



CWCA/ACCR Statement of Commitment to Antiracism

With this statement, the Canadian Writing Centres Association/association des centres de rédaction canadiennes (CWCA/ACCR) commits itself to antiracism in its Board and all CWCA/ACCR policies, practices, and activities. CWCA/ACCR commits to supporting individual writing centres, and the diverse people who work within them, as they respond to a wide range of experiences of racism, and as they fight to build spaces, structures, and relationships on foundations of equity and reciprocity.

The settler languages of English and French have indisputably been instruments of white supremacy in Canada. Since language is a key site of institutional power--power in which writing centres participate--it is not surprising that CWCA/ACCR has historically been a white-majority organization, with largely white Board members setting its agendas. Despite the growing number of racialized¹ members within the organization, there is no unitary, seamless, conflict-free, utopian CWCA: there are white perspectives on the one hand, and Indigenous, Black, Asian, and diverse racialized perspectives on the other, with white perspectives routinely privileged over all other perspectives. This creates a problem of voice: whose statement is this, whose commitment does it represent, and how could it incorporate—perhaps even centre—BIPOC voices?

Drawing on writing centre technique, we present the conflicts and contradictions inherent in the project dialogically, instead of repressing them.

¹ The labelling of racialized people is, itself, challenging and complex. In taking up the ongoing work of antiracism, the CWCA/ACCR stands against the harms and violence of racism in all of its forms and as it is enacted against all racialized peoples. We simultaneously resist the tendency to group all racialized peoples together and to ignore the unique forms of racism and oppression they encounter. In particular, we name the power that anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism have in (re)producing the inequities of institutions and societies.

Commitment to awareness

CWCA/ACCR commits to cultivating and spreading awareness of racism and of antiracist perspectives.

- As racialized members of CWCA/ACCR, we call attention to the long history of anti-racist work in the field of education that has been done by racialized scholars, writers, and activists. This statement owes everything to the work they have done to promote equity in language and education: bell hooks, Romeo Garcia, Asao Inoue, Geneva Smitherman, Neisha-Anne Green, Gregory Younging, April Baker-Bell, Chelsea Vowel, Vershawn Ashanti Young, among others. We commit to amplifying their work, and to educating ourselves about the concerns of racialized communities not our own.
- As white settlers who are members of CWCA/ACCR, we recognize that we must take responsibility for learning, and for working towards racial justice. Grateful for the knowledge created by racialized scholars, we will seek it out, engage with it, learn from it, and amplify it. We will educate ourselves and our colleagues about white supremacy, racism, and colonialism, and about antiracist and decolonial practices, in order to become effective advocates for racial justice.
- As racialized members who are being “invited in” through this statement, we commit to bringing our concerns, recommendations, ideas, and calls to action to the organization. Being aware of diversity and difference *within* the category of “racialized members,” and avoiding lateral violence and homogenizing, we commit to supporting each other in transformative work.
- As white members who have the power to do this, and who have historically failed to do this, we commit to diversity within our organization. As we welcome more racialized faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community members-at-large, we also understand how genuine inclusion and empowerment of BIPOC members will transform the culture of our organization. When racialized members bring forward concerns, recommendations, and/or calls to action, we commit to acting upon them.
- As white and racialized members, we commit to recognizing how intersectionality (e.g., being racialized *and also* having a disability, being racialized *and* identifying as Two Spirit or LGBTQ+) can complicate privilege and disadvantage, and to acting on this recognition.
- Those of us who are white or racialized settlers commit to recognizing that genocide against Indigenous peoples and the legacies of residential schools have created interlocking systemic injustices for Indigenous Peoples.

Commitment to actions

Board and Conferences

CWCA/ACCR will actively work to make the Board and annual conferences antiracist.

As racialized members of CWCA, we are aware that equity usually results from struggle rather than from good intentions. We commit to

- sharing critiques, new ideas, and anti-racist perspectives in sincere engagement with all members, and to being aware of power dynamics within racialized communities that may call upon us to support groups and individuals who are most marginalized.

As white members of CWCA, we commit to

- recruiting Board members who are Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour and empowering them to share their concerns, and to lead;
- amplifying and centering the work of racialized writing centre professionals; (including staff, faculty, students, and administrators) across conference programs and at all other CWCA/ACCR events;
- building protected (dedicated) times/spaces for Indigenous Peoples, Black Peoples, and Peoples of Colour into conference programs;
- facilitating access for racialized participants through reduced or waived conference fees and grant support.

Hiring, publishing, and networking

CWCA/ACCR commits to

- promoting diversification of the Writing Centre community by circulating antiracist recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion documents and strategies;
- functioning as a networking hub for antiracist work, where writing centre professionals (including staff, faculty, students, and administrators) can come for solidarity, connection, support, and resources on their learning journeys;
- providing opportunities for members engaged in antiracist work to write and publish about their journeys to and through the work of antiracism, Indigenization, and decolonization, prioritizing and centering the voices of racialized members;
- defining antiracist standards for peer review in writing centre publications;
- actively supporting and promoting publication of work by racialized writing centre professionals (including staff, faculty, students, and administrators).

As racialized members, we will support diversification of the Writing Centre community by

- creating and sustaining a BIPOC group within CWCA/ACCR, which can play an advisory role in activities and actions and contribute to anti-racist networking;
- writing and speaking on our journeys and struggles in forging antiracist spaces, alliances, and resources.

Advocacy and praxis

CWCA/ACCR invites writing centre professionals and tutors to

- challenge expectations about who can access languages of power, what language is acceptable, and how language is used;
- fight for and enact antiracist recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion, mentorship and allyship strategies in order to recruit and promote racialized people as staff, faculty, tutors, and administrators;
- incorporate antiracist and decolonizing practices into tutor training and professional development;
- advocate for the value and legitimacy of all Englishes and call attention to the ways in which standardized grammar and so-called academic and professional English are driven by racism and colonialism, while also recognizing that many BIPOC writers want to continue to gain academic or professional traction by mastering standard Englishes;
- call attention to institutional spaces and moments where assignment design, academic integrity policies, and writing assessments perpetuate inequities in the guise of standards;
- hold at least one interactive session for writing centre professionals (including staff, faculty, students, and administrators) on how to advocate for antiracist approaches to writing assignments and assessments with faculty and university administration. This session will be held no later than the 2022 CWCA/ACCR conference;
- learn from local communities about experiences of injustice, especially as these pertain to the intersections of race and academic expectations.
- critically evaluate and modify writing centre resources (including this statement) in an ongoing way to amplify antiracist, decolonial, and Indigenized approaches and content.

As racialized members, we plan to

- contribute to debates on antiracist approaches to writing assignments and assessments, lending support to the growing recognition of global Englishes while upholding the interests of writers and clients who seek to harness the benefits of standard English as they study and work in Canada;
- discuss writing centre routines, practices, and protocols that exclude us from full participation.

Acting on our recognition of genocide against Indigenous Peoples, those of us who are settlers commit to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (especially in relation to education) and relevant articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (especially Articles 11 to 16).

The 2022 CWCA/ACCR Annual Conference will include a report on actions taken toward the above identified commitments, and any other racial justice work that has arisen since the drafting of this statement. The conference will also provide opportunities for the membership to reflect on and discuss their successes and challenges in ongoing work towards racial equity and justice in writing centres.

Enacting the commitments above will require us to continue to engage with each other regularly and intentionally around the subject of racism.

The Canadian Writing Centres Association/association des centres de rédaction canadiennes (CWCA/ACCR) is stepping into the uncertain (contentious, difficult, and tension-ridden) terrain of developing racially just spaces, structures, institutions, and relationships in writing centres. We—racialized members and white members who contributed to this statement—invite you to step with us.