



MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rewriting the Rules event will explore ableism in the community

February 28, 2023, Kelowna – Third Space Charity, UBC Okanagan’s Canadian Centre for Inclusion and Citizenship, and B.C.’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (BCOHRC) hope an upcoming event will spark important conversations about ableism in the community, and create opportunities to identify and target systemic barriers that prevent the full inclusion of people with disabilities.

“Rewriting the Rules: Exploring ableism in our community” is scheduled for March 16, 2023, from 4 to 6 pm at University of British Columbia Okanagan.

Ableism is defined as discrimination in favour of able-bodied people. It creates barriers for disabled members of our community. The event will bring people together for a conversation about ableism, and how each of us can address it. A panel of lived experience experts, academic researchers, and community of practice experts will share how they’ve experienced ableism in a variety of contexts and explore structural and systemic changes that have the potential to improve disabled peoples’ lives.

“Whether they have a visible disability like a mobility impairment, or an invisible one like a mental health condition, people with disabilities often face barriers because of physical, administrative, and social structures that don’t take their needs into account,” says Third Space Charity executive director Karen Mason. “Too many of us don’t understand how many people are underserved and discriminated against because they have a disability, and I hope this event can be a starting point in changing that.”

“According to the Canadian Disability Survey, 22 per cent of Canadians ages 15 and over report living with at least one disability, representing one of the largest minority groups in Canada,” points out professor Rachelle Hole, Tier 1 Principal’s Research Chair, Critical Disability Studies, and Co-Director, UBC Okanagan’s Canadian Institute for Inclusion and Citizenship. “Disability is an important topic, but it’s often an unspoken one, which underscores the power and prevalence of ableism in shaping our understandings of disability. To truly understand disability, and the celebration of disability that disabled folks embrace, requires an examination of ableism, and a reimagining of what we think disability is.”

The March 16th event comes in the wake of BCOHRC’s #RewriteTheRules public awareness campaign that ran across the province last fall.

Third Space Charity acknowledges the land we occupy is the unceded, traditional and ancestral territory of the Syilx peoples.



“In the campaign we showed ableism as a set of unwritten rules. They show up in every aspect of our lives, from health care and education to the workplace and the built environment. Everywhere they go, people with disabilities have experiences that reinforce how the world wasn’t designed with their needs in mind,” says B.C.’s Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender. “We must rewrite the unwritten rules of our shared settings and spaces, so people with disabilities are truly included—no special treatment required.”

Third Space Charity was one of a handful of organizations across B.C. that served on a community review committee to inform the campaign design and dissemination based on experience living with disability, supporting people with disabilities, or both.

In addition to the panel discussion and an audience Q&A session, the event will showcase the awareness campaign, and share how BCOHRC is working to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination, and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices, and cultures.

ASL interpretation and live captioning will be provided. Light refreshments will be served. Attendance is in person or online. The event is free, but tickets are required. For more information and to register, visit Trellis.org/rewritingtherules.

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