



## Black Canadian Studies Association

14 August 2019

The BCSA executive is pleased to share that as of August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 we have been informed that the Federation and its partners have revised the theme of the 2020 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences to *Bridging Divides: Confronting Colonialism and Anti-Black Racism*. We acknowledge the Federation has now met the four demands stated in [our open letter of June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019](#), following the [racial profiling of Shelby McPhee at Congress](#).

We agree that this is a positive outcome, and note that it comes after more than two months of [vigilant public pressure on the Federation](#) from the BCSA and many other member associations. The way this process has unfolded, amidst the ongoing racial [profiling and harassment](#) of Black university students this summer, has only further illuminated the extensive work that remains to be done. **We hold the Directors of the Federation responsible** for ensuring that the revision of the Congress theme is not a superficial or tokenizing gesture, and for the development of a long-term strategic plan for continuing the critical work of challenging anti-Black racism and honouring Black scholarship.

We have now reached **a beginning**; an opportunity to expand and deepen efforts toward the “decolonization” of higher education through becoming accountable to Black students, academics, and local communities. We are inspired by Shelby’s courage, and that of witnesses to the incident who stepped forward and shared what they saw. We are encouraged by the many individuals and academic associations who wrote letters of support and issued statements amplifying the demands of the BCSA. Collectively, member associations of the Federation have committed to the long-term work of confronting and ending anti-Black racism in Canadian academia.

We are also **urging our fellow member associations** to develop short-term and long-term plans to support Black graduate students and to foreground the work of Black scholars across academic disciplines. Confronting anti-Black racism requires asking and answering difficult questions about who is and is not present in our associations and why; what areas of scholarship are valued and which are assumed to be irrelevant; what and whose knowledges are assumed to be universal? We look forward to calls for papers for Congress 2020 that critically and creatively take up the new theme and critique how **settler colonialism and anti-Black racism in Canada are inextricably linked and co-constitutive**.

Cordially,  
OmiSoore Dryden and Rosalind Hampton  
Co-Presidents, Black Canadian Studies Association