

President's Report

15th Annual CWCA/ACCR AGM (Virtual)

May 26, 2022

Presented by CWCA/ACCR President Clare Bermingham

The Canadian Writing Centres Association / association canadienne des centres de rédaction (CWCA/ACCR) acknowledges that the work of our association and our member centres takes place on the traditional lands of many Indigenous nations and communities across the geographical area now known as Canada. Our acknowledgement is a starting place for reconciliation and action, and we are committed, through our [Statement of Commitment to Antiracism](#), to actively countering the harms of racism and colonization in our work and in writing centre research, advocacy, and praxis.

1. Thank you

Thank you to the incredible work of Conference Co-Chairs, Stevie Bell (York U.), who also serves as CWCA/ACCR Vice-President, and Brian Hotson (Independent Scholar) for the CWCA/ACCR 2022 Conference. With the conference committee –Sheila Batacharya (U. Toronto—Mississauga), Majid Nikouee (U. Alberta), Julie Tran (Kings' College), Nancy Squair (Douglas College)—the co-chairs have built a conference program that includes two stellar keynotes and a diverse range of panels, presentations, workshops, and posters. With feedback from conference attendees last year, the co-chairs and committee have also streamlined and simplified this year's virtual conference by using our website as the conference platform. I'm grateful for their technical know-how, impeccable organization, and vision for this year's events.

This year's conference will also have an adjacent virtual writing space in the inaugural Pilcrow Studio Writing Retreat on Saturday, June 4. Originally planned to launch in person in 2020, it was postponed due to pandemic circumstances. Thank you to Stevie Bell (York U.), Nadine Fladd (U. Waterloo), and Tessa Troughton (ON Tech U.) who will be hosting a day of writing, reflection, and yoga. Thanks also to Sarah King (U. Toronto – Scarborough) who helped with some of the early organizing of the retreat.

Thank you to the committed, creative, and caring group of individuals with whom I've had the pleasure of serving on the 2021-2022 CWCA/ACCR Board of Directors: Jenna Goddard (Thompson Rivers U.), Jordana Garbati (U. Toronto – Mississauga), Sarah King (U. Toronto – Scarborough), Stevie Bell (York U.), Nadine Fladd (U. Waterloo), Tessa Troughton (ON Tech U.), Lenore Latta (U. Guelph), Sheila Batacharya (U. Toronto – Mississauga), Majid Nikouee

(U. Alberta), and Julie Tran (Kings' College). Your dedication to this work is inspiring. In spite of never-ending change in your home institutions, sickness, and busy family lives, you have given immense energy and labour to this association and its various initiatives and projects.

Thank you, too, to the group of people who comprise the BIPOC Caucus. A special thank you to Sheila Batacharya (UTM), who has acted as the informal liaison between the BIPOC Caucus and the Board and who facilitated many conversations over email and in meetings on behalf of the Caucus. Over email and in joint meetings with the board, the openness, generosity, and input of the BIPOC Caucus have been invaluable to the discussions we had and decisions we made. Members extensively revised CWCA/ACCR's Statement of Commitment to Antiracism, curated guidelines for antiracist conference reviews, gave feedback on key documents including our conference CFP and IWCA's un-CFP, participated in planning the Antiracism Advocacy Session held recently, and provided guidance on several issues. I am immensely grateful that the board has had the opportunity to work in partnership with this collective of faculty, staff, and student CWCA/ACCR members this past year, and I look forward to continuing to work together.

The end of a year also means saying goodbye and thank you to some dear friends and colleagues who have made contributions as board members. The following board members are stepping down and not running for other positions:

- Thank you to Jordana Garbati (U. Toronto – Mississauga), who joined the board as a committee member in 2014, and became Treasurer in 2015. Jordana has served as Treasurer for seven years, and she has been a careful steward of CWCA/ACCR's finances and an unwavering presence on the board. As Treasurer, Jordana has ensured that this organization has the financial and legal mechanisms in place to able to keep working. Her vision for the financial health of the organization ensures that we can run a conference each year, but also that we can set funds aside to provide bursaries and grants, and to have reduced or no fees for students, members without institutional funding, and racialized members. Each year, she takes care of innumerable details and elements behind the scenes, the kind of work that is too often unseen and thankless. We see you, Jordana, and we are immensely grateful to you for everything.
- Thank you to Julie Tran (Kings' College) who started in the new role of Student Member-At-Large. Julie's main goal was to build a Peer Tutor Club, and this group is now a place for peer tutors in Canadian writing centres to meet, organize, support each other, and share information and resources. Thank you, Julie, and congratulations on your graduation.

2. Advocacy: Statement of Commitment to Antiracism

CWCA/ACCR identified antiracism as a critical priority in the last few years. The [Statement of Commitment to Antiracism](#) was initially presented to members at the 2021 AGM. Following the AGM, the BIPOC Caucus stepped forward and invested significant time and energy into revising the Statement. The Board approved the current version of the Statement in January 2022, and later met with the BIPOC Caucus to discuss how best to move forward on taking action on the commitments. The commitments made in the Statement will be folded into our strategic planning process that will begin this year, and the board will also work with the BIPOC Caucus on identifying shorter term actions, progress measures, and a plan for reviewing and renewing the Statement.

One time-bound commitment articulated in the Statement of Commitment to Antiracism was to hold a session on how writing centre faculty, staff, and peer tutors can advocate for antiracist writing pedagogy and assessment with faculty and administrators. Sarah King (U.Toronto – Mississauga) led an organizing group composed of Marcia Prescott-Brown (U. Toronto), Logan Middleton (U. Toronto), Julia Lane (Simon Fraser U.), and Lenore Latta (U. Guelph). The session was held on May 3, 2022, featured a group of excellent panelists, and was very well-attended. There has been some preliminary discussion about next steps following the event.

The Statement of Commitment to Antiracism identified CWCA/ACCR Conferences as important for engaging members in discussions about racial justice and linguistic justice in our writing centre work. Several sessions at the 2022 Conference will open space for discussion of racism and antiracism in various writing centre contexts, from discussing the racism and white ambivalence experienced by racialized administrators (May 25, 1:30pm) to sharing a multi-institutional collaboration to bring antiracist writing to instructors (May 26, 4:20pm) to considering multilingual and racialized students' agency in first-year writing (May 27, 12:40pm). Thank you to the organizers, proposers, and reviewers who made these sessions possible.

3. Advocacy: Addressing Colonialist Language in IWCA's CFP

In response to the CFP issued by the International Writing Center Association in early 2022, I brought concerns from the Board and the BIPOC Caucus about the CFP's theme and language to an IWCA meeting in January. Slight changes to the CFP were made, but our concerns were not fully addressed. As a result, the CWCA/ACCR Board of Directors passed a motion not to support or endorse the Vancouver conference, and we communicated this in [a letter to IWCA](#) on February 22, 2022. As a result of our actions, IWCA recalled the CFP and issued an Un-CFP for the Vancouver conference.

We are grateful to our IWCA colleagues for hearing our concerns and being open to learning about the Canadian context, the Indigenous genocide that made this country possible, and the work of antiracism and reconciliation that is in progress here. CWCA/ACCR has committed to supporting the Vancouver IWCA Conference taking place in October, and we encourage our members to consider attending or volunteering.

4. Advocacy: Standing up for the integrity of writing centres

In the late summer of 2021, the CWCA/ACCR board was made aware that the Director of Academic Learning Services at St. Mary's University had been terminated, and that the University was planning to restructure the writing centre. It was unclear what impact the restructuring would have on the integrity and quality of that program. In alignment with our [Position Statement on Writing Centres in Canada](#), and in support of our colleague, Brian Hotson, who has dedicated significant time to CWCA/ACCR and to advancing writing centre work in Canada, the board sent [a letter to SMU administration](#) to express our dismay and concern. The letter was co-signed by writing centre faculty and staff from across Canada, the U.S. and the world. No response from SMU's administration was received.

5. Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning has been on the agenda of the CWCA/ACCR for a couple of years. We postponed this process when the pandemic forced us to re-focus on immediate matters, and we have begun to move forward on planning again. A working group, consisting of the President, Vice-President, Past-President, and two members of the BIPOC Caucus, will map out what data and inputs will be collected, the modes for doing so, and the overall strategic planning timeline. More information will be forthcoming in the next few months.

6. Looking ahead

Looking ahead is the theme for 2022/2023. Between actioning the Antiracism Statement and initiating our strategic planning process, our primary goal is to determine how CWCA/ACCR can best serve you, as individual members and schools. How will the organization grow and provide value to members? How do we ensure this growth is driven and sustained through principles of equity, antiracism, and anticolonization? How can we engage our members, advocate for writing centres in Canada, and support diverse and emerging practitioners, scholars, and researchers? What should CWCA/ACCR look like in 5-10 years? Over the next 12 months, I look forward to exploring the answers to these questions with you.

My request to you is to please stay connected and involved. There are many ways to engage and share with your fellow members, from submitting to the [CWCR/RCCR Blog](#), using the CWCA/ACCR listserv, joining the [Peer Tutor Club](#) or the [BIPOC Caucus](#), participating in workshops and panels, standing for election, joining or starting a [regional affiliate group](#), engaging in the strategic planning process as it's rolled out, or just emailing any one of the CWCA/ACCR board to share your ideas or concerns. We can't wait to hear from you!