

**CONFERENCE TIP SHEET:**  
**SHARED VALUES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR SESSIONS**

by :

The STLHE/SAPES Equity Committee, May 2023

<https://www.stlhe.ca/equity-committee/>

## **1) PREAMBLE**

The STLHE/SAPES Equity Committee is committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all participants at any event, meeting, or conference organized by the Association. To this end, we invite participants to join us in committing to putting the following actions and values into practice at all meetings and conferences.

The 2023 Equity Committee continues to endorse two documents initially drafted by the 2020/21 EDI Task Force: i) the “Statement of Core Values” (<https://www.stlhe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Statement-of-Core-Values.pdf>); and ii) “Enacting Our Shared Values” (<https://www.stlhe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Enacting-our-Shared-Values-2.pdf>). What follows here reflects and expands on much that is articulated in those two documents.

STLHE/SAPES is committed to the understanding that we all play a role in ensuring that the annual conference (and all other events) is a place where we can engage each other in a community of trust and respect. To that end, to foster a just and inclusive environment for all conference participants, we uphold the following as fundamental shared values and practices for the conference, recognizing that this is not an exhaustive list.

## **2) ENACTING OUR SHARED VALUES**

We invite all conference participants to foster an environment of trust, respect, and ethical behaviours by recognizing and committing to the following observations:

- that participants (no matter their role at an event or meeting) reflect a wide range of gender, race, sexuality, (dis)ability, linguistic, and national identities, and we all recognize that these may make a difference to how people present and express themselves;

- that the above point might mean some organizational details look different to some participants than the usual conference or event formats, and that we all welcome those changes as more inclusive and accessible;
- that different groups of people bring different knowledges and experiences to events and meetings, and we endeavour to ensure that everyone is not just listened to, but actively heard;
- that different groups of people may have different needs in the event space, and we work to make sure that those are met by conference and meeting organizers to the fullest extent possible, and are respected by all participants;
- that not all research is “comfortable” and that it sometimes challenges status quo ways of knowing and being in the world, and we frame and understand comments and questions as generative and in the spirit of scholarly inquiry and learning;
- as a follow-up to the above, that some research is more difficult for some groups of people than for others, and we consider carefully how to frame and present material in a way that doesn’t further harm those people—for instance, by unproblematically reiterating harmful stereotypes and generalizations about particular groups of people or ways of being and knowing;
- that social media formats are a part of conference and meeting processes and we are all responsible to be mindful of how we are engaging with presentations and participants via these formats; this includes being mindful of intellectual property and not taking/posting pictures/screenshots of either presenters/participants or slide decks, or screen grabs of anything on video, without the express permission of those involved.
- that we all share individual and collective responsibility to intervene—through both comments and actions—when we witness actions and behaviours that perpetuate discrimination of any kind.

Participants in STLHE/SAPES events agree not to engage in or condone others’ engagement in actions and behaviours that do not reflect the above-listed shared values of the association. These include:

- addressing participants, either by tone or content, in ways that perpetuate discriminatory, stereotypical, or harmful beliefs and statements—this includes both in sessions and in more informal encounters;
- engaging in—either through our own behaviours or by overlooking the behaviours of other participants—comments, actions, or practices that perpetuate racism, sexism,

ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ethnocentrism, etc., and instead, intervening when such comments and actions are witnessed;

- disagreeing with or disrupting other participants' presentations, comments, and questions, either by tone or content, in ways that are disrespectful or demeaning, or that suggest stereotypes about particular groups of people's knowledges or skills;
- insisting—through verbal comment, gesture, or other body language communication—that people adhere to singular modes of thinking, acting, and presenting, recognizing instead that participants have multiple experiences and perspectives that inform their scholarship and other practices during the conference;
- bullying and harassing behaviours along any identity lines, whether physical or verbal, including racial microaggressions, gender and sexual harassment, and persistent unwanted attention of any kind, in all contexts, whether in-person or online.

The above lists are not all inclusive or exhaustive, and we encourage participants to always note how attention to inclusion and access can make us all more aware of, and more attentive to, altering our own behaviours in support of these shared values. We invite all conference attendees to enact our shared values by working together to create a more just and inclusive space, in all ways, for a greater number of people.

### **3) BEST PRACTICES FOR CONFERENCE SESSIONS**

There are a number of ways to think about presenting our work in ways that are more accessible and inclusive for more people. Below are some suggestions; there are many such lists of ideas widely available online too.

For in-person presentations, the following strategies can increase accessibility and inclusion for those present in the room:

- a slide deck that is not too 'cluttered' with texts or images, with adequate spacing between lines and a font size that is easily readable—and avoid different fonts (additionally, if loading slide deck for remote access, include text descriptions of images);
- Clear/sharp contrast of colours, ensuring that written text is easily readable on background, and consider how colour is used (for instance, are your major concepts dependent on a colour-coding that some audience members may not be able to discern);

- Avoid rapid sensory input of visuals (flickering images or flashing lights) and sounds;
- Provide access to large-font print copies of your presentation remarks for participants who may want/request them;
- Ensure that your audience knows that they can sit, stand, move, as needed during the presentations, since sitting for extended periods of time is not always possible;
- Use inclusive language throughout; for instance, avoid addressing the audience in gender binary ways (e.g., ‘ladies and gentleman’) and opt instead for language that includes a range of gender identities and expressions (e.g., ‘welcome everyone’).

If made possible through conference organizing structures, we also invite in-person presenters to make their comments available to others not physically there, through any of the following mechanisms:

- live streaming talks/presentations and meetings (that are advertised as such beforehand, audiences know and have consented to such);
- video and/or oral recordings of speakers then uploaded onto an online site;
- making slide decks of presentations available on that same site.

## **EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO IMPROVE INCLUSION AT EVENTS / CONFERENCES**

The following are some broad practices to consider for conference and events organizers / planners. We advocate for these to be done as a ‘matter of course,’ and not solely in response to participants’ requests or as a result of asking participants beforehand.

1. Designating public bathrooms as all-gender for the duration of the meeting or conference, and ensuring that these are well marked as such;
2. Reviewing public spaces where events are taking place and confirming that these spaces are accessible to persons with disabilities (this is especially relevant for mobility disabilities);
3. Asking conference and meeting participants to follow scent-free environment practices;
4. Ensuring that all food and drink options cover many dietary practices and that all ingredients are clearly marked;
5. Making arrangements for an ASL / LSQ interpreter to be present, and ensuring captioning on all video conferencing events and sessions;
6. Recognizing and making place for smudging and other practices, while also recognizing how those might have to be negotiated with other participants’ needs, such as the above for a scent-free environment;
7. Ensuring that the appropriate Indigenous territorial acknowledgement is in place at gatherings and in communications, and respecting Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers work / participation at events through the appropriate protocols and honorarium processes;
8. Providing support for students and precarious labour colleagues at events that range from the financial, to travel, to food, to lodging and other critical materials for meaningful participation;
9. Providing conference presenters with recommendations such as: supplying some large text copies of presentations; avoiding video clips that contain flashing lights or colours (see above “Best Practices” tip sheet);
10. Providing name tags with space for participants to include pronouns and any other information that ensures their fuller participation;
11. Using inclusive language in all communication such as calls for proposals, instructions, event programs, etc.; this can include pronouns as part of the program, suggestions for alternate audience greetings (e.g., avoidance of ‘ladies and gentlemen’ and other binary gender forms of address).