

**THE ASSOCIATION OF  
CANADIAN ARCHIVISTS**

**EQUITY  
COMMITMENTS**

© 2020

The Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) is a non-profit organization that represents the needs and interests of archives and records professionals throughout Canada.

The ACA provides members with opportunities to network with archives and records professionals across the country, develop professional skills and expertise, and participate in national and international advocacy initiatives.

The ACA is governed by its members and supported by staff. Offices are located in Canada's capital city, Ottawa, Ontario.

The Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA)  
Suite 1912-130 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4  
Tel: 613-234-6977  
Email: [aca@archivists.ca](mailto:aca@archivists.ca)

# A COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

Inspired by global anti-oppression movements, the Board of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) would like to share the following message with our members:

We acknowledge that the Canadian archival system is based on Western European archival theory and recordkeeping practices. As a result, the foundation of this system shares core values and goals with the legacy of European colonial mandates and upholds social hierarchies that privilege some members of society while marginalizing others. Today, it is widely accepted that archives have an active influence on public memory and that, [in the words of Jarrett Drake<sup>1</sup>](#), they have never been neutral. Yet, the archives and recordkeeping profession often remains unwilling or reluctant to confront the continued colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, and disenfranchisement that are built into the creation, maintenance, and use of archives in this country.

With these statements, the ACA is taking responsibility for having directly and indirectly avoided difficult conversations about the systems of oppression that are deeply embedded within the Canadian archival system.

The ACA acknowledges that archivists and recordkeeping professionals have contributed to and upheld systems of power that privilege one homogenous set of voices while silencing a richly diverse set of others.

The ACA acknowledges that the association's past commitments to the equitable treatment of new and existing professionals, in and outside of the association, have not been consistently followed by meaningful, appropriate, and timely action. We know this inaction has eroded trust in the ACA to act on behalf of all archivists and recordkeeping professionals.

The ACA unequivocally apologizes for the mishandling of sensitive and pressing equity issues within the profession. We want and need to do better.

The ACA recognizes the transformative work of equity-seeking groups within and outside of Canada who have and continue to raise urgent, critical demands for justice. We support Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and other groups seeking equity for racialized people, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, and 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual) people.

Because statements are not enough, we also include these Equity Commitments:

1. The ACA will prioritize the urgent need for equity and justice for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour), people with disabilities, new Canadians, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and communities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Digital Library Federation. February 15, 2017. "Archives have never been neutral:" An NDSA Interview with Jarrett Drake." Accessible at: <https://ndsa.org/2017/02/15/archives-have-never-been-neutral-an-ndsa-interview-with-jarrett-drake.html>

2. The ACA will offer a range of professional development opportunities and resources that support members with diverse perspectives and needs.
3. The ACA will provide equitable opportunities for members to volunteer for leadership positions and fully participate in association business.
4. The ACA will actively work to make its programs and services accessible to an increasingly diverse archives and recordkeeping profession.

Each commitment is supported by actions outlined in the ACA Equity Commitments. This document is a living plan that identifies the steps that the association will take to achieve its Equity Commitments, and the resources that it plans to invest to enable the course of change.

The ACA will continue to report on the status of these Commitments and regularly review and reassess equity work as a critical component of current and future strategic planning.

We thank members of the ACA's Equity Task Force for their contributions and expertise in helping the association incorporate equity into its current and future work.

To share your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions with the Board of Directors, please contact [Executive.Director@archivists.ca](mailto:Executive.Director@archivists.ca)

Sincerely,

ACA Board of Directors

October 6, 2020

## DEVELOPING THE ACA EQUITY COMMITMENTS

The ACA Equity Commitments are the culmination of many years of work and many different voices coming together to initiate and move forward this essential program of work. As Vice-President of the Board and Chair of the Equity Task Force, I am happy to provide this brief account of how this work has developed over the past four years.

### Strategic Renewal

The ACA began its strategic renewal in 2017 with a member survey and a series of facilitated discussions led by [the Portage Group](#). In all activities, the ACA's lack of diversity in membership was identified as a critical deficit for the association. To share just a few things that members said about the ACA in 2017:

*"It would be great to see the ACA taking a more active role in supporting new voices in the profession and encouraging a change in the current professional status quo by being more welcoming to diverse people and viewpoints."*

*"I would like to see the ACA do some work in the future to address, challenge, and begin to dismantle the ongoing whiteness of the profession."*

*"Please start a Special Interest Group or Support group for LGBTQ archivists/people in archives. The SAA has an LGBTQ roundtable. Please use gender neutral language."*

*"I feel the ACA is (pardon the term) an old-boys network. It is not inclusive of all types of archives and archivists, and is not open to accepting participation from those archivists who don't have a perceived level of reputation. Instead, it relies heavily on the same type of archivists, with the same views, year after year. The ACA needs to be welcoming of different points-of-view and different experience."*

It was clear that the ACA had to do more and do better to serve archives and recordkeeping professionals. This was a turning point.

### Responding to Member Input

The first step was to develop a mechanism by which the association could begin to address diversity. In 2018, the Board committed to developing a diversity framework for the association and proposed this program of work as a critical objective in *Moving Forward Together: The ACA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021* (see Objective 3.5). This strategic plan was presented at the 2018 Annual General Meeting and endorsed with a member vote.

In early 2019, the Board worked with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) to develop a two-day equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training 'bootcamp' for directors and committee chairs. This took place in March during the annual Spring Priorities and Planning meeting and was an opportunity for ACA volunteers and staff to level set on key definitions and concepts. This was also a chance to reflect on ACA goals.

Following the training, the Board regrouped and discussed next steps. Directors agreed that the next step benefit from the support of a dedicated group of people with EDI expertise.

### **The Equity Task Force**

In November 2019, the Board struck a Task Force with a priority mandate to make recommendations to the Board on how it might fulfill its strategic objective to develop a diversity framework. The task met for the first time in December.

After an initial period of data gathering, research and analysis, Task Force members agreed that equity should be the focus of the ACA's diversity framework. This is, in part, a recognition that diversity and inclusion are enabled through a sense of fairness and justice. It is also an acknowledgement that historical and persistent inequalities have resulted in the marginalization of many voices in this profession while privileging a small few.

A more equitable ACA means a more open ACA that is:

- ▶ responsive to critical and productive feedback from its members and stakeholders;
- ▶ more representative of the diversity of professional skills, backgrounds, and experiences that support and enhance the archives and recordkeeping profession; and
- ▶ encourages participation and supports leadership from an increasingly diverse membership.

In August 2020, the Task Force delivered its recommendations to the Board in the form of the four Equity Commitments that are outlined in this document. These four commitments were then connected to already existing ACA programs, services and resources to ensure that they could be feasibly planned out and acted on.

The Board unanimously approved these recommendations on September 11, 2020.

### **The Equity Commitments Action Plan**

The Equity Commitments and underlying action plan use a logic model approach.

- ▶ **Outcomes:** These are the four Equity Commitments outlined in this document.
- ▶ **Inputs:** These are the programs, services, and resources available to the ACA that will be used to support activities to achieve the intended outcomes.
- ▶ **Outputs:** These are the activities that could be taken by the ACA to achieve an outcome.

Many of the activities associated with the ACA Equity Commitments are already underway as of this writing. The Board has also committed to ensuring that its equity work is transparent and evergreen. Equity is not something that happens without ongoing action and these actions may change over time as needs change or new priorities emerge. The intention is to begin equity work with the plan outlined in this document and continue to routinely report on progress and update as necessary.

A final note, I want to express my gratitude for all of the members of the Task Force for their work on developing the Equity Commitments. Every single member provided their expertise to the ACA in good faith and with the desire to improve the association for all archives and

recordkeeping professionals. Equity issues are often left to those who seek justice because we desire a more equitable society for ourselves and others. This describes all of the Task Force members; we represent queer, indigenous, racialized, disabled, and precariously employed professionals. We now hand over this program of work to the ACA Board and its Committees so that they can lift this up and carry it forward.

Sincerely,

Rebecka Sheffield

on behalf of the ACA Equity Task Force

Victoria Deleary  
Ferrin Evans  
Lucie Handley-Girard  
Laura Hernandez  
Danielle Robichaud  
Leanne Templeton  
Rebecka Sheffield, chair

# 1.

## **THE ACA WILL PRIORITIZE THE URGENT NEED FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE FOR BIPOC (BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOUR), PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, NEW CANADIANS, AND 2SLGBTQIA+ INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES.**

<b>Input</b>	<b>Output</b>
The resources that will be invested to enable the outcome.	What the association will do with its resources to direct the course of change.
Advocacy Services	Prioritize and promote advocacy efforts that have a direct impact on BIPOC, people with disabilities, new Canadians, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and communities.
Student Chapters	Work in collaboration with equity-seeking student groups to improve access to and financial support for BIPOC, disabled, new Canadians, and 2SLGBTQIA+ students enrolled in archival education programs.
ACA Annual Conference	Provide meeting spaces and networking opportunities for BIPOC professionals to connect and meet (virtually and in-person at the annual conference).
ACA Foundation	Amend the terms of the ACA scholarship program to prioritize new Canadians, BIPOC, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ members.
Task Forces	Provide administrative and financial support for ACA task forces with mandates focused on confronting bias and discrimination in the archives and recordkeeping profession.
Membership Services	Introduce office hours to provide opportunities for BIPOC, people with disabilities, new Canadians, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to talk directly with ACA leaders about the association, the profession, or issues impacting archives and recordkeeping more broadly.

# 2.

## THE ACA WILL OFFER A RANGE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MEMBERS WITH DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES AND NEEDS.



<b>Input</b>	<b>Output</b>
The resources that will be invested to enable the outcome.	What the association will do with its resources to direct the course of change.
Continuing education programming, including workshops, annual meetings, and the ACA Institute	Ensure all new continuing education programming centres anti-bias and anti-racist approaches.
	Develop resources to support members working with equity-seeking groups, and to promote open discussions about racism, colonization, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and other of systems of oppression.
	Work with partners to develop and/or deliver professional development opportunities that explicitly address bias and discrimination in archives and recordkeeping practices.
ACA Job Board	Require all employers to include salary range in job opportunities posted to the ACA Job Board.
ACA Mentorship Program	Grow the ACA Mentorship Program to support members at all stages of their careers and to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse professional community.

# 3.

## THE ACA WILL PROVIDE EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS TO VOLUNTEER FOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND FULLY PARTICIPATE IN ASSOCIATION BUSINESS.



Input	Output
The resources that will be invested to enable the outcome.	What the association will do with its resources to direct the course of change.
ACA leadership and governance structures, including the Board of Directors, standing committees, and task forces.	Post all leadership and volunteer opportunities to the ACA website and members list and ensure transparent and fair recruitment practices.
	Limit all volunteers to no more than two consecutive 2-year terms in the same position.
	Develop anti-racism, anti-oppression, and anti-bias training for current and future volunteers, including staff, directors, chairs and mentors so that no member will be allowed to volunteer for a leadership position within the association without such training.
	Support any member who serves the association as a Director, committee chair or task force chair by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Waiving attendance fees for the annual conference;</li><li>▶ Providing financial support for travel to the annual conference; and</li><li>▶ Providing support for accommodations when attending the annual conference.</li></ul>
	Prioritizing participation from BIPOC members on committees and at organization events.
	Review all ACA policies to ensure equitable language and to address embedded structural inequalities.

# 4.

## THE ACA WILL ACTIVELY WORK TO MAKE ITS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ACCESSIBLE TO AN INCREASINGLY DIVERSE ARCHIVES AND RECORDKEEPING PROFESSION.



Input	Output
The resources that will be invested to enable the outcome.	What the association will do with its resources to direct the course of change.
Membership Services	Provide free, subsidized, or low-cost memberships, conference and continuing education fees to student, precarious and/or underemployed professionals when possible and acknowledge when unable to do so.
ACA Annual Conference	<p>Offer fully virtual conferences every two years using accessible technologies, such as closed captioning and other embedded accessibility features.*</p> <p>When hosting in-person conferences, ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ the conference venue is wheel-chair accessible;</li> <li>▶ a variety of accommodations are available for attendees;</li> <li>▶ any catering is low-cost, ethically sourced and supports local businesses where possible; and</li> <li>▶ conference fees are kept as low as possible while still providing good service to attendees.</li> </ul> <p>Conferences are scheduled to allow for the greatest participation of members and non-members, such that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ there is better coordination with our allied national and regional associations,</li> <li>▶ there is a dedicated quiet, low-sensory space every day of an in-person ACA event to allow for prayer, breastfeeding or social timeout;</li> <li>▶ there at least one alcohol-free social gathering during each day of in-person ACA events; and</li> <li>▶ events do not coincide with major religious holidays.</li> </ul>

\* Notwithstanding existing agreements the ACA has to host in-person annual conference and meetings for 2022 (Vancouver) and 2023 (Charlottetown).

# YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT VOICE

The ACA's commitment to equity is not a matter of debate nor is the role that archivists and record keepers can play in building a fair and just society. Through our professional practices, we work to help individuals and communities address issues of accountability and justice. In our day-to-day work, we ensure that evidence of actions or inactions are kept for as long as it is needed. We connect people with collections in ways that support storytelling, art practices, fact-finding, memory work and more.... Our skills are urgently needed. The ACA is working hard to make sure that our skills — your skills and experiences — are supported, celebrated, and acknowledged.

Get involved. Help us build a stronger ACA community. You are an important voice.

For more information about joining the ACA or becoming a volunteer, visit [www.archivists.ca](http://www.archivists.ca) or email [aca@archivists.ca](mailto:aca@archivists.ca)

