



# INDIA CANADA FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

*...forging close ties among Canadians with an interest in India*

**announces its first lecture event for this year's theme of  
**Diversity and Inclusion****

**on Sunday, 02 May 2021, 11:00 – 13:00 EST (on Zoom)**

To receive Zoom details, please send your full name, city and email address to [icfcircle@gmail.com](mailto:icfcircle@gmail.com) by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021



**H.E. Ajay Bisaria, High Commissioner  
of India to Canada**



**Mr. Robin Higham, Author  
and former Canadian Ambassador**

## **Panel Presentation on Innovative Ways of Looking at Diversity and Inclusion in Canada, India, and Globally**

**India@75: An Aspiration for Inclusive Development  
by H.E. Ajay Bisaria**

**Who Do We Think We Are?  
by Mr. Robin Higham**

The High Commissioner's presentation will focus on the centrality of the democratic process in evaluating India's constitutional and developmental policies which treat inclusion as a core principle. H.E. Bisaria will also touch on global inclusivity in the access to vaccines in today's pandemic.

In Canada, multiculturalism, immigration, integration and assimilation have defined the governance of communities of diversity. Mr. Higham will draw on his long international career as a Canadian diplomat to share his experience and insights about who we might be and expose the range of perspectives and attitudes which are at play in so many other countries struggling with new "diversity challenges".

A full synopsis of the above two lectures and speakers' bios are included below.

### **About the Speakers:**

**Ajay Bisaria** has been the High Commissioner of India to Canada since March 2020. He is a career diplomat who has earlier served as High Commissioner of India to Pakistan and as Ambassador to Poland and Lithuania. He has represented India at the World Bank in Washington DC, and in Embassies in Berlin and Moscow. He has served in various capacities in India in the Ministry of External Affairs, Department of Commerce and the Prime Minister's Office. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Economics, an MBA from IIM Kolkata and a Master's Degree in Public Policy from Princeton University.

**Robin Higham**, has had a 35-year career in Canada's foreign service. Assignments abroad included Ghana, United Kingdom, United States and Thailand, Rome, Brussels and Rabat, Morocco. 1995 he returned to Ottawa as Director General of the Department's International Cultural and Academic Relations Bureau. In 1999, Robin retired from DFAIT (now Global Affairs Canada) to join the University of Ottawa as Senior Fellow, focusing his research interests on international public diplomacy, cultural pluralism and the governance of culturally diverse societies. At the University of Ottawa until 2016, Mr Higham completed a series of initiatives on international public diplomacy and identity, in communities of diversity. Motivated by a perceived need for more innovative approaches to democratic governance in societies characterized by their diversity, he authored two books examining the opportunities and challenges inherent in Canada's model of multiculturalism and newcomer integration: *Who do we think we are?* and *What Would You Say?*

### **Synopsis of Lectures:**

The High Commissioner's presentation will focus on the centrality of the democratic process in the evaluation of India's constitutional and developmental policies which treat inclusion as a core principle. India's developmental ethos is informed by the deeply engrained civilizational and philosophic tenets that celebrate the welfare of all and have been codified in modern India's legal framework in India's Constitution. The right to equality and justice is enshrined in India's Constitution as fundamental rights of the people. India's inclusive approach to development is reflected in its 'development for all' approach. India stands as an example of inclusive economic policies where the state endeavours to provide the fruits of development and growth to all the citizens irrespective of their background. India's development drive is also not confined to its own borders but despite the challenges of meeting its domestic development compulsions, India has stood willing to share its resources and abilities with other countries of the world and much of the celebrated sustainable development goals being championed by the United Nations are informed by India's own experience in inclusive economic development. Inclusivity in the global access to vaccines will also be discussed in the current pandemic.

Robin Higham: When conversation amongst Canadians of all backgrounds turns to comparing encounters with immigrant newcomers, almost everyone has an anecdote or an observation to contribute. And even without an anecdote, everyone has an opinion about Canada's current and future immigration policies and the interminable newcomer-accommodation debates. In Canada, multiculturalism, immigration, integration and assimilation out-rank the traditional big three: sex, religion and politics, as the most reliable conversation subjects for transforming a polite dinner party into an animated bun-throw. And why not? The governance of communities of diversity is about nothing if it is not about sex, religion and politics. Those conversations work best of course when the participants have a common grasp of the basic notions, the jargon and buzz-words and the principals to take into account when thinking about either public policy options or personal behaviour choices. My wish is to share that experience and those insights about who we might be and to expose the range of perspectives and attitudes which are in play in so many other countries struggling with the new "diversity challenges".

### **About India Canada Friendship Circle**

India Canada Friendship Circle (ICFC), a non-profit Canadian organization, operating in Ottawa since 2004 and conducting lectures by prominent speakers, encourages dialogue on India in a non-religious, non-partisan and harmonious environment. The words "friendship" and "circle" in its name, convey an explicit desire to forge and maintain close ties among Canadians with an interest in India.

ICFC's mission is to promote an intercultural relationship between India and Canada in the areas of philosophy, history, literature, the arts and sciences through prominent speakers.

Please visit our website: <http://icfc.ws>