

Canadian Association of Geographers' Standing Committee on Decolonizing¹ and Indigenizing² the Professional Association

TERMS OF REFERENCE³

Version 1.0 – Adopted at the CAG AGM on June 2, 2022

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT⁴

Geography, as a profession and discipline, has played and continues to play an active role in shaping the settler colonial enterprise in what is now so-called Canada, subjecting Indigenous Peoples to ongoing colonial and racist violence, and Land dispossession (Hunt 2014; Daigle 2016). Kobayashi and Peake (2000) outline, “From its origins in exploration and scientific classifications, the discipline played a founding role in establishing the systems of imperialist expansion and colonial power through which the western world became a dominant center and its white inhabitants became normative, authoritative, and privileged” (399). Noxolo (2017) puts it “baldy, [that] geography’s history is of a terrible and problematic opening out of the world to colonial and exploitative forces, and the continued whiteness of its post-colonising heartland displays little practical contemporary openness to difference and diversity in its knowledge production processes” (p. 317).

The vast landscape that the members of the Canadian Association of Geographers reside on is land that has been stolen from Indigenous Peoples by white settlers of mainly British and French descent, and this land is now also home to im/migrants, forcibly emplaced peoples, and refugees from the around the world. The autochthonous peoples of this land, who are still here today, are Indigenous Peoples: the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of this land. How the Canadian Association of Geographers continues to enact certain practices and ways of knowing is part of our collective obligation as a Professional Association to examine our responsibilities to this land and the Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded it since time immemorial. These responsibilities include and extend beyond our Association’s Annual National Meeting and Regional Division Meetings to the places where we conduct our human and physical geographical and planning research, teaching, practice, and policy-making. By making this Land Acknowledgement and enshrining this Standing Committee into the governance structure of the Canadian Association of Geographers, we are hereby committing to disrupt and dismantle white settler colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism in our research, teaching, professional practice, policy-making, and everyday lives.

¹ For a definition of ‘decolonizing’, we draw on Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1 (1), 1–40.

² For a definition of ‘Indigenizing’, we draw on Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 14(3), 218-227.

³ The development of this Terms of Reference is inspired (heavily and gratefully!) by the work of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigenization and Accountability Committee in the Department of Geography and Planning at Queen’s University (2020-2021) and the Women and Inclusivity in Sustainable Energy Research (2018-2019) as well as two National Roundtables of the CAG, held in 2021.

⁴ Chelsea Vowel, who is Métis from the Plains Cree speaking community of Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, writes: “If we think of territorial acknowledgments as sites of potential disruption, they can be transformative acts that to some extent undo Indigenous erasure. I believe this is true as long as these acknowledgments discomfit both those speaking and hearing the words. The fact of Indigenous presence should force non-Indigenous peoples to confront their own place on these lands.” – Chelsea Vowel, Métis, *Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements*

PREAMBLE

This Terms of Reference is a “living document” for the Standing Committee on Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Professional Association. It was developed based on the Mission Statement of the Canadian Association of Geographers, to guide the Standing Committee’s organizational structure and decision-making processes; it is subject to revisions as needed (i.e., at minimum, through an annual review of its contents) and outlines the key provisions and principles that will govern the relationships between the Committee Co-Chairs, Secretary, Standing Committee Members, and the CAG Executive Committee.

CAG’S OBJECTIVES

The Canadian Association of Geographers has two core objectives, as noted in its Constitution:

1. The objectives of the Association are to encourage geographical study and research particularly in relation to the Canadian environment. The Association shall provide for the dissemination to the public of the results of research supported by the Association.
2. The Association is an educational Association, the activities of which shall be conducted without purpose of gain for its members. Any profits or other gains to the Association shall be used in promoting its objectives.

THE GLOBAL, NATIONAL, and PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION’S CONTEXT

- Professional geography and cognate educational organizations around the world are examining their own roles in perpetuating structural racism and colonialism.
- In Canada, we have examined our ‘settler problem’ through a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1991-1996), a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2007-2015), a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2016-2019), and we have embraced the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples without qualification (2016) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act received Royal Assent in 2021. But little has changed.
- In our professional Association there is growing awareness of unaddressed problems ‘at home’ and the need for a mechanism (this Standing Committee) to discuss and address these problems.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STANDING COMMITTEE

The objectives of the Standing Committee on Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Professional Association are to cultivate a culturally safe community; create welcoming spaces for un-learning; support the development of decolonized and Indigenized policies, processes, curricula, marketing, recruitment/retention of members, and events; and to routinely monitor, evaluate, and report on our collective progress on these objectives. To this end, the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee will lead and promote engagement with CAG-wide activities aimed at addressing the impacts of anti-Indigenous racism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism in producing and reproducing injustices.

The Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee approaches this work as social and environmental justice issue that must be addressed across the CAG as a whole, and as such, is not work that ought to be limited to the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee alone. By working synergistically with the CAG Executive, the Regional Divisions, and the Study Groups, the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee will be positioned to surface the environmental and social justice issues in the work of the CAG and hold the Professional Association accountable for its commitment to Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Professional Association.

MANDATE OF THIS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Drawing on the TRC's 94 Calls to Action, the MMIWG Inquiry Report's 231 Calls to Justice, and the UNDRIP's 46 Articles, establish annual Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee goals and a strategic framework to achieve the aforementioned objectives.
2. Routinely monitor and report on the CAG's progress towards meeting the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Objectives (noted above), and make these reports publicly available on the CAG's website;
3. Provide platforms for Indigenous scholarship and anti-colonialism and create safe spaces for Indigenous students, scholars, and practitioners in virtual and physical spheres of the CAG;
4. Identify how the CAG can create space for racial affinity groups to come together to do the important self-reflection and reflexivity on how their racial positioning and their understanding of Indigenous-specific racism informs their bias, stereotypes, and ways of being. This type of educational space allows non-Indigenous people to engage in self-reflection, reflexivity and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to Indigenous Peoples and the land, and not burden Indigenous Peoples;
5. Support the work of the CAG Executive, the Regional Divisions, and the Study Groups to ensure that issues of decolonizing and Indigeneity are not ignored and are effectively addressed across the Professional Association (including a Constitutional and By-law review);
6. Inform the CAG membership about training and resources available to the membership on decolonization and Indigenization through the listserv and website;
7. Support seminars and discussion groups on reconciliation, calls to action, decolonization, and anti-Indigenous racism so that people can learn, contribute, listen, and respond effectively; and
8. Support further recognition of the wide, complex and varied impacts of ongoing anti-Indigenous racism in the profession and develop and create learning opportunities about whiteness, bias, stereotyping, power, privilege, and settler colonialism.

STANDING COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee will be led by Co-Chairs: the Co-Chairs will be nominated from within the Committee. Committee members will serve one-year terms. No Committee member shall serve for more than three consecutive one-year terms. Committee members will be invited to self-identify their interest in serving on the Committee; should the need arise, they may be appointed by the CAG Executive from the CAG membership.

The Committee will be comprised of 7 members:

- Two Knowledge-Keepers
- Four Regular Members
- Two Students/Postdocs
- CAG President (ex officio)

The Knowledge-Keepers are to be invited by the Co-Chairs as honorary CAG members and they are to be compensated for their time. The two students are to receive a one-year complimentary CAG membership in recognition of their time and contributions to the Committee.

STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS SHOULD:

- have an interest in and/or some knowledge of decolonization and Indigenization;
- attend a majority of meetings and actively contribute to decisions and actions; and
- be available to listen to CAG members who have ideas, concerns or suggestions, and bring this information forward to the committee.

STANDING COMMITTEE FREQUENCY AND PROCESS:

The Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee will meet at least four times per year. The Co-Chairs will set the meeting calendar during the CAG Annual National Meeting.

All meetings will begin with a territorial acknowledgement by one or both Co-Chairs, followed by review of the agenda, approval of previous minutes, and call for additional agenda items or new business.

Robert's Rules of Order will apply with a note that when there is discussion on an Item, the discussion will take place in Circle format. This ensures that everyone has an opportunity to speak on an item before the Co-Chairs move to the next speaker. If a committee member wishes to pass, they may do so. Once everyone has had a chance to comment on the item, the Co-Chairs may ask for final comments before calling for a decision.

Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee meetings shall be open to the entire CAG membership. However, only Decolonizing and Indigenizing Committee members will be eligible to vote on committee items. A quorum of four committee members is needed for decisions to be taken.

STANDING COMMITTEE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Co-Chairs and Committee Members of the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee will recognize their respective roles and responsibilities with the intention of achieving the stated objectives; these roles and responsibilities are detailed here.

Co-Chairs

With a desire for shared leadership, internal peer mentorship, and institutional continuity, the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee will have Co-Chairs. During the tenure of the Co-Chair, these individuals will work in close consultation with each other and the Standing Committee. The Co-Chairs will be identified by consensus from the Standing Committee members and/or nominations (self and by others).

It is the responsibility of the Co-Chairs to set Standing Committee meetings, draft and circulate Standing Committee agendas, attend and chair Standing Committee meetings. Annually, the Co-Chairs will draft a letter of appreciation, provide it to the CAG President for review/signature, acknowledging the service of those involved in the Standing Committee for their contributions to decolonizing and Indigenizing the Professional Association.

Standing Committee Members

Standing Committee members are expected to participate in the scheduled meetings of the Committee to review minutes, actions, and business arising. Members of the Standing Committee may volunteer or be asked to contribute in various capacities to any Decolonizing and Indigenizing activities or event.

The length of service commitment for will be 1 year, with the possibility to renew the position (based on consensus decision-making). We will encourage at least 2 members of the Standing Committee to maintain their position in any given year to support institutional memory.

If any Standing Committee Member (including the Co-Chairs) misses more than two consecutive meetings, they will be asked to consider stepping down, to allow another CAG member to take on the role, in order to maintain continuity and momentum. If there is no response or action taken, after the third missed meeting, they will be provided with a concluding letter of appreciation (from one or both of the Co-Chairs) for their service and a replacement will be immediately sought from the CAG membership via email.

Standing Committee Secretary

The Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee Secretary will be rotating from the general membership of the CAG Standing Committee; their responsibility will include recording and circulating meeting minutes with actions within one week after the conclusion of each Standing Committee meeting. The Secretary will be identified at the start of each meeting by volunteering or at the request from the Co-Chairs.

DECISION-MAKING DICTUM

The Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee's Decision-Making dictum is to:

Encourage equal and unrestricted participation of all Standing Committee Members and Attendees at Meetings;

Be transparent consistent and clear in our goals, values, and vision, striving for consensus, and turning to the Co-Chairs (and/or Elders who may be present) for guidance when consensus cannot be achieved, and;

Provide alternative avenues for Standing Committee Members to contribute to the decision-making process when absent from Committee Meetings (e.g., electronic communication).

For present and asynchronous attendees, the Standing Committee Co-Chairs will endeavour to respond to requests for input within two weeks of correspondence circulated to the Standing Committee via the CAG Listserv.

When decisions need to be made, Standing Committee Members and Attendees who remain silent (i.e., no reply) within an established time frame, will be interpreted by the Standing Committee Co-Chairs as in favour of the decision on the table.

If Committee members or CAG members-at-large have comments or concerns about the activities of the Decolonizing and Indigenizing Standing Committee, this is a platform to express them; that is, the Standing Committee is to welcome such expressions and engage in respectful, honest, thoughtful, and meaningful debate and resolution.

STANDING COMMITTEE DATA

Data Storage: All agendas and minutes will be filed with the CAG Executive Director.

CITATIONS

Daigle, M. (2016). Awawanenitakik: The spatial politics of recognition and relational geographies of Indigenous self-determination. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 60(2), 259-269.

Hunt, S. (2014). Ontologies of indigeneity: The politics of embodying a concept. *Cultural geographies*, 21(1), 27-32.

Kobayashi, A., & Peake, L. (2000). Racism out of place: Thoughts on whiteness and an antiracist geography in the new millennium. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(2), 392-403.

Noxolo, P. (2017). Introduction: Decolonising geographical knowledge in a colonised and re-colonising postcolonial world. *Area*, 49(3), 317-319.