



# Council on Inclusive Work Environments

## The Language of Inclusion – Winter Roundtable Series Addressing Ableism in Communication and Terminology

March 23, 2022 – Virtual

### Overview

Words have power in the workplace, especially when endeavoring to foster inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA).<sup>1</sup> To ensure that every employee can succeed in their job free from discriminatory language, organizations need to adapt to sometimes rapidly shifting norms and nomenclature. This roundtable series seeks to explore best practices, challenges and opportunities in developing policies and standards that organizations can implement around inclusive language, both externally and internally.

The third and final roundtable of the series will foster discussion on the ways in which ableism can shape language within workplace policies, processes, systems and communications, which, in turn, can have negative consequences for the employment and economic outcomes of Canadians with disabilities. Ableism can be understood as “a belief system, analogous to racism, sexism or ageism, that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others.”<sup>2</sup> This belief system can manifest itself in not only day-to-day interactions, but larger systems and institutions, whether implicit or explicit, unconscious or conscious, and thereby impact whether Persons with Disabilities (PwD) are hired, retained, engaged and ultimately included in the workplace. This roundtable seeks to address how to identify, unpack and change Ableist language that may be embedded within organizational processes, policies, and communication, in order to help ensure employees with disabilities can grow and thrive in their careers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Christina Brodzik, “The Power of Language: Building Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace” Deloitte (29 June 2021). <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/blog/human-capital-blog/2021/inclusive-workplace-language.html>

<sup>2</sup> “Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability,” *Ontario Human Rights Commission* (27 June 2016). <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability>

When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the **Chatham House Rule**, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. Source: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule>



## Meeting Objectives

- **Reflect** on how ableism can implicitly or explicitly shape the language, and in turn, the implementation of, workplace policies, processes and communication.
- **Discuss** approaches to ensuring the language used throughout the career life cycle, including recruitment, onboarding, engagement and promotion, contributes to creating accessible and equitable work environments for employees with disabilities.
- **Explore** strategies by which to communicate with colleagues and senior leaders the role of inclusive language in furthering accessibility and equitable opportunities for employees with disabilities.
- **Determine** best practices for prompting organizational language change so that terminology used in workplace policy and communication contributes to advancing the goal of barrier-free workplaces.

## Wednesday, March 23, 2022

**1:00 p.m. Welcome Remarks**

**Chantal Pye (she/her)**, Senior Coordinator, The Conference Board of Canada

**1:05 p.m. Moderated Panel Discussion**

**Moderator**

**Michele Cameron (she/her)**, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, Federated Co-operatives Limited.

**Panelists**

**Holly Ellingwood (he/him)**, Lead Departmental Strategist, Diversity and Inclusion Secretariate, Public Safety Canada

**TerriLynn Hulett (she/her)**, Accessibility Talent Specialist, Diversity, and Inclusion | People Experience, City of Toronto

**Gabrielle Trepanier (she/her)**, Senior Evaluator, Parks Canada

**2:10 p.m. Questions from the Audience**

**2:25 p.m. Closing Remarks**



## Speaker Biographies

### **Michele Cameron (she/her)**

Diversity & Inclusion Manager  
Federated Co-operatives Limited.

Michele is the Diversity and Inclusion, Wellness and Engagement Manager at Federated Co-operatives Limited. Her team has been the driving force behind FCL's diversity and inclusion journey which includes its strategic design, development, implementation and evolution.

Michele holds a Master of Human Resource Management, a Bachelor of Business, and is a Certified Leadership Empowerment Coach, and Public Speaker. She is a lifelong learner who continually challenges her mind and perspectives believing that she is only as smart as the breadth of which her lens allows. Being a Black woman who was raised in Saskatchewan, she has experienced racism and exclusion, and she strives to ensure that everyone feels valued and as though they belong regardless of their ability, socioeconomic status, race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.

### **Holly Ellingwood (he/him)**

Lead Departmental Strategist, Diversity and Inclusion Secretariate  
Public Safety Canada

Dr. Holly Ellingwood is an innovative leader in areas of strategic planning, leadership and diversity and inclusion. He is a passionate advocate for accessibility rights and does so as a member of the Accessibility Advisory Committee for the City of Ottawa and in areas of intersectionality for the Ottawa Hospital Patient and Family Care Committee and for community wellbeing and inclusion as the founder and organizer for Orléans Pride. He is the Lead Departmental Strategist for the Diversity and Inclusion Secretariat at Public Safety Canada and holds degrees in law, criminology and psychology.



**TerriLynn Hulett (she/her)**

Accessibility Talent Specialist, Diversity and Inclusion | People Experience  
City of Toronto

TerriLynn Hulett is an afro-indigenous multi-racial woman with a visible disability with vision loss who works at the City of Toronto in the People & Equity Division, Diversity & Inclusion unit, as an Accessibility Talent Specialist. With over 20 years of employment services experience working within the cross-disability community as a vocational professional and manager, TerriLynn has also been a strong accessibility EDI advocate throughout her career in other areas including post-secondary education, workplace accommodation, sports and recreation, access to accessible information and technology.

TerriLynn continues to work toward improving the quality of life, security and freedom of PWD through accessibility and equitable employment opportunities away from inadequate social assistance schemes and undervalued paid and unpaid work.

TerriLynn likes movies, music, summer patios and exploring through staycations and travelling abroad.

**Gabrielle Trepanier (she/her)**

Senior Evaluator  
Parks Canada

Gabrielle Trépanier (she/her) is an evaluator and accessibility advocate whose work focuses on the cultural sector, specifically museums and heritage sites. She holds a Ph.D. in informal learning from the University of British Columbia and a master's in museum studies from the University of Toronto. In her previous role at the Canada Science and Technology Museum (Ottawa, ON) Gabrielle co-led the development of accessibility standards for exhibitions and acted as the accessibility advocate during the renewal of the Museum, which re-opened to the public in 2017. Gabrielle is currently a Senior Evaluator at Parks Canada, where she chairs the Agency's Network of Employees with Disabilities.