panel Featuring Library Colleagues with Intersectional Identities

August 23, 2023

[Recording](#)

Moderator:

- Paige Maylott (she/her), Accessibility Specialist, McMaster University Libraries

Speakers:

- Ashley Manhas (she/her), Public Services Librarian, Capilano University
- Cleire Lauron (she/her), Metadata and Discovery Librarian, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Rachel Chong (she/her), Indigenous Engagement and Subject Liaison Librarian, and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Carly McLeod (she/they), Interim Graduate Studies Librarian, McMaster University Libraries

Intersectional Identities:

Paige Maylott speaks to intersectional identities as a trans-woman with invisible disability. Ashley Manhas is a Canadian woman with grandparents from India and is a first-generation university graduate. Cleire Lauron identifies as a Filipina-Canadian woman. Rachel Chong's family is Meti and mixed European, and her spouse is Chinese-Canadian. Carly McLeod identifies as neurodivergent. Cleire, Rachel, and Carly worked as paraprofessionals before obtaining their librarian degrees.

Key Themes

Intersectionality

According to Black feminism activist and American critical legal race scholar, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, intersectionality is a lens by which various forms of inequality often operates together and exacerbate each other. Race inequity is often discussed as separate from gender, class, sexuality, or immigrant status. However, some people are subject to more than one form of inequity, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts.

Two spirit people - not a new concept

The term “two-spirit” was selected by gay and lesbian activists in Winnipeg in 1990 at an international conference (Klassen, 2014). Historically, two-spirit people were “revered as leaders, visionaries, and healers.” Genderful ways of being are not a new phenomenon for they have always been, and always will be all around the world.

Bring your whole self, but guard yourself

Job postings are increasingly expressing interest in candidates with intersectional identities. Candidates can speak to how their identity relates to a skill or qualification or supports the work. When one feels safe to do so, one can share one’s story as it relates to one’s identity. However, it is important to check in with oneself. It can be emotionally and mentally draining to draw from personal experiences. The library continues to be a largely homogenous environment where whiteness is seen as neutral, and it can be isolating at times when one is not part of the dominant identity.

Hyper-visible and invisible at the same time

Racialized women in the library field can be both hyper-visible and invisible at the same time. It can be challenging to be called on to be the go-to EDI expert or to be a tokenized member of a committee or group.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Values around equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are often written in EDI statements, but they are not always upheld in libraries. It’s important for libraries to be accountable. Candidates interested in these institutions should be able to find evidence of actions taken to back up the claims in EDI statements. Enhance transparency and be proactive with advocacy on EDI initiatives. Institutions should be honest about what work is being done, and who is doing the work.

Neurodiverse perspectives

There needs to be flexibility and understanding of what diverse learners need to be successful. Neurodivergent people may process information differently. This provides new perspectives on issues that can support innovation or streamline workflows.

Grow talent from within

Several panelists started their careers in the library not as librarians. Libraries should consider inclusive hiring practices at all levels including entry level paraprofessional positions, and support, nurture, and grow the talent among team members. Help them gain valuable work experience and grow their professional networks.

Mentorship

Participating in formal and informal mentorship can be valuable. Joining affinity groups, interest groups, or conferences, are other ways to grow your network. Be mindful of who is taking on the mentorship work. Librarians of colour often take on additional invisible labour, including mentorship. According to Healey-Brooks and Lee (2022), libraries can foster peer mentoring by providing proper credit or compensation for the additional labour.

Resources Mentioned During Webinar:

- Indigenous Mentorship Group: <https://coppul.ca/indigenous/oskapewis-mentorship-group/>
- ViMLoC Mentorship Program: <https://vimloc.wordpress.com/mentorship/>
- EDI Strategies in Recruitment Toolkit: <https://bclaconnect.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/EDI-Strategies-in-Recruitment-Toolkit.pdf>
- Library Green Book <https://librarygreenbook.com/>
- ALA BIPOC Student Resource Center <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum/BIPOC-student-resource-center>
- BCLA Indigenous interest group <https://bclaconnect.ca/fnig/>
- Homosaurus: An international LGBTQ+ linked data vocabulary. <https://homosaurus.org/>
- BDC Classification: https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Library/KPU_BDC_Version1.pdf
- My Body is Distant: A Memoir by Paige Maylott
- “Two spirits, one struggle: The front lines of being First Nations and gay” by Kelsey Klassen
- “Pairing Up: Peer mentorship offers approach to retaining librarians of color” by Taylor Healey-Brooks and Michelle Lee