



Canadian Association of Geographers / Association Canadienne des Géographes

**Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Standing Committee
Annual Report 2023/24**

Presented by EDIA Standing Committee Co-Chairs Sinead Earley and Andrea Rishworth

Letter from the Co-Chairs

The Standing Committee is in its first year of formation, and we are very excited to author its first annual report. Eight members convened for the inaugural meeting in October 2023. This was preceded by several years of constructive critique from members and the Executive Committee, calling for significant changes in governance to increase diversity, justice, transparency, and inclusive participation in the organization and broadly across the geographic discipline. Since 2022, the establishment of numerous Standing Committees (EDIA, Decolonization and Indigenization, Study Group Governance, CAG Governance) exemplifies how the Association is aiming to uphold equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility principles in the ways the CAG defines itself, operates, and serves its membership.

From the outset, it was recognized that new approaches to governance needed to be built through dialogue with members. [Bakau Consulting](#) was contracted in February 2023 to facilitate a focus group, which resulted in a comprehensive, critical, and insightful report. The [report](#), in turn, was instrumental in drafting the mandate, goals, and language embedded in the first Terms of Reference (TOR) for the EDI Standing Committee. Since, the generous time offered by current members signals a commitment to oppose harmful processes of differentiation and to take actions for improved policies, processes, practices, and outcomes. An **action planning framework** has been established (outlined on p. 4-5) and the Committee is excited to get to work. One of the most critical tasks for the Committee is to build momentum, ensure broader interest, and increase participation from other CAG members to sustain this work over time. To this end, we chose to include the defining principles and mandate in this annual report as an excerpt from the TOR (p. 3-4).

Over the past year, the committee has been actively working to revise the TOR (treated as a living document that will be reviewed annually to reflect changing needs and priorities). First, the committee unanimously approved to change the group name from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Standing Committee to the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and **Accessibility** (EDIA) Standing Committee. We have enhanced the language surrounding accessibility in recognition that disability is diversity, not a deficit, and contributes to a creative mix of ideas and experiences. Second, we have clarified and enhanced our description of what we mean when discussing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Most recently, the group clarified the guidelines for committee member terms to include staggered positions of two years up to two terms in a row.

A priority for the committee has been around **EDIA training**. The committee is currently searching for a service provider that will deliver mandatory training for CAG Executive/Board members on an annual basis. This stems from the premise that those leading the association must actively work to enhance diversity, promote equity,

support accessibility, and foster a more inclusive culture in its organizational culture and practice. The Standing Committee has drafted the following set of criteria to guide training selection:

- covers the fundamentals of anti-oppression
 - confronts racism in its multiple forms
 - confronts patriarchy
 - confronts oppression of gender diversity and sexual orientation
- fosters inclusive communications and meetings
- is oriented towards Executive/Board governance
- is a service provided by those with expertise in EDIA and is a BIPOC owned or led organization
- is resourced by the CAG

The process for embedding required training within the Executive/Board is currently being defined through impending changes to the CAG Constitution and By-Laws (currently being attended to by the CAG Governance Standing Committee). Our goal is to have this implemented in the 2024/25 cycle.

The committee also thought it would be beneficial to create an EDIA training resource for CAG members to use, leading to the development of a [training toolkit](#) comprising a thematic list of training resources for members to use and apply in their daily lives. We are excited to share this, and we also welcome suggestions for additions or edits. Inclusion in communications and digital infrastructure has also been identified as a priority area. There are important steps to take towards linguistic inclusion, such as addressing the call for French and English to be used for all CAG communications, governance documents, and conference proceedings. The committee is also hoping to make the CAG website more accessible to those with disabilities.

Finally, we would like to note that as a Standing Committee navigating its formative period, the input and dedication from its current members (listed below) has been crucial. We also note that we are in a critical period of establishing legitimacy and strength. To this end, we recognize that there is a lot of work to be done. There is an ongoing need for **recruitment** of new members (welcome to our newest member, Caroline Barakat, who joined in June!), and broadened support for equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the geography community in Canada and internationally. The Standing Committee has been sharing information about the group with colleagues and networks, and we encourage anyone who is interested to consider serving on the committee. Please, be in touch, as we identify the steps the CAG needs to take to establish itself as an Association that denounces injustice in all of its blatant and opaque forms and embeds EDIA in all of its actions.

Sincerely and in solidarity,

Sinead Earley and Andrea Rishworth

Current Members

NAME	AFFILIATION	POSITION	TERM
Dr. Emmanuel Ackom	University of British Columbia, Adjunct Professor	Member	2023-2025
Dr. Caroline Barakat	Ontario Tech University, Associate Professor	Member	2024-2026
Dr. Craig Coburn	University of Lethbridge, Professor	Member	2023-2025
Dr. Sinead Earley	University of Northern British Columbia, Assistant Professor	Co-Chair	2023-2025

Dr. Sheika Henry	Brandon University, Assistant Professor	Member	2023-2025
Asma Khanani	University of Western Ontario, PhD Candidate	Member	2023-2025
Sohail Majoka	University Canada West / Alexander College, Faculty	Member	2023-2025
Dr. Andrea Rishworth	University of Toronto Mississauga, Research Associate	Co-Chair	2023-2025
Yihang Zhang	University of Northern British Columbia, MA Candidate	Member	2023-2025

Defining Principles & Mandate

Content derived from the Terms of Reference (2024).

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.

In relation to 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.

Mandate:

1. Recognize areas where inequities have already been identified and system change is needed, and identify opportunities to advance EDIA efforts
2. 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)
3. Build capacity within the CAG to increase participation in EDIA work and help initiatives flourish
4. 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
5. Help to maintain intentionality and accountability for EDIA initiatives

Action Planning

To move TOR goals into action, the committee has developed a document that identifies the short-term (<1yr) and long-term (>1yr) action items the group wants to accomplish in the coming years. Committee members have signed on to specific tasks.

The short-term goals comprise the following:

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Training Toolkit	Finalize EDIA living resource document for general membership; linked to EDIA community page on CAG website
Required Training for CAG Board	Finalize required EDIA training for CAG Executive / Board members on an annual basis; action recommendation to guide new bylaw
Data Management	Establish data management system; ensure recording of efforts so that future members can recognize and build upon work previously done
Reporting	Annual reporting; AGM and open access on CAG website

The long-term goals comprise the following:

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Gender-Based Data Collection	Carry forward work by Jewett and Everhart (2022) to establish a gender-based data collection subcommittee; move from proposal to action
CAG Website Content Accessibility	Evaluate CAG website for web content accessibility; make recommendations for needed changes

Ombudsman / External Reporting	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
CAG Governance Documents	Ensure EDIA principles are integrated into constitutional and by-law changes; develop new language for the CAG Mission Statement that reflects EDIA principles (not updated since 1996!)
Pay Equity in Membership & Conference Fees	Enhance equity in access to CAG membership and conference fees through sliding scales
Annual Conferences	Ensure EDIA principles embedded in conference planning committees
CAG Awards	Establish an annual award for EDIA leadership
Diversify Membership	Encourage and create incentives for participation from marginalized, racialized, and equity-seeking peoples to join the CAG
Advocacy & Extension	Develop an advocacy program beyond internal CAG governance
EDIA Code of Conduct	Develop a Code of Conduct for all members, leadership, and conference attendees as an anti-discrimination policy