

## **CSSHE 2021 Conference Committee Response to *Igniting Change* report from the Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization**

26 April 2021

Read the full report at: <http://www.ideas-idees.ca/about/CAC-EDID-report>

The publication of the *Igniting Change* report and the presentation of the report by the Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (AC-EDID) on 9 April 2021 laid the foundation for this response from the CSSHE 2021 Conference Committee (2021-CC). With its focus on matters relating to the conference, this response is separate from and additional to the CSSHE Board of Directors' follow up from its meeting of 23 March 2021 which was convened following the withdrawal from Congress 2021 by the Canadian Black Studies Association.

Issues pertaining to EDID have been important to the 2021-CC since it was established, in line with the general orientation of CSSHE to be more aware of the barriers and challenges preventing EDID and to take actions leading to positive change. However, in light of the publication of *Igniting Change* in April 2021 and in particular Part III of the report (Better Practices for an Inclusive Conference: An Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization Guide) the 2021-CC has decided to prepare this response. It sets out the steps that the 2021-CC has already taken, what more could be done now, and offers recommendations to CSSHE for future considerations.

### **Steps taken by the 2021-CC towards better practices for an inclusive conference**

#### *Committee formation*

- Used an open recruitment process to encourage people to join the 2021-CC who had not served on a conference committee before and/or previously had limited engagement with CSSHE.
- Did not put up barriers to joining the committee: all those who applied were invited to join. Applications were accepted on a rolling basis.
- Acknowledging people's varying availability (caring responsibilities, work/study commitments, level of interest etc), did not over-burden committee members with tasks and endeavoured to match tasks to committee member interests.

#### *Organization of committee's workload*

- All files are made available to everyone through a shared Google Drive folder.
- As far as possible given deadlines/required tasks, committee works flexibly using different formats (e.g. Zoom meetings, asynchronous collaborative Google doc planning, emails).
- Responsibility for different areas is delegated to share workload and provide leadership/learning opportunities.
- All 2021-CC members are invited to review and comment on key documents/emails to be sent out to applicants/delegates.

#### *Planning the conference program*

- Consciously created a range of session formats for the conference, including new formats for CSSHE, to encourage wider participation and welcome diverse forms of knowledge/knowledge

sharing. The new formats included Ask Me Anything, Storytelling, Networking Conversations and Innovative format.

- Wrote the call for proposals using clear and simple language; translated it into French.
- Based on good practice inherited from the 2020 committee, incorporated EDID as core and central to all conference tracks, not as siloed topics.
- In response to feedback from a delegate, dropped the ableist language of 'blind' peer review in favour of anonymous peer review.
- Encouraged all proposal submitters to act as peer reviewers, which led to a wide pool of 57 reviewers. Provided clear guidance to peer reviewers.

#### *Fees and funding*

- Successfully proposed to the CSSHE Board a radically different registration fee structure for the CSSHE conference to remove financial barriers to participation. The Board extended the proposal and adopted a flat fee of \$50 or a subsidized rate of \$0. No documentation is required to be eligible for the zero fee rate.
- Prioritized two equity-deserving groups<sup>1</sup> in awarding CSSHE's allocation of Congress Graduate Merit Awards. These are graduate students who identify as Canadian Indigenous or a Racialized person (people who have been treated differently on the basis of background, colour or ethnicity, including non-Canadian Indigenous and/or international students). Also gave priority to those presenting at their first CSSHE conference.

#### *At the conference*

- Session times in the program have been clearly defined. There are a limited number of sessions each day. The program includes breaks between each session to avoid overwhelming delegates/to acknowledge that life continues around the virtual conference.
- All live sessions are being recorded so that delegates can watch them 'on demand' at a later date.
- Both flagship sessions focus on EDID in different ways: one through an all-Indigenous panel on Enabling Indigenous Scholarship in Canadian Higher Education, and the other (with CIESC) on Confronting Privilege in Internationalization of Higher Education during Covid-19.
  - Both sessions are listed as Open Events, expanding access to all those registered for Congress.
  - In addition, both events are open access i.e. not just for those registered for Congress.
- Delegates are asked for their ideas on how to make the conference more accessible and inclusive within the framework of the current program. Implement suggestions that are feasible given the time and resources available.

#### **What more will the 2021-CC aim to do for this year's conference?**

- Ask Congress to produce guidance to share with delegates/that CSSHE could adopt e.g.
  - Territorial acknowledgements for the start of each session (report p.78)
  - EDID conference statement (report p.87)
  - Inclusive language guide (report p.88)
  - Code of conduct (report p.89)
  - Discrimination, bullying and harassment policies (report p.89)

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<sup>1</sup> This term, coined by Wisdom Tettey at the University of Toronto, is used in *Inspiring Change* and has been adopted for use by the 2021-CC. The five equity-deserving groups are women, Indigenous Peoples, visible/racialized minorities, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ2S+.

- How to show/use preferred name/pronouns (report p.105)
- Use the Virtual Lounge space and breaks towards building an inclusive environment e.g. designated meet times for first-time CSSHE presenters/people identifying as LGBTQ2S+ (etc).
- When asking for feedback after the conference focusing on inclusion: what worked well, what could be improved, where were the gaps?

**What additional steps could CSSHE take in the future to make its conferences more inclusive?**

- Ensure diversity of representation on conference committees, paying particular attention to equity-deserving groups that are under-represented in CSSHE at large. While we believe that the majority of the 2021-CC are from one or more equity-deserving groups, this was not monitored in the sense that we did not ask people to declare whether they identified with these groups.
- Monitor demographics of conference delegates to support more inclusive panels (e.g. no all-male panels). This information was not collected in 2021 and it would be presumptive for the committee to guess whether someone belonged to an equity-deserving group.
- Hold space in the program for sessions that respond to current events affecting higher education. These could be panels, roundtables, or the creation of safe spaces open to all delegates to be in solidarity with colleagues.
- Create new policies that would formalize guidelines to improve EDID at conferences e.g. rules on panel composition, involvement of equity-deserving groups on the conference committee.
- Set aside or fundraise to support the cost of childcare (for in-person conferences), formalize reduced registration fee rates as practice, captioning (for virtual conferences), sign language translation, and other costs that would improve inclusivity.
- Review the current arrangements whereby keynote or flagship speakers are compensated but other delegates are not.
- Advocate to Congress to fund live captioning and simultaneous interpretation of conference sessions.
- Advocate to Congress for a memorandum of understanding between CSSHE (and other associations) and Congress that outlines EDID policies that both agree to uphold.

Ideas on how to make the 2021 conference more accessible and inclusive for delegates within the framework of the current program as well as comments and suggestions for CSSHE to take forward in the future can be emailed to the 2021-CC at [csshe2021@gmail.com](mailto:csshe2021@gmail.com).