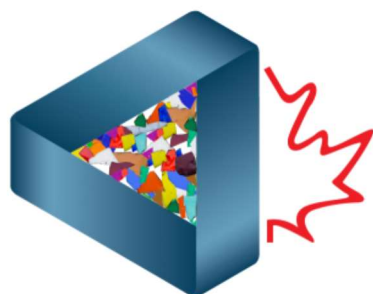


Steven Rayan (he/him) (University of Saskatchewan)



*MOSAIC, Outreach, Society, Accessibility, and Inclusiveness Column is directed by the CMS EDI committee and touches upon issues concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion in mathematics. Comments, suggestions and submissions are welcome.*

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We are less than two years into the new decade and, already, it has presented formidable challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic has steamrolled through the world, costing lives and damaging the health of a great many. In keeping one another safe from this constantly-evolving virus, we have learned to live in sequestered ways that have tested our social bonds. At the same time, we continue to witness the unspeakable brutality of racism and hatred. A year ago, George Floyd's life was cut short by savage, hate-fueled violence, leading to renewed discussion of systemic and pervasive racism in nations around the world. This year, we have seen brutal killings of individuals of Asian descent in the US and of Muslims in Canada. In recent weeks, the discoveries of mass burial sites and unmarked graves in Canada at the sites of former residential schools has left the country shaken and horrified. The discoveries serve as a sad reminder of how much progress has yet to be made in the journey towards Reconciliation and how much healing has yet to happen.

It is a common folklore belief that mathematics, and more broadly science, is immune to what happens "out there in the world", and that the injustices faced by many in the population-at-large are experienced only by very few within what is surely a very welcoming and tolerant scientific community. It is erroneous beliefs such as this one that are part of the problem and part of the obstruction to positive change. The sooner we recognize that mathematics is a microcosm of the real world, the sooner we will be able to collectively take the steps needed to create the welcoming and tolerant community to which we aspire.

My writing that this belief is erroneous may not convince the casual reader who picks up this copy of the *CMS Notes*, at least depending on their lived experiences and how ingrained the philosophy of mathematics-as-utopia is in their consciousness. I encourage all readers to look beyond themselves and to ask themselves tough but simple questions about their professional environment — the questions that are easy to ask but whose answers may be challenging and indicative of uncomfortable truths. Let's start with: is your department diverse? Do you believe that every voice in your college or university is heard? Do you believe that every individual around you is rewarded in a fair and equitable way for their labour and expertise? Is the playing field level? In addition to asking these questions, I encourage readers to seek out the documentary *Picture a Scientist*, which details the horrifying injustices faced by women in the sciences. I applaud the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences (PIMS) and its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee for making the documentary available to the community and holding a panel session in response to it on Women in Mathematics Day in May 2021.

Created a year ago, the CMS' Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee has been working to understand how to make mathematics in Canada more diverse and inclusive for all. The task is sweeping and finding a single place to start is.

admittedly, a problem in and of itself. Take, just for instance, the CMS Meetings. The most recent occasion, in June 2021, was a celebration of the Society's 75(+1)-th anniversary. I was "there" — virtually, like everyone else — and I must say that it was an absolutely fantastic celebration. These meetings in general have become a staple of the Canadian mathematics calendar, occurring twice yearly. For many, these events are cherished: traveling to a quiet, picturesque campus in June or arriving at a hotel conference centre after braving the winter weather and impending December exams, and being rewarded either way with the opportunity to catch up with colleagues and friends from different corners of Canada and the world. But are these events inclusive? Is the cost of registration and travel prohibitive for students and non-tenure-track faculty? How about for attendees with accessibility needs, for whom travel may be very arduous if not impossible? Should future meetings be hybrid? Are the scientific sessions, which operate by direct invitation to speakers, diverse? When sessions occur repeatedly with no speakers at all from underrepresented groups, these questions have to be asked. Over the next few CMS meetings, you will see changes to a number of aspects of how the meetings operate, fueled by these observations and questions. For one, we will be experimenting with making it possible for any individual to apply to speak in scientific sessions. Please stay tuned.

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The meetings are just one example — one that arises without even approaching the much wider question of how mathematics departments operate, for better or for worse. We cannot be afraid to rethink how we do things, even those basic things that we perhaps consider immutable. We have to ask questions about all of the structures in play, many of which have been designed either consciously or unconsciously to favor the status quo and keep less powerful groups from achieving equity. We have to step outside the comfort of our own shoes and we have to listen. And then we have to act.

In order to facilitate this conversation, and to help channel ideas and questions into actions, a new column is being initiated here in the *CMS Notes*. This column, for which this article is the inaugural contribution, is titled **MOSAIC**:

This column is all about respect, honesty, learning, healing, welcoming, solving problems, acknowledging and listening to each other, moving forward, and building a stronger and richer Canadian mathematical community. You can expect to read about ongoing challenges on various fronts and proposed strategies for tackling them, successful examples of allyship, issues affecting students and early-career mathematicians, tips for work-life balance, advertisements and recaps of relevant events, and brainstorming around outreach.

The first few articles will come from the EDI Committee members, who are: Habiba Kadiri (Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge), Elana Kalashnikov (Assistant Professor, University of Waterloo), Karen Meagher (Professor, University of Regina and Chair, CMS Women in Mathematics Committee), Israel Ncube (Professor, Alabama A&M University), Monica Nevins (Professor, University of Ottawa and Member, CMS Executive Committee), and Reila Zheng (PhD Student, University of Toronto). We also plan to host various guest contributors as the series evolves.

You too can be part of this series. If you have an article to propose, please do not hesitate to write to the EDI Committee at [edic@cms.math.ca](mailto:edic@cms.math.ca). We also welcome ideas for content to be featured in our [Inclusive Mathematics project](#).

I would also like to acknowledge Denise Charron, Termeh Kousha, Zishad Lak, Yvette Roberts, Gosia Skrobutan, and Sarah Watson of the CMS for helping to facilitate and publicize EDI events and content across the CMS this past year.

So let's start the conversation: *ask, listen, act*. We can do this — together.

*Steven Rayan (he/him) is the chair of CMS EDI Committee and Associate Professor at the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at University of Saskatchewan on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis people.*