

on advocating for change from the frontline

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**Diana Chan McNally, Harm Reduction Case Manager,
All Saints Church-Community Centre, Diocese of Toronto**

Tuesday, March 26, 2024 - 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Workers on the frontline are the most connected to the everyday realities of systemic poverty and the myriad ways that policy gaps and loopholes manifest as harm. Yet, frontline workers are also largely excluded from conversations at the political level, let alone included — alongside with people with lived experience — in the development of policy that impacts poor people. Working on the frontline should fit naturally with advocacy work, but there are numerous challenges to maintaining a balance between these activities — let alone being able to do both effectively.

Diana will share her insights into her praxis as a frontline worker and an advocate, including the successes and challenges she's faced in advocating for change for homeless and underhoused people.

Diana Chan McNally (Dipl. CW BFA MA MEd) is a community and crisis worker in Toronto's downtown east side. As someone with lived experience of social services and of being unhoused, Diana's work focuses on human rights and equity issues for people who are experiencing homelessness by advocating at the political level, while still maintaining an active frontline praxis. Diana is also an instructor in George Brown College's Community Worker program and has served on the steering committees and boards of Justice for Children and Youth and Health Providers Against Poverty. She is an alumna of Maytree Policy School, a fellow of the McNally Project for Paramedicine Research, a Board Director of the Chinese-Canadian Intercultural Association, and a founding member of the Chinatown Land Trust.



Five Good Ideas

- Be bold:** Don't be afraid of advocacy.
- Be real:** Break down the barriers between frontline praxis and systems change work.
- Be smart:** Have tangible, achievable goals you can win.
- Be strategic:** Build "inside" and "outside" strategies for systems change, and understand where you fit in.
- Have fun:** Make time for joy, even if you can't make much time for rest, and celebrate the wins.

Resources

- [Terra Loire Gillespie's Community Builder Hub](#), which includes Toronto-centric resources that are helpful for organizing and community development efforts.
- [Progress Toronto's training series](#), which includes a primer workshop on City politics as well as deputation training.
- [The Press Officer Handbook](#), a guide to creative effective media in progressive movements.
- How community organizing and community development organizations can "walk the line": examples from my chapter in [*Displacement City: Fighting for Health and Homes in a Pandemic*](#) (2022).
- An example of extremely effective people-driven organizing for the right to housing, via Brazil: [*Occupy to survive: Brazilian squatters fight for housing rights*](#) (2022).



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Edited by ALAN BROADBENT AND RATNA OMIDVAR

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