

CACS Annual General Meeting
October 23, 2005
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In Attendance:

Jenny Burman, Carolina Cambre, Mridula Nath Chakraborty, Paulomi Chakraborty, Leilei Chen, Judy Davidson, Amber Dean, Mo Engel, Lori Hanson, Sarah Hoffman, Penelope Ironstone-Catterall, Rozmin Jaffer, Jennifer Kelly, Katherine McKittrick, Patricia Molloy, Ken Paradis, Julie Rak, Sharon Rosenberg, Renee Sgroi, Rob Shields, Roger Simon, Mark Simpson, Antonia Smith, Richard Sutherland, Serra Tinic, Pauline Wakeham, Patrick West, Handel Wright, Heather Zwicker

Chair:

Heather Zwicker

Minutes:

Rebecca Lock, Lisa Martin-DeMoor, Alissa Overend

Meeting opens 10:00

Motion that Heather Zwicker chair the meeting

Made by Ken Paradis

Seconded by Sharon Rosenberg

Carried

Motion for the approval of the agenda

Made by Sharon Rosenberg

Seconded by Mark Simpson

Carried

Julie Rak presents the new constitution. She speaks about the strengths and failures of the current constitution, emphasizing that the changes proposed to the constitution are not about changing the basic goals of CACS. Rather, she argues, there are problems with the structure of the organization as laid out in the current constitution. Though the current goals are laudably idealistic, the new goals need to be more practical, more effective. The current structure is unworkable, and in fact CACS is not in compliance with its constitution at the moment. Rak

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acknowledges the members of the committee that looked at the current constitution and drafted the proposed constitution: Judy Davidson, Jennifer Kelly and Mark Simpson. Rak states the committee's belief that the current constitution has never been finished—that it is, in fact, an unfinished document. Rak further states that none of the goals of the constitution have been realized.

Rak proposes a new constitution, stating that it is the committee's opinion that the best solution to the problems of the current constitution is the radical option of starting over. Rak says the goal of the new constitution is to honour the objectives of the founding members of CACS while making the organization more accountable and flexible. The proposed constitution also more accurately reflects what actually goes on within the organization. She points out that the proposed constitution would create a new organizational structure for CACS, and argues that the on-site committee needs room to do more than just run a conference. In fact, there is no provision for an onsite committee in the current constitution.

The new two-part structure laid out by the proposed constitution would consist of an onsite committee and an advisory board. The onsite committee would rotate every four years. This is a change from the current situation in which the CACS host institution changes every three years. The committee reviewing the current constitution does not feel that this three year period is long enough. The change to four years would allow time for transition, as well as time for attention to social activism in addition to two bi-annual conferences. This change would allow for a commitment to community development.

Under the proposed constitution, the onsite committee would be empowered to make decisions about CACS. The current constitution does not empower the host institution(s) to make these decisions.

The onsite committee would be composed of the following roles: an executive chair, who will liaise between the advisory board and the onsite committee; a treasurer; a communications chair, who among other things could fill an activist function in relation to media; an online coordinator; and, in alternate years, a conference chair and a chair of activism.

The advisory board would consist of seven elected members who represent the diversity of CACS. Grad students would be eligible to serve on the advisory board, or even to chair the advisory board. Members of the advisory board would have four year terms, and would not be asked to make micro-level decisions about running the organization. The advisory board would help the onsite committee to make decisions and would make CACS more accountable. Additionally, the advisory board would oversee the transition of CACS from one home institution, or cluster of institutions, to another. The CACS commitment to activism would be built into the structure of CACS.

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The proposed two-part structure (advisory board and onsite committee) is designed so that nobody will be overburdened. The new structure will also allow off-site members of CACS to run cultural interventions from their own locations, in an accountable way.

Rak stresses that CACS' twin mandate is preserved in the proposed constitution, but that the constitution is not prescriptive as to how those aims should be realized. The question of how the aims are to be realized is left open so that "all of us," i.e. the members of CACS, can decide how best to realize these aims in an ongoing way. The proposed constitution has been designed so that CACS won't be out of compliance with its constitution in the future, as it is now. Rak points out that an organization as large as the MLA is able to function with a one page constitution, and so CACS should be able to function well with the proposed constitution.

A minor change to the current constitution would be a change in the definitions of membership, so that a member will be defined as somebody who pays their dues. In other words, CACS would do away with institutional membership.

(Penelope Ironstone-Catterall objects, stating that she has just paid for an institutional membership).

Julie Rak states the bottom line of her presentation: the structure of CACS as laid, out in the current constitution, is not working. CACS needs a structure that will allow it to function effectively.

Motion that the current constitution be replaced with the proposed constitution

Made by Julie Rak

Seconded by Judy Davidson

Discussion

Ken Paradis asks if there is a copy of the old constitution available, so that a copy can be pulled up and displayed on the screen so it can be referred to during the discussion.

Antonia Smith asks why the proposed constitution calls for a seven member advisory board when formerly the steering committee had thirteen members.

Sharon Rosenberg answers that this is to make the structure workable, to make it easier to get the advisory board together to have conversations about policy. It is too arduous to make decisions with thirteen people across the country.

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Julie Rak adds that there are technological options CACS can make available to improve communications within the advisory board and between the advisory board and the onsite committee.

Jenny Burman asks what provisions the proposed constitution makes for amendments.

Julie Rak answers that the new constitution does have an amending formula, and points to it.

Lori Hanson asks how the onsite committee will keep the advisory board informed.

Julie Rak answers that the executive chair of the onsite committee acts as an ex-officio liaison to the advisory board: this is one of the jobs of the executive chair of the onsite committee.

Patrick West suggests that membership for institutions might be \$500. It's an option to expand the financial base and membership.

Judy Davidson replies that graduate student and sessional membership fees are \$20 annually and that CACS has dropped the institutional membership because, except for Penelope Ironstone-Catterall, no one has signed up.

Penelope Ironstone-Catterall says institutional membership is a way for organizations to support CACS.

Patrick West suggests a friendly amendment to the constitution. He asks if the wording of the constitution can be amended to reflect CACS' commitment to international linkages, so that people working in other countries on Canadian studies can feel more included in CACS. He wants international linkages to be named in the constitution as an aim of CACS.

Mo Engel says that "Canadian" works two ways: it means both Canadian studies of culture and studies of Canadian culture. The latter could be performed anywhere and still be included.

Sharon Rosenberg agrees, stating that the language of "Canadian" isn't meant to be foreclosing.

Heather Zwicker asks Patrick West if he has a specific amendment to propose.

Motion that "promoting international linkages" be included after "...the dissemination and exchange of research" in Aim 1 of the proposed constitution

Made by Patrick West

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Anne Whitelaw says that it might be better to include the amendment under Aim 2 of the proposed constitution.

Motion that “nationally and internationally” be included in Aim 2 of the proposed constitution.

Made by Patrick West

Jenny Kelly asks: Are we able to realize this aim?

Motion that the amendment be discussed

Made by Rob Shields

Seconded by Roger Simon

Roger Simon says we need to be clear where monies for activism can be spent. We do activism in Canada, not in other countries.

Julie Rak: We need to be clearer about what international linkages would entail.

Sharon Rosenberg suggests that “nationally and internationally” could be added to Aim 1 so that the international link refers to academic not activist work.

Patrick withdraws his amendments.

Motion that: “nationally and internationally,” be included after “...exchange of research” in Aim 1 of the proposed constitution; that “and the exploration of” be changed to “by exploring” in Aim 1 of the proposed constitution; and that “across Canada” be added after “To create greater public spaces” in Aim 2 of the proposed constitution.

Made by Sharon Rosenberg

Seconded by Mo Engel

Carried

Sharon Rosenberg asks if the membership is open to creating a second document, a vision statement, that would go alongside the constitution and that would address the organization’s aims and goals.

At this point the old constitution is brought up on the screen.

Jenny Burman raises a budget issue. She’s concerned about regional access to the national budget. She wonders if the constitution can identify a proportional split of monies which are

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allocated to different activities, if commitment to funding local projects has to be written into the constitution.

Julie Rak suggests there should be a policy about making certain funds available—but it shouldn't be in the constitution because of potential practical difficulties. There is no guarantee for constant funding, for example. This issue does need to be considered, she says, but that should be done somewhere else.

Judy Davidson says we need to revisit this discussion in how we do the accounting, because how the accounting is done sometimes ties our hands. She adds that most constitutions say nothing about an organization's budget. The constitution document needs to be as flexible and open as possible.

Mo Engel suggests a very flexible policy document about how monies can be spent—a document that allows for variable circumstances.

Ken Paradis says he supports most of the proposed constitution but is concerned because he thinks that two objectives or purposes get blurred. He is bothered by the suggestion that the membership throw out the old constitution. He is in support of replacing just the operational part of the constitution but keeping more of the old vision and language than the proposed constitution contains. He wants to preserve the traces of CACS' formation.

Heather Zwicker interjects to clarify that Ken Paradis is speaking against the motion.

Rob Shields speaks for the motion and calls the question.

Heather Zwicker asks for a show of hands in favour, against, and in abstention:

29 in favour

0 against

1 in abstention.

The motion that the current constitution be replaced with the proposed constitution carries.

Motion that the tenure of CACS in Alberta be extended to December 2007

Made by Sharon Rosenberg

Seconded by Mark Simpson

All in favour.

Motion carries.

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Elections for onsite committee (special situation)

[TO BE ADDED FROM THE OTHER NOTETAKER'S SOURCES]

Elections for advisory board

Heather Zwicker asks for advice on how to proceed.

Mridula Nath Chakraborty suggests that we proceed with people in the room to begin with.

Jennifer Kelly says the issue of representation is crucial. She suggests: Let's begin with people in the room, take nominations, then move to an electronic process.

Mo Engel suggests that we first ask for people to volunteer.

Julie Rak emphasizes that the burden of sitting on the advisory board will not be overwhelming but the role will be important.

Mridula Nath Chakraborty asks for clarification: is the advisory board totally distinct from the onsite committee?

Julie Rak replies that it is.

Jennifer Kelly mentions that if the onsite committee, when it moves in one year, were transferred to the location of a member of the advisory board, that member could step down.

Roger Simon asks what is meant by diversity in seeking to form a diverse advisory board.

Julie Rak speaks to this. She says diversity has been deliberately left open as an issue because she wants the membership to figure it out. What does diversity mean to them? Diversity obviously includes age, sexuality. What else?

Antonia Smith says she would be interested in participating. The only potential conflict is that she is affiliated with the University of Alberta, though she doesn't live here.

Julie Rak says she thinks this is fine.

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Mo Engel says she wouldn't want people on the advisory board who were affiliated with the onsite institution(s) unless there were a shortage, unless no one else stepped up to fill the slate.

Mark Simpson echoes this concern.

Jennifer Kelly asks if there can be a preamble about what diversity means included when CACS launches the electronic voting system for electing an advisory board. She also asks how you get diversity if it's not within your membership.

Mo Engel says the mailing list is not necessarily the membership. Over 600 people subscribe to the listserv. That could address your concerns, she says.

Jenny Burman says she will run if Roger Simon and Handel Wright will run.

Roger Simon says he'd be glad to put his energies into the advisory board, but he doesn't want to undercut the diversity issue.

Handel Wright says he's concerned about the amount of work that would be involved. He's completely overwhelmed and he would have to think about this longer and harder. There's just too much that he's involved in right now.

Jenny Burman says we'd have to lay out more clearly what the division of labour is. She says to Handel that the advisory board will be called on to consult, but her feeling is that the advisory board is not as onerous a commitment as the OSC.

Handel Wright says he's on the board of the Association of Cultural Studies and it has been a burden.

Mridula Nath Chakraborty says she would like to nominate Pauline Wakeham.

Heather Zwicker asks Pauline Wakeham if she will accept the nomination.

Pauline Wakeham says she would allow herself to be put on a reserve list in case the slate is not filled by others.

Antonia Smith suggests that the people nominated today be used as a reserve list for the electronic voting.

Mo Engel says she thinks this is a good suggestion. She suggests that a list be made of people who are willing to stand and of people who are willing to stand if there's a gap.

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Renee Sgroi nominates herself.

Paulomi Chakraborty asks if CACS can make it explicit in the preamble about diversity that will be included when the electronic voting system is launched that grad students are welcome to do anything in this organization.

Julie Rak confirms that grad students can do anything for CACS except financial work

Sharon Rosenberg agrees that grad students will fit in well within the organization and the advisory board in particular.

Heather Zwicker suggests that the rest of the nomination and election processes for setting up an advisory board be left to the onsite committee.

Financial Report

Judy Davidson says that this is CACS' first ever financial report. She draws the memberships' attention to the document she has distributed. She explains that all membership and conference registration fees must be spent on the conference. She reads through the financial report and explains how some money is committed to being spent in certain ways—e.g., earmarked money from Athabasca.

Roger Simon notes that there is not a lot of money for all activities (speakers, conference, activism, etc.)

Judy Davidson says that CACS will be looking for new money for the next conference. She says CACS needs to think about where membership fees should be spent in the future. CACS needs to think about whether these fees should change.

Rob Shields points out how university audits have affected the movement of money and the regulation of how money is spent.

Lori Hanson says Athabasca's money is targeted for developing online resources for graduate students.

Motion to accept the financial report

Made by Judy Davidson

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Seconded by Jennifer Kelly
Carried

Other business

Motion that the onsite committee in consultation with the forthcoming advisory board produce a vision statement to be used alongside the new constitution.

Made by Sharon Rosenberg
Seconded by Mridula Nath Chakraborty
Carried.

Motion to adjourn

Made by Julie Rak
Seconded by Mo Engel
Carried