

0:00 - 5:00

**Merik Gertler:** Good morning, bonjour. My name is Merik Gertler and I have the honor of serving as president of the University of Toronto. I am a white male with gray hair wearing a dark blue suit. At the beginning of our gathering I wish to acknowledge the land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land. I would like to welcome everyone to this second event in the National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities. The National Dialogues and Action Series is a collaborative effort on the part of universities and colleges across Canada. It is a powerful source of positive social change as we have already seen through the launch of the Scarborough Charter on anti-Black racism and Black inclusion. It's so wonderful to see colleagues from so many member organizations taking part in this year's gathering. Our topic today is of the greatest importance. There is strong consensus among Canada's colleges and universities that in order to fulfill our educational mission we must embrace the full diversity of human experiences and perspectives. To that end, post-secondary institutions across Canada as well as the umbrella organizations representing our sector have integrated accessibility into their policies on equity, diversity, and inclusion. Those policies reflect the country's human rights codes and related legislation, which address persons with disabilities alongside women, indigenous people and members of racialized communities as well as other equity deserving groups. Accessibility is therefore one of our core shared values as scholars, teachers and administrators, and as Canadians. It is a priority, not an afterthought and it must be intentional and comprehensive. We've made considerable progress in recent years, here on complaint to the work being done by the Accessibility Institute of Carlton University. The programs in disability studies at Bow Valley College, the program in disability and citizenship rights at L'Université du Québec à Montréal, the first of its kind in the Francophone. The Spatializing Care Lab at St. Francis Xavier University, and our own Center for Global Disability Studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough, to name just a few examples. There are many other accessibility initiatives at your own institutions but we need to redouble our efforts. Universities Canada, of which I am currently the chair instituted a survey of EDI policies and practices in our member institutions in 2019. The results have helped to provide the data we need for benchmarking, capacity building, and information sharing. They show a strong widespread commitment to accessibility across our sector, but they also confirm that much more remains to be done in order to meet that commitment. The survey was conducted again this year and the results will be published in due course. Now, as we emerge from the pandemic, our institutions are rethinking how we use space as we reflect on the experience of working from home and respond to the increased demand for hybrid work arrangements. We are also rethinking how we integrate digital technologies into our teaching and learning. As we ponder these questions we have a tremendous opportunity to consider how to advance accessibility in the classroom and the workplace. We can use this process to accelerate the integration of universal design principles into our planning so that our teaching, learning, and work environments both in person and virtual will be increasingly accessible to all.

I'd like to close by thanking all of you for your contributions in addressing ableism, disability, and accessibility in our institutions. Your expertise, passion and commitment are making a difference for the better. I would also like to thank the organizers of today's gathering and colleagues across the country who are actively engaged in the national dialogues and action process. And now, without further ado, I am pleased to turn over the podium to Professor Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice President of People Strategy, Equity and Culture at U of T.

5:01 - 9:39

**Kelly Hannah-Moffat:** Good morning everyone, bonjour. I am a white woman, with long brown hair and I am wearing a green sweater. And like President Gertler, I am honored to welcome you all to the second national Dialogues and Action event hosted by our institution. And to join you as we focus on addressing ableism, disability, and accessibility in Canadian higher education. I would also like to acknowledge that tomorrow will mark 30 years since the United Nations General Assembly declared December 3rd, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities or IDPD. This International Day of Recognition celebrates now 1 billion individuals worldwide with lived experience of disability. It also acknowledges the work that's being done across the globe to remove barriers to their full participation in all areas of society. The IDPD champions inclusion as a necessary mindset urging governments and institutions as well as citizens to recognize how ableism affects the design of our spaces and systems and informs language and behavior. This year's theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is transformative solutions for inclusive development. The role of innovation in fueling accessibility, and an equitable world. Under this theme, the UN encourages global conversations about how to remove barriers in both public and private sectors for those with lived experiences of disability. It also encourages conversations about what innovations can support full access to employment in a rapidly changing world of work. Holding such conversations is exactly what we're going to do in today's sessions. And I'm very excited that we have panelists from post-secondary institutions across Canada from the public and private sectors, and more than 1000 registrants here today. We are here to embrace diverse perspectives to confront current practices and assumptions and as institutions to co-create solutions with those with lived experiences of disability. And I want to thank everyone who is participating here today. Thank you for recognizing the urgency of what we are here to do. To ensure that all members of our respective communities can participate fully in the activities and aspirations that define our institutions. We will emerge from these dialogues with concrete strategies and ideas to apply in our own contexts. And we will, as the United Nations suggest work towards transformative solutions for inclusion and also design our spaces, systems and language and attitudes in ways that are accessible to all. Inclusion is a necessary mindset. Without it, we are not honoring the very reason post-secondary institutions exist, which is to nurture the success of all those who learn and work here. Nurturing this success involves creating an institutional culture that integrates principles of accessibility and belonging and ensuring this culture engages and supports those with a lived experience of disability. When every member of our community experiences a sense of belonging, they can do their very best work, be their most creative, and make the greatest contributions. Our learning, working, and

research environments can in turn be enriched by a wide range of lived experiences and ideas. And that is when institutions achieve excellence. By joining in these dialogues today, all of us addressing a commitment to meeting that goal. So I also would like to thank our planning committee that is led by Professor Wisdom Tettey, Vice President and Principal of the University of Toronto, Scarborough. And thank you again to everybody else who's gonna engage in these dialogues. And now I would like to turn it over to Professor Tettey.

9:40 - 13:11

**Wisdom Tettey:** Thank you, Kelly. Good morning, bonjour, everyone. So we are going to get started by letting you know who I am beyond my name, and hopefully you can connect my voice to the image of who I am. So I'm a Black male, I've got short hair and I've got glasses on. And I'm going to be helping with setting out some of the housekeeping pieces to our dialogues this morning just so that we are all on the same wavelength in terms of expectations, but also to give you some hints on the technical tips that you need to bear in mind to ensure that you have a smooth and effective engagement with the deliberations today. So let's get to the first slide on technical tips. So make sure that you are not connected to VPN and exit all other programs and browsers. It's helpful to do that. Most technical problems can be resolved by refreshing your page. And for the best viewing experience we recommend Google Chrome. Next slide, please. For language selection because we are offering this conversation in both English and French. So make sure you're on the correct language for your own purpose. You can change your language at any time by the language toggle at the top right of your screen. Close captions are available in English and French so please turn them on by clicking the CC button on the bottom right of your video player. Next screen, please. It's important that we have a respectful collegial conversation throughout the day so it's important that we respect one another. So that means that there's no tolerance in this environment for hate, disrespect, discrimination or the promotion of that kind of behavior. You'll be removed from the conference platform should you participate in this kind of behavior. But I'm confident that all of us here have a commitment to inclusion and respectful and collegial engagement and so wouldn't have to get to the point of having to remove anyone. Next slide, please. So if you need assistance over the course of the deliberations please feel free to contact [events@proofexperiences.com](mailto:events@proofexperiences.com). If you require technical assistance, please feel free to connect with our colleagues who are on standby to support in whatever way is necessary. So I think, next slide, that's our last slide. And so I think I'll just transition now to the session. So our first session is going to be moderated by my colleague Robert Cassandra Hartblay. And the focus here is to provide the broader context of ableism and how it impacts people within our communities who are living with disabilities and how it privileges particular members of our community because of an ableist orientation to most of the things that we do. So hopefully that sets the broader content for the conversations that are to come over the course of the day. And so with that, I'll turn it over to you, Cassandra.