



**DIGNITY
NETWORK
CANADA**

Panel discussions with UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Minister of International Development

Montréal, October 20, 2020 – Equitas, Canada's most recognized and most active human rights education organization, is hosting an exciting series of virtual events, the [EquiTalks](#), on October 21 and October 22, with Victor Madrigal-Borloz, United Nations Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. A diverse panel of activists, human rights defenders and the Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of International Development, that will engage with the Independent Expert on important issues faced by LGBTQ2I communities in Canada and around the world.

EquiTalks – Building Connected Communities

These inspiring talks, organized with the collaboration of [Dignity Network Canada](#), will engage diverse individuals working in different sectors to share their perspectives on important issues faced by LGBTQ2I communities today and how we can all contribute to building more equitable and inclusive communities. Keynote speaker Victor Madrigal-Borloz, as a UN Independent Expert, assesses the implementation of international human rights law, raises awareness, and provides advisory services and capacity-building to help address violence and discrimination against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Panelists, all working to promote and protect the rights of LGBTQ2I communities in different capacities, will engage with Victor Madrigal-Borloz on the impacts and challenges of LGBTQ2I human rights defenders and on Canada's role in supporting LGBTQI refugees and newcomers. The events will include Q&A sessions with the audience and a virtual networking events following the panel presentation.

The EquiTalks are opportunity to raise awareness about human rights violations that marginalized groups face and also to raise funds for the cause of human rights education. As a long-standing supporter of EquiTalks, the TD Ready Commitment, the Bank's global corporate citizenship platform, provides Equitas with funds to support children's participation in activities that build their understanding of diversity and inclusion. Support also helps children to initiate actions that help create more inclusive communities.

Event Details

[The impacts and challenges of LGBTQ2I human rights defenders](#)

October 21, 2020 - 12:00-1:30 pm EST

Panelists:

- The Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of International Development
- Diane Labelle, an expert and researcher on Aboriginal education, LGBTQ2I and Two-Spirit identities
- Solange Musanganya, co-coordinator of the Queer African Youth Network, based in Burkina Faso
- Janik Bastien Charlebois, Professor of Sociology at UQAM specializing in intersex studies

Canada's role in supporting LGBTQI refugees and newcomers

October 22, 2020 - 12:00-1:30 pm EST

Panelists:

- Kimahli Powell, Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad
- Debbie Douglas, Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
- Deon Mejri, co-chair of the Board of Égides, the International Francophone Alliance for Equality and Diversity

Quotes

"There are 2 billion people that live in environments where homosexuality has been criminalized, and whoever is born an LGBT person will be born a criminal, due to factors that are not under her or his control and have to do simply with who they are and who they love. My dream is to see a world free of criminalization of same-sex relations by 2030." – **Victor Madrigal-Borloz**, United Nations Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

"Everyone matters and deserves respect, acceptance and to live in dignity, no matter who they choose to love and where they live. Our government and Canadian civil society remain committed to work to recognize, promote and ensure the human rights of LGBTQ2 people around the world." – **The Honourable Karina Gould**, Minister of International Development

"With COVID-19 highlighting the many inequalities that exist in our world, it is more important than ever to take a stand for equality and human rights. Thanks to the support of the TD Ready Commitment, Equitas is able to convene these important conversations about respect for diversity and inclusion. Our guest, Victor Madrigal-Borloz has a wealth of international experience and insight to share which will help to mobilize Canadians and stimulate further reflection on how we can build stronger and more resilient connections between diverse communities, both across Canada and around the world." – **Odette McCarthy**, Executive Director, Equitas

"We are proud to work with Equitas to help children facing social isolation across Canada, including LGBTQ2I youth, build meaningful connections that drive inclusion and belonging, says Andrea Barrack, Global Head, Sustainability and Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group. Through the TD Ready Commitment, the Bank's global corporate citizenship platform, we recognize our role in acting as a leader for the LGBTQ2I community inside our organization and as an agent for change across our global operating footprint." - **Andrea Barrack**, Global Head, Sustainability and Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group

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About Equitas

Based in Montreal, Equitas is Canada's most recognized and active human rights education organization. Equitas works for the advancement of equality, inclusion and respect for human dignity through transformative human rights education programs. Equitas empowers people to address inequality and discrimination, and to work to build more inclusive and rights-respecting communities. In Canada, Equitas reaches over 120,000 children and youth annually in 56 communities from coast to coast. Overseas, Equitas has trained human rights defenders to reinforce a culture of human rights in over 140 countries and has reached over 4 million people worldwide over the past 50 years. For more information, visit equitas.org.

About Dignity Network Canada

Dignity Network Canada is a coalition of over 40 voluntary, non-profit sector organizations and individuals located in Canada, working locally, nationally and globally to advance human rights around the world related to sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). We do this work by convening, education, public engagement and policy advocacy.

About Global Affairs Canada

We define, shape and advance Canada's interests and values in a complex global environment. We manage diplomatic relations, promote international trade and provide consular support. We lead international development, humanitarian, and peace and security assistance efforts. We also contribute to national security and the development of international law.