

## Editorial

# From performance to perseverance: Equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization in Canadian higher education

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# Editorial

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## **From performance to perseverance: Equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization in Canadian higher education**

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What a rejuvenating Canadian Society for the Study of Education annual conference we had during a warm spring week at York University! It was great to see so many familiar colleagues and friends from coast to coast and to meet new ones. This CJE issue picks up on some of the conversations at the conference about the current opportunities and challenges in Canadian higher education. The articles in this issue illustrate how contemporary aspirations concerning equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization are complex and deeply connected to the past and future. To advance these collective desires in higher education, we need continued *collective perseverance* rather than a performance checklist. Importantly, the articles collectively explore how post-secondary institutions can practice more reflexive approaches to their own educational programs and/or learn from other institutions that are making headway in institutional reform. They do so by recognizing how Canadian universities and college programs have been built on capitalistic, colonial, and patriarchal policies and procedures that have systemically discriminated against members of under-represented groups. Reforming educational institutions to be safe and inclusive for all in this complex context, thus necessitates taking a deeper look at ways to support needed systemic change.

In a provocative article that prompts educational institutions to move from words to action, MacMath, Salingré, and Sivia wrestle with a teacher education program's admissions policy and practice in the age of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization

(EDID). They question the extent to which those who enroll in the program mirror the population of students in the educational jurisdictions the teacher education program serves. Given the current discrepancies, they investigate what criteria are considered for admission. They also critically examine their own program and grapple with how to decolonize their own teacher education program and make its admission process more equitable. This study offers critical reflexivity and practical suggestions for how teacher education programs could continually and critically reflect on their own admission practices and procedures to move towards the ideals of EDID.

Robinson's study illuminates the important work that Indigenous post-secondary institutes are doing to lead in decolonization and Indigenization of higher education in British Columbia. The article acknowledges the historical significance of the Assembly of First Nations (formerly known as the Chiefs of the National Indian Brotherhood) in refining the aims and directions that should inform Indigenous education in relation to Indigenous learners, Indigenous knowledges, and Indigenous self-determination. She examines the ways three Indigenous post-secondary institutes are translating these broad aims into practice. In particular, the study illuminates the profound impacts the institutes have had for Indigenous students, staff, and the local communities. Her study also identifies the need for guaranteed public funding to continue the important work of these pivotal institutions. Further, as institutions of higher education across Canada struggle with ways to meaningfully Indigenize, Robinson's study provides us with invaluable lessons and pathways in this complex work.

Smith, Masson, Spiliotopoulos, and Kristmanson write that post-secondary institutions are tasked with offering and advancing programs that incorporate current research with the ongoing needs of school systems. In particular, they highlight the importance of strengthening teacher education programs for French as a Second Language across multiple institutions in all of Canada's provinces. While noting the wide range of programs across the country, they argue that universities could create stronger connections with local communities and contexts where teacher candidates can improve their linguistic competence and sensibility in addressing social justice goals.

McLean, looking historically, examines the role of universities in adult education in Quebec, critically questioning what role contemporary universities play in their communities. He is concerned that with the corporatization of higher education and declining public funding, post-secondary institutions are lessening their emphasis on community

engagement in ways that might, in turn, lessen equity and justice. He contrasts the present from the past, specifically by analyzing Laval University's adult education programs from 1930 to 1965. He says that during this period, the University offered programs that met the needs and interests of adult learners through a wide range of programs that benefited Quebec society, rather than serving particular ideological or elite interests. He urges Canadian universities to reflect on their relationships with the broader interests of society and consider what types and levels of community engagement might be needed.

The final article, by Morrison, Hughes, Scott, Kotsopoulos, and Ruttenberg-Rozen, reminds us of the importance of recognizing the entrenched gender-based harassment and discrimination that continues to underpin higher education, and the intensification of this experience for women academics who also identify as Indigenous, Black or as a person of colour. What counts towards merit awards, pay raises, promotion, and tenure is still inequitably experienced by people who identify as women after decades of intervention. Women academics continue to experience gender-based microaggressions, harassment, discrimination, and gaslighting. These experiences seem to be more pronounced among young, early-career scholars, and more intensively experienced by those with intersectional identities. While there are some encouraging statistics on the position of women since the Chilly Collective was created almost 30 years ago, the authors say there is a still long way to go. The authors identify the significant issue that with the rise of reporting mechanisms there is a problematic rise in systematic efforts to silence reporting. They suggest that equity, diversity, and inclusion conversations that are occurring in today's higher education institutions should not lose sight of the intersection with women's struggles in the pursuit of equality.

In brief, much of the work presented in this issue shows that the ideals of equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization, and Indigenization have historical roots in Canada's past; yet, each article provides new insights and suggestions for the present and future. The studies also offer new perspectives and more equitably-oriented approaches. Every article tells a similar story that these complex issues are not amenable to easy and quick solutions, but require continued efforts towards systemic change. They tell us that in higher education, we need to move from performance to perseverance.