Canadian Association of Geographers / Association Canadienne des Géographes
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee
Draft Terms of Reference
Version 4.0: July 8, 2024

This is a living document that will be updated to reflect
changing needs and priorities for the CAG.

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1. Introduction

Attention to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility represents a commitment to oppose harmful processes of differentiation and to take actions for improved policies, processes, practices, and outcomes.

a. Defining EDIA

Equity is about everyone having access to opportunities and resources that will make everyday experiences and events more equal, allowing people to flourish. An organization committed to equity starts by recognizing the diverse and different circumstances that shape our backgrounds, experiences, and encounters. This also means challenging pre-existing structures as needed. It means allocating resources and opportunities to achieve parity in policy, process, and outcomes for historically and currently marginalized and underrepresented people and groups.

Diversity refers to the variety of differences among people, including but not limited to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, experiences, talents, skills, abilities, and opinions. This is also accompanied by an acknowledgement that 'difference' has been constructed/maintained to uphold systems of power, oppression, and exploitation. Since intersectional identities can have an impact on oppression and privilege, it is imperative that diversity is considered in practices related to inclusion and belonging.

Inclusion means the involvement and empowerment of all people, irrespective of background and identity, where their inherent worth and dignity are recognized and valued. Inclusion means taking steps to value and practice respect for one's talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living to promote and sustain a sense of belonging, where all individuals and groups feel valued. Welcoming, respectful, supportive, and positive opportunities for participation are ensured through planning, policy, and practice.

Accessibility means giving people of all abilities equal opportunity to participate fully in everyday life. Commitment to accessibility begins with identifying, removing, and preventing social, communication, and physical barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities. By recognizing how barriers create disability, focus shifts to the environment where we can seek

solutions to remove barriers. Commitment to accessibility recognizes that disability is diversity, not deficit, which contributes to a creative mix of ideas and experiences.[1]

b. Guiding EDIA principles for the CAG

The CAG and its membership must commit to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility as fundamental to its mission. This means enhancing diversity, promoting equity, and fostering a more inclusive culture in its organizational culture and practice, the mobilization of geographic research, the promotion of geographic education at all levels, and the recognition of excellence through an equitable awards process. Foremost, it means grounding EDIA principles in the ways the CAG defines itself, operates, and serves its membership. A more just, equitable, and anti-oppressive CAG will provide greater opportunities for members and aspiring members, especially those from marginalized and racialized backgrounds, to participate in CAG activities, meetings, publications, and governance.

This journey will be hard: "It requires exploring sometimes painful subjects and experiences of exclusion, while also digging into our own thinking and behaviours that may be maintaining oppressive systems. No one is exempt from their participation in the institutional reproduction of oppression and marginalization."[2]

2. Mandate

    a. Recognize areas where inequities have already been identified and system change is needed, and identify opportunities to advance EDIA efforts

    b. Support and strengthen EDIA work already being done by Canadian geographers and CAG working groups (e.g., Decolonizing & Indigenizing Standing Committee and Feminist Intersectionality Solidarity Group)

    c. Build capacity within the CAG to increase participation in EDIA work and help initiatives flourish

    d. Create safer spaces to discuss and engage with EDIA topics as part of CAG processes, such as the Annual National Conference, Annual General Meetings, and Executive Meetings

    e. Help to maintain intentionality and accountability for EDIA initiatives[3]

3. Goals

    a. Promote EDIA resources and training for CAG leadership and members to ensure that members are not contributing to oppressive environments;

    b. Develop a framework that advances EDIA, through identification of priority issues and projects;

    c. Develop a Code of Conduct for all members, leadership, and conference attendees as an anti-discrimination policy;

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[1] Accessibility principles are informed by the Accessible Canada Act (ACA), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code) which provide a foundation for deliberative action capable of creating fully accessible learning and working environments for all. The purpose of the ACA is to make Canada barrier free by 2040 by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction including employment, the built environment, information and communications technologies, and the design and delivery of programs and services. The AODA obliges institutions to provide a barrier-free environment that supports dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for all persons with disabilities. The Code guarantees the right to equal treatment in education, and equal opportunity in employment without discrimination on the ground of disability. This includes the rights of individuals with disabilities to be appropriately accommodated in programming, academic life, experiential learning, employment, and housing.

[2] University of British Columbia (2020), *Activating Inclusion Toolkit*, p. 13.

[3] Williams, D. A. (2013). Strategic diversity leadership: Activating change and transformation in higher education. Fairfax, VA: Stylus.

d. Support the CAG in designating an external ombudsperson and/or anonymized reporting structure for instances of discrimination, bullying, and harassment and for people to share their feedback with leadership;
e. Promote equity of access through recommendations for sliding scales in membership and conference fees;
f. Promote EDIA principles within Annual National Conference Planning Committees;
g. Establish a CAG Award for Inclusion and Diversity to recognize leaders who have worked to create a more diverse and inclusive geographic discipline over several years;
h. Encourage and create incentives for participation from marginalized or racialized backgrounds to join the CAG;
i. Maintain a record of efforts so that future members can recognize and build upon work previously done; and
j. Routinely monitor and report on the CAG's progress towards fulfilling the EDIA mandate, and to make these reports publicly available on the CAG website.

4. Membership Composition

The EDIA Committee will strive for a mix of perspectives and expertise to ensure the committee is diverse in all ways possible. This means intentional distribution of representation from the CAG to include minorities, students, post-doctoral students, faculty, sessional instructors, and professional geographers outside academia. The Committee will be led by Co-Chairs that have been nominated from within the Committee who will serve one-year terms. Committee members will be invited to self-identify their service and will not serve more than three consecutive one-year terms. The Committee will be composed of 8 members, and CAG President (ex officio). Membership will be composed of at least three member groups (i.e., students, post-doctoral students, faculty, sessional instructors, professional geographers), and include at least two student members.

5. Committee Work: Labour, Recognition, and Roles

The EDIA Committee recognizes the work that marginalized members do alongside required actions.[4] Challenging EDIA takes skills, expertise, and emotional labour and should be made visible through a variety of means, through compensation and recognition from the CAG. Recognition and roles for the Committee are as follows:

a. Student participation will be compensated through a one-year CAG membership.
b. Participation by non-salaried members will be compensated through a one-year CAG membership;
c. *Roles and responsibilities of Committee Co-Chairs*: scheduling meetings (designated during the CAG Annual Conference) and circulate meeting agendas;
d. *Roles and responsibilities of Committee Members*: participation in meetings and review of agendas, minutes, and actions. If members (including the Co-Chairs) miss more than two consecutive meetings, they will be asked to consider stepping down to make room for new membership to maintain Committee momentum;
e. *Roles and responsibilities of Committee Secretary*: recording and circulating minutes one week after the conclusion of the meeting. The Secretary will be identified by volunteer or at request of the Co-Chairs and will be a rotating position within the Committee.
f. Committee members will serve two-year terms up to two terms in a row. Composition will be staggered to the greatest extent possible to ensure continuity.

6. Committee Processes

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[4] Henry, F., Dua, E., James, C. E., Kobayashi, A., Li, P., Ramos, H., & Smith, M. S. (2017). The equity myth: Racialization and indigeneity at Canadian universities. UBC Press.

a. The EDIA Committee will meet at least four times annually, and Co-Chairs will establish the schedule during the CAG Annual Conference;
b. Agendas will be developed through open calls to the EDIA Standing Committee and CAG membership, and through issues brought forward at Annual General Meetings and through Study Groups;
c. Meetings are open to full CAG membership, but only EDIA Committee Members will vote on committee items;
d. A quorum of five committee members is needed for decisions to be taken;
e. One member of the CAG Executive Committee will sit on the EDIA Standing Committee;
f. One member of the EDIA Standing Committee will participate in the D&I Committee, either as formal member or *ex officio* member;
g. Meetings will use facilitation approaches that aim to be accessible, address and mitigate risk to any participants, and foster participation from all present. This may be done through the use of creative decision-making methods (e.g., anonymous surveys, dotmocracy voting, roundtables) to reflect differing communication and thinking styles;
h. One meeting per year will include review of the ToR to reflect the work of the EDIA Committee and the changing landscape of the CAG.

7. Accountability & Reporting Structure

A sense of trust with the CAG membership, Executive Committee, and Study Groups will be facilitated through transparency in EDIA Committee outputs and reporting. A sense of trust will also be generated by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, when necessary, to create safer spaces for engagement and dialogue:

a. Annual reports will be submitted to the CAG President, Executive, and AGM;
b. The EDIA Committee will share communication on activities and progress beyond this direct reporting relationship through the listserv, web content, and social medias;
c. Meeting agendas and minutes will be made available by request;
d. Open and constructive dialogue with CAG members will be used to gain support for strategies and recommendations made by the EDIA Committee.

8. EDIA Committee Data

Data storage: all meeting agendas and minutes will be stored with the CAG Executive Director

9. Resources
a. American Association of Geographers (2021) 3-Year Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan
b. Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (2021) Charter on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in the Social Sciences and Humanities
c. University of British Columbia (2020) Activating Inclusion Toolkit