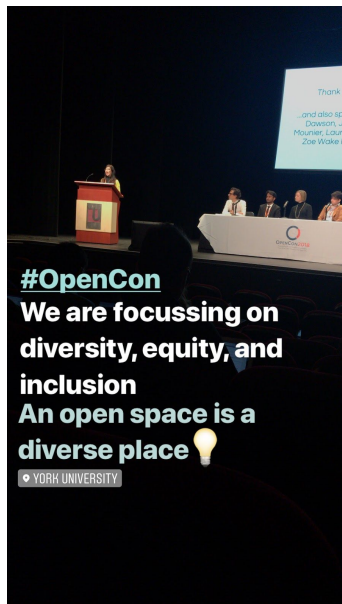


Conference Report: OpenCon 2018

Something that I am incredibly passionate about as a student advocate is Open Education. Open Education has the ability to break down so many significant barriers for students that pursue post-secondary. Could you imagine what life as a student would be like if your instructor created a course pack with 100% course applicable information that was \$15, as opposed to requiring 3, \$50 books that you may read a few pages of? This is just one area of Open Education that has so much potential to change post-secondary for so many.

Earlier in my term, I heard about OpenCon, a global conference that would connect individuals passionate about Open Data, Access, and Education. This immediately gained my attention and I knew I had to at least apply to go. OpenCon is typically held in different locations every year - last year it was in Europe. This year, it was being held in Toronto, which really opened up the possibility of attending. A couple of months went by, and then I received confirmation that I had been chosen to attend the conference. From there, I cleared going with my executive team, and ensured this aligned with my mandate as the Director of Policy for CASA.

I flew to Toronto, Ontario on November 1 and attended the conference from the 2nd - 4th. The conference was held at York University. York is a beautiful campus and I really wish I would have had the chance to see more of it. I was able to attend this



conference with someone that is absolutely die hard for the Open movement! Akanksha is the Vice-President Academic at the University of Alberta Students' Union, and someone I would consider a good friend! It was nice to have a familiar face along with me, but to also have someone with a similar background in advocacy and understanding of the concerns, restraints, and rhetoric occurring on our campuses in Alberta.



The theme for the conference was discussing equity, diversity, and inclusion in scholarship and the Open movement. I learned a lot and it allowed me to reflect upon the things that I may have been unknowingly upholding. Each day, there were various activities,



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panels, and discussions. One of the standout sessions for me was a panel on being critical of the work we do and scholarship in general, and how we can question the structures we may be enforcing, aren't contributing to further our cause in the Open movement.

Another session that was pretty interesting was a session I attended with participants from North America. We were in a collaborative session in which the end goal was to figure out ways stakeholders, students, individuals, on campuses can start conversations about Openness on their and how they can begin achieving their goals. I worked with a group of other students on how a students voice can matter in the Open movement. It was nice to be able to work with students who passionate and recognize the barriers that many students and even faculty and staff are facing on a day to day basis.

I am incredibly thankful to have been able to attend this conference. I have a lot of ideas on how to work more closely with the University of Lethbridge, and have a few ways to engage students on campus. Being able to bring additional information back to CASA is also a huge benefit to the organization

If you have any questions about this conference, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Victoria Schindler
Vice-President External

