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Elise Ahenkorah

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
(DE&I) STRATEGIST AND
KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

SPEAKER KIT



ELISE AHENKORAH, CCIP, PROSCI

As one of Canada's leading DE&I strategists, Elise Ahenkorah is an award-winning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) strategist and keynote speaker.



As the Founder and Inclusion Strategist of inclusion FACTOR, Elise uses data-driven strategies to show how an inclusive workplace increases talent retention, employee engagement, team performance and ultimately — the bottom line.

Her award-winning engaging, humorous, and approachable keynote presentations equip leaders and teammates with practical actions to mitigate bias and foster inclusion.

AS SEEN IN

**AVENUE
MAGAZINE**

Globe & Mail

**Calgary
Herald**

CBC

Client Testimonials

"At WM, we were lucky to find Elise. Elise provided an informative and eye-opening DE&I session. This one-hour session focused on allyship in the workplace and ensured we had the building blocks to translate intentions into actions. She made the concepts easy to understand, relevant to our company, and experiences our team members would have. I thoroughly recommend Elise and inclusion FACTOR for any organization that needs a refresh, a boost or a starting point."

Krista Doherty, Waste Management Inc.

"I highly recommend Elise to any organization committed to learning and growing in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practices. Elise provided incredible content and space for development and curiosity in her sessions.

Elise is truly passionate about making a difference, and her work is truly inspiring. We are very thankful for Elise as a partner to Saje."

- Zuleika Sgro, Saje Natural Wellness

If You Have a Brain, You Have Biases: Uncovering Your Biases at Work

Overview

Did you know that if you have a brain – you have biases?

Have you heard these types of statements before?

- “When I look at you, I don’t see colour. / I am an ally, I am colourblind.”
- “I’m surprised Sam is gay because he doesn’t act gay.”
- “Josh’s wife is pregnant, but he won’t be taking parental leave because he is a man.”
- “Christine wasn’t smiling in the meeting. She seems aggressive.”
- “Caleb has a heavy accent; he couldn’t possibly be a leader.”

Most of us will say, “I see people for who they are,” — but do we? Unconscious biases affect and impact daily decision-making in our workplace and leadership behaviours.

First impressions, positive or negative, are made in seven seconds or less. The human brain can process 11 million bits of information every second. But our conscious minds can handle only 40 to 50 bits of information a second.

As a result, our brains sometimes take cognitive shortcuts that can lead to unconscious or implicit bias, with severe consequences for how we perceive and act toward other people, especially if they have lived experiences that differ from ours.

Recognizing, managing, and mitigating unconscious bias promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I). DE&I drives innovation, increases productivity, and stimulates creativity while fostering a productive, innovative, and engaging workplace culture.

Learning Outcomes

- What are biases?
- What are real-life examples of how biases negatively impact hiring, growth opportunities, team performance and workplace culture?
- What techniques can I use to combat my biases in my daily behaviours?
- Identifying resources to learn more

Allyship at Work: Translation Intentions into Action

Overview

Did you know that while most employees see themselves as allies, research shows relatively few are taking basic allyship actions?

In today's competitive labour market, an inclusive workplace is a key differentiator when candidates decide where they want to work. As a result, diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) are no longer a nice to have but a must-have for talent attraction and retention.

In fact, a survey conducted by Glassdoor found that more than three-in-four employees and job seekers (76 percent) report a diverse and inclusive workforce as an important factor when evaluating how long to stay with an organization or reviewing prospective job offers.

Embedding DE&I in the workplace goes beyond stating that your organization is inclusive. It must be woven into daily actions that shape a workplace culture/"how we do business". Allyship is critical to fostering an inclusive workplace culture.

The right policies alone cannot shift workplace culture. Instead, employees must become part of the cause. That's where allyship comes in. Research shows allies don't just influence one person at a time. They inspire others to act as change agents, creating a culture of belonging, inclusive innovation, collaboration, and increased talent engagement and retention.

Join our interactive session, where we will explore how to transform the word "ally" into a verb.

Learning Outcomes

- Defining allyship and key-related terms
- Unpacking our own privileges
- Identifying opportunities and practical actions to turn the word ally into a verb
- Identifying resources to learn more

Intersectionality in the Workplace: Broadening the Lens of Inclusion

Overview

For diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) or LGBTQ2S+ inclusion efforts to be truly impactful, we all need to better understand and apply the concept of intersectionality to our workplaces.

When some people face prejudice, the targeted characteristics overlap. This makes the experiences of discrimination or oppression unique. For example, a woman with autism, a woman of colour or an older transgender person can face prejudice due to their overlapping social identities. Another example is how racialized women experience gender discrimination differently from how a white woman will experience it.

Therefore, teammates and leaders must make room for intersectionality within their DE&I, LGBTQ2S+, or belonging practices. If you ignore intersectionality, you're overlooking the reality of your employees' experiences at work and in communities.

Learning Outcomes

- Understanding what intersectionality is
- Importance of intersectionality to the workplace, employee retention, engagement, LGBTQ2S+, and DE&I and belonging initiatives
- How to embed intersectionality into your workplace culture, systems, DE&I initiatives, and individual daily actions
- Identifying resources to learn more

It Starts from the Top: Inclusive Leadership Propels High-Performing Teams

Overview

To attract and retain talent, leaders must leverage communication, daily actions, and strategy to create a human-centred employee experience.

In the context of rapid change, challenges adapting to hybrid working and a global pivot towards a more sustainable future, the only employee experience that stands a chance is a human-centred one. Be it by introducing flexibility, improving inclusion, or demanding sustainability, to retain and attract talent, leaders need to show they have people's best interests at heart.

Prioritizing an inclusive employee experience requires time and attention. It is not enough to say that DE&I is important if leaders are insensitive when they hear lived experiences that differ from their own.

To "walk the talk," people leaders need to be equipped with how to leverage inclusive leadership behaviours to unleash a team's diversity of thought to propel an organization's objectives.

As organizations navigate new ways of working together, it is essential for leaders to develop inclusive leadership behaviours (accountability, ownership, allyship, curiosity, humility, and courage) to foster an environment where employees feel respected, valued, and heard.

This interactive session prepares people leaders to manage high-performing groups that champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in their organizations.

Learning Outcomes

- What is inclusive leadership mean?
- How does inclusive leadership support business objectives and outcomes?
- Identifying practical ways to exude leadership behaviours that amplify a diversity of thought, innovation, employee engagement and retention.
- Identifying resources to learn more

Subtle Acts of Exclusion: Microaggressions in the Workplace

Overview

Microaggressions are subtle behaviours that reveal our biases. [A new study, Race Relations In Canada in 2019](#), conducted by Environics Institute For Survey Research, has found that one in five Canadians experiences discrimination regularly or from time to time.

Microaggression in the workplace has an 'othering' effect, which can impact retention, employee engagement, psychological safety, productivity, and team performance.

Some examples of microaggressions in the workplace are:

- “Okay, but where are you really from?” – This statement betrays racist assumptions that racialized individuals are perpetual foreigners.
- A woman as a superior is often called 'bossy' vs. her male counterparts.
- Giving personality feedback like “smile more” to women in a performance review.
- Someone saying an offensive comment about a certain racial group.
- Allowing teammates to steal or take credit for others’ ideas.
- Allowing teammates to be cut off in meetings or team interaction.
- Consistently using women as note-takers in meetings vs. their male counterparts.
- Harsher criticism of males leveraging parental leave, like their female teammates.
- Harsher evaluation and less recognition for talent from equity-deserving communities.

A key part of championing DE&I in the workplace is identifying microaggressions.

Understanding they exist is the first step to being able to spot, challenge and mitigate these behaviours. Our training will equip teammates with the confidence to do this.

Learning Outcomes

- What are microaggressions? Examples of microaggressions in the workplace
- Identifying what microaggressions are and how to respond to them
- Practical actions to combat microaggressions
- Identifying resources to learn more

Partial Client List



E P I C U R E™



CALGARY PRIDE



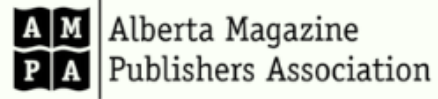
EVANS HUNT



HOLT RENFREW



Partial Client List



fresh routes



Client Testimonials

At WM, we were lucky to find Elise; Elise provided an informative and eye-opening DE&I session.

This one-hour session focused on allyship in the workplace and ensured we had the building blocks to translate intentions into actions. She made the concepts easy to understand, relevant to our company, and experiences our team members would have.

Elise not only facilitated an engaging session but Elise also provided tangible takeaway items that we could continue the conversation even after the session was over.

Elise taught us that "Allyship is a journey, not a destination" thankfully for WM, Elise is very eloquent, engaging and exceptionally well-versed in taking steps to change. As Elise said, "it's about progress - not perfection," and you can't make progress without first steps! Thank you again, Elise!

I thoroughly recommend Elise and Inclusion FACTOR for any organization that needs a refresh, a boost or a starting point.

- Krista Doherty, Sales Manager, Canada Area - Waste Management (WM) Inc.

Pride at Work Canada has welcomed Elise as a speaker and presenter several times.

We are consistently impressed by her ability to explain and unpack complicated concepts, such as intersectionality and systems of power/oppression, in terms that everyone can understand.

She uses humor and storytelling to take her audience on a journey of discovery and she provides practical tools in order for them to apply their new knowledge right away. Her wealth of experience consulting on a range of topics across many of Canada's key industries shines through in all of her work.

- Colin Druhan, Executive Director, Pride at Work Canada

Client Testimonials



Elise was invited by our provincial advisory committee for Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) to speak at our first annual IDEA Conference.

She was exceedingly insightful, organized and easy to work with prior to the event - and surpassed all expectations with her presentations at the event.

Her insights, humour, and the compelling way in which the information was presented resulted in her being the high-point of our event and provided us all with a much deeper understanding of intersectionality and workplace equity, diversity and inclusion.

- Sean McEwen - Director of Operations, Gateway Association of Alberta



Elise Ahenkorah delivered a dynamic, relevant and, an impactful keynote at Alberta's very first DEAM Conference in October 2022. It's no surprise given her experience, passion and body of work. It was incredible however to witness her impact on conference attendees that spend a tremendous amount of time on disability inclusion.

Yet, each person walked away with new thinking points, opportunities for self-reflection and raw realities that hadn't been considered before.

I highly recommend Elise Ahenkorah to not only speak to the very foundation of intersectionality and its relation to power and privilege for organizational development as well as stakeholder engagement.

- Sahana Parameswara, Executive Director, Gateway Association of Alberta



Elise recently spoke at our organization's Diversity in Leadership event. She was a powerful speaker whose messages and tangible action items resonated with staff. We would have her back again in a heartbeat!

- Jennifer Lawlor, Business Strategist, City of Calgary

Client Testimonials



I first met Elise while working with the Women's Inclusion Network at Sobeys. As a cis hetero, white male, I was the image of privilege and not well educated on inclusion.

Elise helped me prepare to participate in a panel discussion on allyship. I was very nervous that I was going to do or say something wrong. Not only was Elise exceptionally well prepared, but she gave me the support and space to find my voice and speak my truth without fear or judgment.

I can't think of anyone better to have in your corner.

- Terry MacIsaac, Director Project Integration, Sobeys Inc.



We engaged Elise to provide anti-racism training for the Calgary International Film Festival's board and staff. The feedback we received following the training was especially strong, with some participants saying that it was one of the best experiences they have had during their time with CIFF.

Elise's relatable and clear approach allowed our diverse group of participants to engage effectively with the course information and concepts, regardless of their varying backgrounds, perspectives and starting points. Elise is gifted at making concepts tangible and relevant.

It was evident that Elise carefully and thoughtfully researched our sector prior to the session. The concepts she covered were grounded in, and brought to life by, specific examples, trends and data from our industry. We really appreciated this aspect of her approach. Our time with Elise was a positive, necessary and very helpful experience on CIFF's inclusion, equity and anti-racism journey.

- Stephen Schroeder, Executive Director, Calgary International Film Festival

Client Testimonials



I've had the pleasure of working with Elise at Sobeys Inc., for the last year. She has a very strategic mindset that has helped drive several DE&I initiatives within the business.

Her strong project management skills, combined with her strategic thinking and deep experience in DE&I makes her a powerhouse partner to work with.

She is always thoughtful in her communication and approach, and provides practical, actionable insights to drive change. I truly value her collaboration and partnership within Sobeys.

- Tracy Parry-Palladino B.A., CTDP, Senior HRBP Consultant, Sobeys Inc.



Elise was part of Hootsuite's Lived Experience Pride Panel on June 2021. Elise brought her unique experience and perspective completely grounded in vulnerability and empathy.

Her own story and the actionable advice she gave our community strongly resonated with attendees.

Beyond that, it was also such a pleasure to work with her in planning the event, and as she made it so easy for me to connect as a moderator. I will always be looking forward to crossing paths with Elise.

- Angel Carrillo, M.Ed, CLC, Learning & Development Sr. Manager, Hootsuite

Client Testimonials



Elise did a phenomenal job of working with Evans Hunt's DEI team to tailor an insightful, illuminating session to our industry.

The session focused on the business case for diversity, equity and inclusion in marketing and advertising. When you're dealing with a large group of people who are at different points in their journey, it can be challenging to reach everyone where they are.

Not only did Elise successfully do that, but she also created a session that resonated with everyone. She provided an open, safe space for discussion and questions. We left feeling equipped with the tools to strengthen our DEI practices and advocate for them in our work.

It was the first time we've worked with Elise, but it certainly won't be the last.

- Narissa Tadros, Senior Writer, Evans Hunt Marketing Agency



We engaged Elise at Alberta Theatre Projects to help us through the first steps of our DE&I strategy.

From our initial contact, Elise was readily available to provide her generous knowledge on how an organization like ours should start with this highly sensitive and important aspect of our business.

Elise tailored training specifically to our 120 theatre workers, ranging from the Board of Directors to frontline employees, and built an environment of trust amongst this group through content that can make the learner feel extremely vulnerable.

Elise is continuing to help us through the next steps of our strategy and we're looking forward to continuing this partnership. Elise is tactful, kind, and extremely knowledgeable in delivering DE&I training and I would highly recommend her as a consultant and trainer.

- Kyle Russell, Executive Director, Alberta Theatre Projects

Client Testimonials



I highly recommend Elise to any team looking to strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices in their workplace or sector.

Elise took the time to listen and understand industry-specific issues around DEI before preparing a workshop for the Canadian magazine media industry.

Her impactful and well-researched presentation provided actionable and concrete steps for magazine teams to become more inclusive, equitable and diverse in staffing, finding sources and in content.

In the post-workshop evaluation, 100% of respondents stated that the presentation met their needs.

- Suzanne Trudel, Executive Director, Alberta Magazine Publishers Association



Elise Konadu Ahenkorah gave a presentation on diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace to the Canadian magazine industry for the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association and the Magazine Association of BC.

Elise seamlessly interwove concepts with advice, and principles with the practical. She was concise and on-target, with content tailored specifically for our sector.

Much of what she recommended could be implemented by BC magazines, despite many of them having limited staff, time and money.

I wholeheartedly recommend Elise.

- Sylvia Skene, Executive Director at Magazine Association of BC

Client Testimonials



Elise Ahenkorah and inclusion FACTOR provided exactly the session that we needed for Avenue but also I believe for the magazine industry as a whole with the DE&I seminar presented to the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association in 2021.

The session focused on action, both things we could put into place right away and also those we could work toward in the long term. Elise is a thoughtful and thought-provoking presenter and importantly, she also listens to the needs of the audience.

She met each of us where we were. My team came away feeling empowered and inspired to continue working on DE&I.

It's the beginning of our journey, but we now feel like we have a roadmap thanks to inclusion FACTOR.

- Käthe Lemon, President, RedPoint Media And Marketing Solutions



Elise was one of Pride at Work Canada's panelists for Virtual ProPride: Queer and Trans Women Leading the Way in June 2020.

She brought expertise that made D&I practitioners rethink how they are addressing the intersections of gender, sexual orientation, and race.

Elise professional expertise shines through, and she would be an amazing presenter for anyone looking at inclusion, diversity, and belonging in the workplace.

- Jade Pichette, Director of Programs at Pride at Work Canada

Client Testimonials



Elise has been an incredible partner to Saje. She delivered a powerful, informative, and impactful awareness session to our Team Members in 2020.

I highly recommend Elise to any organization who is committed to learning and growing in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practices. Elise provided incredible content and space for development and curiosity in her sessions.

This continues to be content myself and my team references for our DE&I practices. Elise has also continued to be a thinking partner and supporter for us as a company for follow up questions along the journey of learning.

Elise is truly passionate about making a difference and her work is truly inspiring. We are very thankful for Elise as a partner to Saje.

- Zuleika Sgro, Chief People Officer, Saje Natural Wellness Inc.



I would absolutely recommend Elise for any organization looking to strengthen their team's understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Elise hosted a company-wide DE&I session for us where she facilitated a safe space for learning, with industry-specific content, that was applicable for team members across all levels of our organization.

Our group left feeling energized, optimistic and excited for how they can each contribute to our company's specific DE&I goals.

The thoughtful and robust list of resources that she shared after the presentation has given us tools to continue learning and strengthen our next steps. We look forward to continuing our work with Elise.

- Jennifer Hogarth, Director of Marketing, Righteous Gelato

Client Testimonials



We were privileged to have Elise as a panelist at Calgary Foundation's annual Vital City event in 2020.

The event focused specifically on belonging, equity and racial justice, and Elise added a powerful voice to the conversation. In sharing her personal and professional experiences as a Black woman, she gave the audience compelling insight into what equity looks like (or doesn't look like) in our communities and our city.

Elise shared examples of historical inequities, strategies for building a culture of equity within an organization and key takeaways including "if you have a brain, you have a bias."

Her remarks resonated with our audience and gave many in attendance food-for-thought on how they might begin to evaluate equity and racial justice knowledge within their own lives or organizations.

- Taylor Barrie, Vice-President, Communications, Calgary Foundation



I highly recommend Elise to any team that wants to learn and strengthen Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices in their workplace.

Elise spent time with our teams at the Leftovers Foundation and at Fresh Routes to come up with practical solutions to build DE&I into our daily work. She helped the team understand how different communities disproportionately struggle with the burden of food insecurity and how we as leaders in the non-profit sector can contribute to the change.

The toolkit and session she provided won't be the last that we do together with Elise. This will be a journey for us and we are grateful for her mentorship and knowledge.

- Lourdes Juan, CEO, Fresh Routes and Leftovers Foundation

Client Testimonials



Elise provided excellent Anti-racism and Inclusive Board Leadership to the Calgary Police Commission, a group of citizen volunteers that provides oversight to the Calgary Police Service.

Elise went above and beyond to tailor her presentation to the specific context of a police oversight board, and gave relevant examples to bring the presentation to life.

The virtual training was detailed, thorough and engaging and triggered focused action within our board.

- Heather Spicer, Executive Director and Legal Counsel, Calgary Police Commission



Elise tailored a presentation on how diversity and inclusion can contribute to research excellence for my colleagues and me in the Energy Bioengineering and Geomicrobiology (EBG) Research Group at the University of Calgary.

Elise impressively delivered her presentation, engaged and connected with a large audience (our group had ~35 members) and fostered an open environment that encouraged deep discussions.

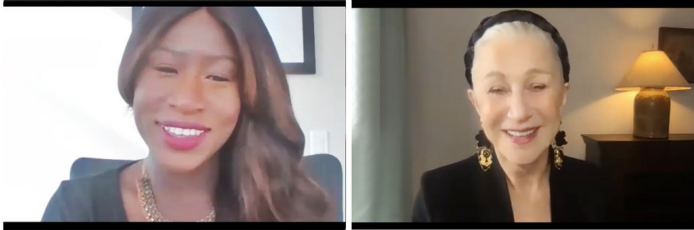
My colleagues were engrossed throughout, and this showed through their willingness to share their personal experiences with EDI issues in and beyond their academic careers.

Afterwards, colleagues shared shining feedback for Elise with me – words of praise included: knowledgeable, inspiring, thought-provoking, polished, professional, and insightful.

Several of my colleagues reached out directly to Elise after her visit to continue their EDI conversations, demonstrating the impact that she had on our group's collective awareness of the importance of EDI in our workplace.

- Carmen Li, Lab Manager, University of Calgary

L'ORÉAL
PARIS
WOMEN of
WORTH



Honouree: Elise Konadu Abenkorah

Dame Helen Mirren



NEED A CUSTOMIZED SESSION?

Need help finding a topic that suits your organization's DE&I needs?

The topics we have listed are the most commonly requested. We have delivered presentations on over 25 DE&I topics across the globe. We love customizing presentations that deliver high-impact for equipping teammates with practical tools to be inclusive in their daily actions.

We customize our presentations to highlight sector-specific best-in-class examples and practical actions that can be leveraged by teammates, individual contributors, people leaders, executives to Board members.



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LET'S CONNECT

Our sessions and tangible takeaways will equip your staff and leaders with the skills to mitigate bias and foster inclusion. When everyone feels respected, valued and heard — employees and the business wins.

Elise