



**congress 2023** | **congrès 2023**  
OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES | DES SCIENCES HUMAINES  
**Reckonings & Re-Imaginings** | **Confronter le passé, réimaginer l'avenir**

## University Programming Guide for Congress 2023

### Congress 2023

The Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences is Canada's largest academic gathering, bringing together scholars, researchers, policy makers, artists and public intellectuals to help shape Canada's future. It is organized each year by the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in partnership with a host university. York University is proud to be hosting this pivotal event on its Keele and Glendon campuses from May 27 to June 2, 2023. The first in-person Congress since 2019, Congress 2023 will include at least 65 scholarly associations, each holding their annual conference under one umbrella, with more than 7,000 delegates expected to participate in person and virtually.

The week-long series of events will feature academic panels and workshops led by scholarly associations for their members, and Big Thinking Lectures and Career Corner professional development workshops organized in partnership with the Federation and York University. Congress 2023 will also include a variety of public programming offered by associations and York, as well as cultural events and receptions, and Canada's largest academic trade show.

### The Theme: "Reckonings and Re-Imaginings"

The third decade of the twenty-first century has brought us into unprecedented times. An unrelenting global pandemic, protests for racial justice, and escalating climate disasters have heightened our awareness of the urgent need for collective action to help us create a more equitable and sustainable world. The lessons from Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, have been joined by new lessons, new reckonings about what is needed to live in non-hierarchical relationships that can truly honour our human differences, while protecting the land, water and air we all need to live together.

In the theme, “Reckonings and Re-Imaginings,” we invite the Congress community to pause and reflect on the lessons we have learned, but also to begin the work of imagining and enacting the terms under which we might create a radically different world. What might it mean for us to commit to knowing and caring for each other across our differences, understanding that the world we want to live in tomorrow is dependent on the action we take together today? Can we re-imagine a new set of social relationships grounded in decoloniality, anti-racism, justice, and preservation of the earth? This invitation for both reflection and action requires a genuine investment in the project of learning and growing, a willingness to participate in active and meaningful co-engagement, and a commitment to exercising patience and care in doing the hard work of changing belief systems and the world.

In Congress 2023, we respond to this call for reflection and action by centering the experiences, knowledges and cultures of Indigenous and Black communities as valuable and critical modes of thought fundamental to the realization of racial and climate justice. In a deepened commitment to the United Nations’ sustainable development goals (SDGs), we understand the problems of food insecurity, gender disparities, racial inequities, forced migration and others as linked to an accelerating climate disaster, and Black and Indigenous futurities. What might we produce when we reckon with and re-imagine climate mitigation strategies and the UN SDGs through the lens of racial justice and Indigenous resurgence? In centering these conjoined global challenges and possibilities, we are seeking to shift the culture of Congress, to create meaningful space for diverse viewpoints and a profound reckoning with white supremacist forms of knowledge production, while making visible decolonial, anti-racism, queer, and critical disability perspectives. Hosted by one of Canada’s most diverse universities, Congress 2023 welcomes scholars and student researchers, artists, activists, and public intellectuals—including those who have not previously seen themselves or their work reflected in Congress—to engage in deep interdisciplinary scholarly and artistic engagement, and to join this crucial conversation about how we can re-imagine and change the world for the better.

### **The Logo: “Seed for Tomorrow”**

The logo, "Seed for Tomorrow" illustrates the Congress theme’s focus on the intersections of racial and climate justice and the invitation to work collaboratively to care for each other and the environment.

The colours purple and red in the logo align powerfully with Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee traditions. For Haudenosaunee peoples, purple is the colour that comes from the quahog shells that are used to make Wampum Belts (including the Dish with One Spoon). Purple is, therefore, associated with Haudenosaunee confederacy as governance, commitment, memory and relationships, as that is what Wampum Belts do. This allusion supports York’s land acknowledgement and its reference to the Dish with One Spoon treaty. Red in the Anishinabek tradition (depending on the teachings and where someone is located geographically) refers to “love” and the “future.” This idea of love for future generations is a particularly powerful rendering of the Congress theme.

The rendering of the hands in purple further centers the theme's focus on our human diversity and relationality, displacing whiteness while making space for Black, Indigenous, Brown and other scholars and thinkers across their racial, cultural, linguistic, and gender differences. The timeliness of the reference to spring/summer (as the period when Congress is hosted) and the emphasis on hands as nurturing, with the plant linking and growing out of the hands as earth and source, work powerfully together. The cupping of hands also suggests a posture of supplication and humility. In inviting us to care deeply for the earth and for each other, the logo refers back to the theme's call for "active and meaningful co-engagement, and a commitment to exercising patience and care in doing the hard work of changing belief systems and the world."

The strawberry—as the first berry of the season and often referred to as a heart berry because of its shape—is an important source of food and medicine in many Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island. As a heart berry, it repeats the idea of love and shared humanity. As a berry with "seeds" growing on the outside, the strawberry also powerfully connects to the logo's creative focus, "Seed for Tomorrow." The gray in the flowers and the veins of the leaves challenges normative assumptions and signifies the middle ground between the absolute of black and white, and a refusal of colonial models of binary thinking.

### **Call for University Programming**

We invite Faculties, departments, faculty members, research hubs, and organized research units to contribute to university-wide programming by developing initiatives under two overarching themes: **Arts@Congress**, and **Community Engagement and Connections**.

Congress 2023 will be York's preeminent event of the coming year, bringing national and international attention to the university. This platform provides a unique opportunity for our researchers and organized research units to showcase their longstanding strengths in the humanities and social sciences, path-breaking interdisciplinary research, and historical commitment to social justice, while drawing on a rich tradition in the arts to curate an immersive cultural experience.

Building on the Congress theme, York is seeking to develop a suite of institution programming that will highlight these strengths in interdisciplinary research and community engaged arts. This programming is meant to bridge the gap between the university and wider society by positioning community art, activism and knowledges as central to the work of the humanities and social sciences. Specifically, this programming will recognize York's location in the Jane and Finch community, one of the most visibly racialized communities in the City of Toronto with a high proportion of youth, and refugee and immigrant families.

In addition to delegates presenting in their scholarly associations, university programming will be open to all York faculty, students and staff, alumni, high school teachers, and other members of the public with the purchase of a community pass valid for the entire duration of Congress. We are hoping to galvanize interest in Congress among these groups, whose

members would not otherwise experience Congress, and we are thrilled to note that community passes will be free for community members who self-identify as Black or Indigenous.

Below is a list of programming already identified by the scholarly planning committee.

### **Arts@Congress**

- An Arts@Congress showcase with exhibitions and performances by York students and faculty in disciplines across the arts, culture and design, including events curated through the School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design's Year of the Arts.
- Pop-up performances throughout Congress, which may include performances by York Dance Ensemble, York Jazz Ensemble, and York University Gospel Choir, as well as Indigenous and African drumming.
- Evening outdoor film festival featuring popular films.
- Screening of Indigenous films.
- Art walks around the public art sculptures at York's campuses with augmented reality access points.

### **Community Engagement and Connections**

- Community Film Project—a film archive project with community youth.
- Community Mural—in collaboration with artists from the Jane Finch community.
- Poetry/Spoken Word competition engaging Congress theme, "Reckonings and Re-Imaginations."
- High school student engagement—students in the Jane and Finch corridor attend select Big Thinking Lectures and a private debrief and Q&A.
- Sensory and themed walks—Indigenous walking tours, Black Creek and Jane Finch walks, and architecture walks.

We invite you to participate in Congress by organizing your own events to be included among York's offering of open university programming. These events may be organized as disciplinary or interdisciplinary panels, keynote speakers, or special sessions focused on the Congress theme or some aspect of the UN SDGs. You may also consider showcasing your research as part of the conference programming provided by scholarly associations.

Please submit all suggestions for university programming using the [Congress 2023 Programming Machform](#) by November 20, 2022.