**Terms of Reference - Canadian Association of Human Rights Institutes (CAHRI)**

**Draft**

The Canadian Association of Human Rights Institutes (CAHRI) was formally launched in Ottawa during a conference titled “Realizing Rights 2017: Human Rights and Constitutionalism” organized by the Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC) at the University of Ottawa. At the time, representatives from nine (9) institutions invited agreed to form this Association. At the time, it was decided that CAHRI would not function as a legal entity and would operate mostly virtually. The Association established a listserv hosted by the University of Manitoba and a webpage hosted by the Atlantic Human Rights Centre at Saint Thomas University. Each member institution nominated at least one institutional representative to be included in the listserv. Representatives are tasked with sharing information from CAHRI to their respective networks and attend the Association’s meetings.

CAHRI membership is composed of Canadian university or college-based centres, institutes, programmes, chairs, laboratories, clinics and similar entities which conduct research, education, practice and outreach (or some of these) in the field of human rights and related fields. The scope of collaborations includes proposing, participating and/or sharing information about events, projects and research initiatives, funding and career opportunities, publications, invitations to contribute, newsletters and annual reports, etc. The Association exists as a forum to connect human rights researchers working in university settings in Canada, promotes and improves human rights education, and promotes human rights pedagogy and research. In terms of advocacy, CAHRI recognizes that each member is free to participate or endorse initiatives proposed or spearheaded by other members without the requirement of unanimous consensus or for the Association’s leadership. Joint actions on key files of national importance can be considered.

CAHRI members normally meet annually, ideally coinciding with large academic events organized by member institutions. Rotating locations and direction for the meetings is desirable and virtual participation should be facilitated by hosts given the physical distance between members.

In 2020, HRREC proposed the Canadian Human Rights Yearbook, a publication they had relaunched a couple of years prior, as a vehicle for CAHRI. An editorial board with some CAHRI member was composed. This initiative is led by former HRREC Director, Prof. John Packer, with help from the Gordon Henderson postdoctoral fellow at HRREC.

CAHRI is a bilingual organization (French and English).

1. Mandate for CAHRI:
   1. Promoting human rights research, teaching, practice and advocacy in Canada.
   2. Connecting human rights researchers working in university settings in Canada.
   3. Preparing and carrying out joint activities.
   4. Sharing information about member institution’s activities, projects and research initiatives, funding and career opportunities, publications, etc.
   5. Encourage new academic institutions to join the Association.
2. The decision-making body of CAHRI is the General Assembly.
   1. The General Assembly consists of all institutional representatives, or designated alternatives.
   2. Meetings of the General Assembly of CAHRI will take place at least every year starting in 2025. Meetings can be in person or virtual (choice of suitable platform to be agreed by the group).
   3. The General Assembly shall not deliberate and decide validly unless all members have been invited to the meeting at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.
   4. Members, or designates, who cannot attend the meeting in person or virtually may give permission in writing, copied to all members, for the Chair or another member to act as their proxy.
   5. All decisions must be introduced as motions and supported by a minimum of two attending members by a show of hands or written indication to the Chair in the case of virtual participation.
   6. All decisions must be made by a two-thirds majority of the members in attendance at the meeting.
3. The General Assembly will typically elect three institutional representatives to function as the CAHRI Board for a period of two years.
   1. The Board is responsible for the leadership of CAHRI according to the mandate outlined above and guided by decisions made by the General Assembly.
   2. Board members ideally represent different regions in Canada and reflect the country’s language diversity.
   3. Mandate on the Board is renewable up to an additional two terms, for a maximum total term of 6 years. Members who have completed 3 terms, are eligible for a reappointment to the Board after a 4-year break.
   4. A Chair of the Board can be appointed through a consensus-based process among the Board Members. A Chair can only serve for one term of two years during their maximum six-year mandate on the Board.
   5. The Chair is responsible for inviting all members to the General Assembly at least two weeks before the date of the meeting.
   6. Specific areas of work for the Board are:
      1. Representing CAHRI on suitable situations determined by members, i.e. academic, federal and civil society groups.
      2. Scheduling and setting up the CAHRI Board and AGM meetings and taking minutes.
      3. Coordinating, supporting and/or organizing CAHRI events as needed.
      4. Expanding membership and promoting CAHRI among Canadian academic institutions.
      5. Receiving nominations for the election of CAHRI Board members, circulating profiles and setting up the election, following a policy and procedure to be adopted by the membership.
      6. Overseeing CAHRI promotional activities, branding and social media platforms (if any).