

**IGNITING CHANGE: FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**by the Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization**  
**(AC-EDID)**

**Executive Summary and Recommendations**

Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization

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## Executive Summary

This Final Report and Recommendations bring to a close the work of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences' (Federation) Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (AC-EDID). Following six months of committee deliberations, social sciences and humanities community consultations and interviews, and a research and literature review, this report includes an overview of our work and our recommendations. We believe that this overview and the recommendations should enable the Federation to pursue, embed, and advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization at Congress and other Federation events. More than this, we believe the Federation must be proactive in working with the broader social sciences and humanities community both to achieve a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive Congress and to embark upon the journey toward decolonization in our disciplines, scholarly associations, and universities.

Several lines led to the formation of this committee. The first and most obvious one can be traced to the racial profiling of Black graduate student Shelby McPhee at Congress 2019 held at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the chain of events that ensued.<sup>1</sup> A second, and related, rationale relates to the recognized harm and the need to answer the question: what is to be done to repair the harm? What must the Federation – and, in turn, its constituent member associations, universities, and affiliates – do to combat the scourge of anti-Black racism, to repair and prevent further harm to colleagues in the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) meetings McPhee was attending, and to facilitate solidarity among the many scholarly associations? While the racial profiling had occurred at a Congress hosted by UBC,<sup>2</sup> the Federation agreed to the demand of the BCSA that Western University, the 2020 host of Congress, would modify its conference theme to “*Bridging Divides: Confronting Colonialism and Anti-Black Racism*”<sup>3</sup> in order to focus attention on the historical and contemporary Black and Indigenous experiences in Canada. When Congress 2020 was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, another question arose: how does the Federation, and the social sciences and humanities community, continue the engagement with combatting anti-Black racism and colonialism? The pandemic created considerable uncertainty about the conditions under which

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<sup>1</sup>Shelby McPhee has written and spoken on his experience at Congress, hence using his name. “Scholar who was racially profiled welcomed back at UBC: ‘Believe the victim’: Shelby McPhee was wrongly accused of stealing a laptop from a university conference,” CBC (February 7, 2020), <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1695133763826>; Karin Larsen, “Nova Scotia student says he was racially profiled at UBC-held congress: Shelby McPhee says he was asked to show his congress registration and falsely accused of stealing a laptop,” CBC (June 5, 2019), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/nova-scotia-student-says-he-was-racially-profiled-at-ubc-held-congress-1.4668201>

<sup>2</sup> UBC, “Revised: Statement regarding report of anti-Black racism incident during Congress 2019 (June 11, 2019), <https://equity.ubc.ca/news-and-stories/revised-statement-regarding-report-of-anti-black-racism-incident-during-congress-2019/>

<sup>3</sup> Patrizia Albanese, President, “Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Federation President’s update regarding the Congress 2020 theme” (August 14, 2019), <http://www.ideas-idees.ca/media/media-releases/federation-presidents-update-regarding-congress-2020-theme>; Jeff Tennant, Academic Convenor for Congress 2020, “Welcome to Congress 2020: “Bridging Divides: Confronting Colonialism and Anti-Black Racism.” (March 5, 2020), <https://www.congress2019.ca/congress-blog/welcome-congress-2020-bridging-divides-confronting-colonialism-and-anti-black-racism>

Congress 2021 would occur – in-person, hybrid, or virtual – and the conditions and possibilities for the continuation of the conversations on anti-Black racism and colonialism.

The Federation announced the creation of the Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (AC-EDID) on July 30, 2020.<sup>4</sup> To do the work with appropriate knowledge, and with a sense of urgency, the committee’s constitution intentionally included members from wide-ranging backgrounds. Committee members brought to the table research, teaching, community engagement, administrative, and lived experiences in the areas of accessibility, anti-colonialism, decolonization, anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Expertise was drawn from social sciences and humanities disciplines in universities across Canada, as well as from former and current Board members. The committee worked through the intellectual, emotional, physical, and administrative challenges of building trust and a shared understanding of the complex terrain of the work in a virtual environment, in the midst of a continuing pandemic, in the face of the urgent and practical need to respond to how to continue the critical conversations on anti-Black racism and colonialism specifically, and EDID more broadly, in face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual Congress environments.

The requirements of our work, including the contested language, grammar,<sup>5</sup> and practices associated with EDI, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism, were tackled head-on. The language and practice of EDI, who and what is included – and how<sup>6</sup> – under its umbrella, vary significantly across the social sciences and humanities, scholarly associations, and universities. Some critics see “EDI” as the language of appeasement, rather than justice or fairness. Likewise, the language, processes, and practice of decolonization are often presented in opposition to EDI, such as the formulation “decolonize, not diversity”<sup>7</sup> or the equally generative question “diverse from what?”<sup>8</sup> While the committee’s deliberations were not going to offer any definitive answers to these questions, it was necessary to specify our own understanding, while also encouraging members of the social sciences and humanities community to continue to

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<sup>4</sup> Federation appoints Congress Advisory Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization, <http://www.ideas-idees.ca/media/media-releases/federation-appoints-congress-advisory-committee-equity-diversity-inclusion-and>

<sup>5</sup> See: Janine Barlow, “‘Racial Grammar’ is Focus of Duke Professor’s Talk,” *Hamilton* (October 7, 2011), Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “The Invisible Weight of Whiteness: The Racial Grammar of Everyday Life in Contemporary America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35, 2 (2012): 173-94. Also, Susan R. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Example, Sue Lemos, “Decolonise Not Diversify,” *Social History Society* (October 1, 2018), [https://socialhistory.org.uk/shs\\_exchange/decolonise-not-diversify/](https://socialhistory.org.uk/shs_exchange/decolonise-not-diversify/); Lauren Blackwood, “The Reality of Diversification without Beginning the Process of Decolonisation,” *Diversity Digest* (May 28, 2020), <https://blogs.kcl.ac.uk/diversity/2020/05/28/the-reality-of-diversification-without-beginning-the-process-of-decolonisation/>; Nihan Albayrak, “Diversity helps but decolonisation is the key to equality in higher education,” LSE: Eden Centre for Education Enhancement (April 16, 2018), <https://lsepccertcctl.wordpress.com/2018/04/16/diversity-helps-but-decolonisation-is-the-key-to-equality-in-higher-education/>

<sup>8</sup> Sadiya Ansari, “‘Diverse from what?’: Dionne Brand on art for all people,” *Globe and Mail* (September 26, 2018), <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books/article-diverse-from-what-dionne-brand-on-art-for-all-people/>

pursue their own generative lines of enquiry. We were, after all, undertaking this work to advance the conversations and practices of EDID in the wake of decades of unsatisfactory EDI initiatives to name and combat discrimination and systemic inequities, including in the areas of racism, ableism, and homophobia. The slow progress of change has also generated widespread scepticism about EDI committees like our own, including the belief that such committees are where important social justice issues go to die. The tendency to use “decolonization” as a metaphor<sup>9</sup> or in ways that are either silent on Indigenous peoples or the tendency to conflate terms such as reconciliation and Indigenization<sup>10</sup> informed the committee’s work to clarify the key concepts in its mandate. The working definitions are captured in the Glossary and are elaborated upon throughout the Report.

The EDID recommendations, likewise, are understood by the committee as both necessary and “promising practices” on a journey to create a more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and decolonizing Congress and broader social sciences and humanities community. Above all, the recommendations are a recognition of the harm caused by, and the need to move away from, the injurious performativity of conventional EDI committees and technocratic checklists that result in superficial change. They are, instead, a clarion call to action to the Federation, member scholarly associations and affiliates, and Congress host universities, to meet the challenges of the moment, and the second “D” in EDID, and embark upon the long recognized need for structural and systemic change.

### **Better Practices Towards Transformation**

As the Report and Recommendations detail, the work of the committee can be divided into three interrelated parts, each leading to a major deliverable in our mandate, and each aimed at generating actions toward transformation.

- While the Federation has engaged some EDI themes and issues at Congress and other Federation events, its commitment and focus has waxed and waned over the past decade. The focus was put on short-term activities rather than on a bolder, transformative EDID vision and practice. The Federation’s founding mandate included a commitment to gender equity, and this broadened over time to be inclusive of people, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible/racialized LGBTQ2S+ communities (Appendices 1 and 2). There has never been a sustained commitment to anti-racism as a principle and racial justice as a practice. The commitment to indigenization and reconciliation has also waxed and waned. The Federation has never made a

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<sup>9</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Wang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1, 1 (2012): 1-40, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>

<sup>10</sup> Karl Gardner and Devin Clancy, “From Recognition to Decolonization: An Interview with Glen Coulthard,” *Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory & Action*, 19 (8/2/2017), <https://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/19-from-recognition-to-decolonization>; and Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz, “Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous People*, 14, 3 (2018): 218-27.

commitment to decolonization. Consequently, the committee's deliberations led to giving special weight to the second 'D' in EDID. Part II of our Report explores ***"Decolonization: Principles, Guidelines, and Promising Practices."*** This section also takes up the urgent need for distinctions and interrelations between reconciliation, indigenization, anti-racism, and decolonization knowledges and practices in the social sciences and humanities communities that participate in Congress and other Federation events.

- The committee was faced with the time-sensitive need to engage with and respond to the Congress Task Force on Contingency Planning, including making recommendations to it on how to embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in Congress 2021 being hosted by the University of Alberta from May 27 to June 4. The long-established theme for Congress 2021 was "Northern Relations." Working with the Task Force, our committee was tasked with offering urgent advice on how to incorporate anti-Black racism and colonialism specifically, and EDID more broadly, into Congress 2021 and beyond. Our committee's contributions are already reflected in the structure, programming, and practices of Congress 2021. With the support of a research assistant, Part III of this Report includes the committee's recognition of the need for a ***"Better Practices for an Inclusive Conference: An EDID Guide."***
- To get a better understanding of what was already being done, and what member associations of the Federation believed still needed to be done to advance EDID, the committee consulted the humanities and social sciences community between December 2020 and January 2021. To take up the urgent need to continue the conversation beyond the life of our committee, and to deepen engagement with EDID in disciplines, scholarly associations, universities, and affiliates, Part IV of this report is a ***"Charter on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in the Social Sciences and Humanities"*** to be used as a platform from which the Federation, its member associations, and its partners will together commit to and work towards change.

Finally, the committee's mandate called for us to make recommendations on how to enable and embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization into Congress and other Federation events. The committee's recommendations follow.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Federation needs to develop a Congress land acknowledgement stating that Congress and other Federation events are held at universities and sites located on diverse territories of Indigenous Peoples. This should be used as a basis for deep reflection on the host's and attendees' connection to the treaties and mutual obligations to the land.

2. As soon as a post-COVID-19 opportunity permits an in-person Congress gathering, the Federation should host a Congress that focuses on combatting anti-Black racism and colonialism.
3. Given the racial profiling at Congress 2019 and the cancellation of Congress 2020, the Federation should explore collaborations with the University of British Columbia and Western University on initiatives to advance the conversations on anti-Black racism and colonialism.
4. The Federation and Congress host universities should embed anti-racism and anti-colonial principles, policies, and practices into the strategic event plan for Congress.
5. The Federation should state clearly how it aims to embed its commitment to accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in Congress priorities, practices, and programming, and should identify knowledgeable personnel to respond to matters arising from actions to advance EDID at Congress and other Federation events.
6. The Federation should require any university hosting Congress to have a demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to provide an institutional equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization plan to support its application to host Congress.
7. The Federation and scholarly associations must acknowledge and commit to the fact that decolonizing Congress is an ongoing process and needs to be embedded in the principles, practices, planning, and programming of all events and activities as well as committing to providing respect, accommodations, and space for diverse knowledges.
8. To model its commitment at Congress and other events, the Federation should embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization into its structures, systems, policies, processes, and practices and provide processes, including metrics, to evaluate each Congress's achievement of these outcomes.
9. The Federation should establish a Standing Committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization, with a caucus for each equity-deserving group (women, Indigenous Journalists for Human Rights – Indigenous Peoples, visible/racialized minorities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+) that could advise on Congress and other Federation events.
10. The Federation should hire a designated staff member with equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization expertise to support and evaluate Congress and other Federation events.
11. The Federation and any Congress host university need a clear anti-harassment, anti-discrimination, and anti-bullying policy posted to their website, and all staff, volunteers,

and attendees should be made aware of the policies as well as the consequences for breaching them.

12. The Federation should be proactive and produce online equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization training sessions, modules, and resource supports for all Congress staff, service providers, and attendees at Congress and other Federation events.
13. The Federation should develop an equitable financing model for equity-deserving groups (e.g. sliding scale for registrants or fee waivers, scholarships), and consider variable fees (Elders, students, community, retired or unwaged earners, etc.); should seek support, including from the federal government, to provide graduate scholarships and to enable fee exemptions for community and low-income members attending Congress and other events.
14. The Federation and host universities should identify and engage a list of Elders and other Indigenous leaders who can support associations in their land acknowledgements, opening and closing ceremonies, language and knowledge inclusions, etc. appropriate to the Indigenous lands and territories on which events take place.
15. The Federation should acknowledge and incorporate into its policies, practices, and programming at Congress and other Federation events the goals and objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
16. The Federation should acknowledge and incorporate into its policies, practices, and programming at Congress and other Federation events the goals and objectives of the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent.
17. The Federation should acknowledge and incorporate into its policies, practices, and programming at Congress and other Federation events the goals and objectives of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
18. The Federation should complement what the federal granting agencies and higher education associations are doing to support members who are deaf and people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ2S+, members of visible/racialized minority groups, women, and those who are at the intersections of these communities.
19. The Federation should demonstrate its commitment to Canada's official bilingualism, Indigenous languages, and Deaf culture through bilingual presentations by diverse bilingual/multilingual facilitators or interpreters, and discussants.
20. The Federation should develop an action plan to support scholarly associations financially to implement equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

21. The Federation should consider requiring scholarly associations to commit to equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in order to participate in Congress and other Federation events.
22. The Federation should consider making a statement in support of diversity of panels at Congress, including an opposition to all-male and all-white panels.
23. The Federation and host universities should adopt and disseminate clear intellectual property policies and guidelines for materials shared virtually through the Congress platform.
24. The Federation and host universities should ensure that Congress is accessible via one entry point for any requests for accommodations.
25. The Federation should be as accessible as possible, technologically or otherwise, to members of Deaf and disabled communities to enable them to participate in or attend plenary panels and keynotes dealing with research or work relevant to communities from where the research was drawn.
26. The Federation should adopt clear guidelines on inclusive language, including but not limited to, the use of gender-neutral/gender-aware language, pronouns, and preferred names, and in the way they appear and can be self-defined in online spaces.
27. The Federation should ensure that affordable childcare and safe spaces for breastfeeding, resting/gathering places for Elders, and secure places to smudge are available at Congress and other Federation events.
28. The Federation and host universities should aim to provide captioning and ASL and/or LSQ (Langue des signes du Québec) interpretation for all Congress sessions, face-to-face, hybrid or virtual; advance French–English bilingual or other languages at events, with translations made available and including Indigenous languages of the territories on which Congress or other Federation events are being hosted.
29. The Federation should provide opportunities for sponsorship, internship, and mentoring of graduate and undergraduate students, junior faculty, and community members of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), deaf and disabled persons, and members of LGBTQ2S+ groups.
30. The Federation should include interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledges panels and keynotes that address the professional needs and desires of marginalized women, particularly Indigenous Peoples, Black and People of Colour (BIPOC) at Congress and other Federation events.

31. To ensure it is modelling a commitment to EDID, the Federation should collect and track self-identification disaggregated diversity data on its Board, leadership, staff, membership, advisory committees, and all its invitees to Congress and other Federation events.
32. In collaboration with scholarly associations, the Federation should collect voluntary self-identification disaggregated data of Congress participants and attendees to identify what EDID issues exist and what changes are needed to improve accessibility and other EDID issues.
33. The Federation, in collaboration with the Canadian Association of University Teachers, should regularly produce a report on the diversity of scholars, scholarship, and funding opportunities for BIPOC in the social sciences and humanities in Canada.
34. The Federation and the host university should conduct an EDID assessment after each Congress and develop a strategy to close any gaps between policies and practice.
35. The Federation and Congress host universities should develop an anti-racism and equity framework to guide the conduct of police and campus security at Congress and Federation events.
36. The Federation and Congress host universities should include local, national and international Indigenous scholars at plenaries.
37. The Federation and Congress host universities should take trauma and the effects of Residential/Day Schools into account when making decisions about presentations and plenaries dealing with Residential/Day Schools or other trauma-triggering events/histories. These sessions may need additional resources for support of the listeners, the presenters, or may require more skilled or trained discussants.
38. The Federation and Congress host universities should dedicate a position or responsibilities for the conference planner or planning committee who liaises with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples for the event.
39. The Federation and Congress host universities should include in the program at least one session on Indigenous justice that reviews events of the past year, from frustrations and protests to celebrations and accomplishments.
40. All Federation gatherings, program invitations, and panels should include different worldviews/knowledge systems, including legal pluralisms and languages.

41. The Federation should demonstrate commitment to decolonization by adopting the “***Decolonization: Principles, Guidelines, and Promising Practices***” (see Part II) and urging member associations, universities, and affiliates to do the same.
42. The Federation should demonstrate commitment to equitable, diverse, inclusive, and decolonial conferences by adopting the “***Better Practices for an Inclusive Conference Guide***” (see Part III) and by urging member associations, universities, and affiliates to do the same.
43. The Federation should demonstrate commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization by adopting the “Charter on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization in the Social Sciences and Humanities,” (see Part IV) and by urging member associations, universities, and affiliates to endorse and promote it in their respective institutions.

[Read the full report](#)