

**REPRESENTING AND ADVOCATING FOR LEISURE SCHOLARS IN
CANADA:
THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR LEISURE STUDIES / ASSOCIATION
CANADIENNE D'ÉTUDES EN LOISIR**

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ABSTRACT: The Canadian Association for Leisure Studies / Association canadienne d'études en loisir (CALs) was established in 1981 following successful conferences in 1975 and 1978 focusing on leisure research. The primary aim of CALs is to provide a platform and voice for Canadian leisure scholars through regular communication and advocacy. CALs principal means of connecting leisure researchers is through the hosting of the triennial Canadian Congress on Leisure Research and the publication of the scholarly journal, *Leisure / Loisir*.

Keywords: Leisure studies. Scholarship. Interdisciplinary research.

**REPRESENTANDO ACADEMICAMENTE OS PESQUISADORES DE LAZER
NO CANADÁ:
A ASSOCIAÇÃO CANADENSE PARA ESTUDOS DO LAZER**

RESUMO: A Associação Canadense para Estudos do Lazer (CALs) foi fundada em 1981 após duas bem-sucedidas conferências sobre pesquisa no lazer realizadas em 1975 e 1978. O objetivo principal da CALs é fornecer uma plataforma que permita representatividade para os pesquisadores canadenses no lazer por meio de uma efetiva comunicação. As principais metas da CALs consistem em conectar os pesquisadores de lazer na realização do evento trienal Congresso Canadense de Pesquisa em Lazer e a publicação da revista acadêmica *Leisure/Loisir*.

Palavras-chave: Estudos do lazer. Oportunidades acadêmicas. Pesquisa interdisciplinar.

**REPRESENTACIÓN Y DEFENSA DE LOS INVESTIGADORES DE OCIO EN
CANADÁ:
LA ASOCIACIÓN CANADIENSE DE ESTUDIOS DEL OCIO**

RESUMEN: La Asociación Canadiense de Estudios del Ocio (CALs) fue fundada en 1981, luego de dos conferencias exitosas sobre investigación en ocio realizadas en 1975 y 1978. El objetivo principal de la CALs es brindar una plataforma y voz para los investigadores de ocio canadienses, por medio de una comunicación efectiva. Los principales medios para conectar a los investigadores de ocio, consisten en la celebración del Congreso Canadiense Trienal de Investigación en Ocio, y la publicación de la Revista Académica *Leisure/Loisir*.

Palabras-clave: Estudios del ocio. Investigadores. Investigación interdisciplinaria.

¹ President of CALs, 2005 to 2014.

The Canadian Association for Leisure Studies / Association canadienne d'études en loisir (CALs) is a professional organization of Canadian and international scholars who share an interest in leisure research, and the role leisure plays in the lives of individuals, communities, and society. While the primary function of CALs is to provide a vehicle through which the membership can regularly communicate, the organization also serves an advocacy role by championing the importance of leisure to governments, institutions, and the public at large.

Founding of CALs

In 1975, researchers from across Canada representing universities, government, and the private sector convened in Québec City, Québec, at the first *Canadian Congress on Leisure Research*. Organised under the auspices of Laval University, the first Congress was conceived as a one-time event, that served to provide researchers from several different disciplines, all of whom shared an interest in leisure, recreation, and tourism, with a forum to share their work and to celebrate an area of study frequently marginalised within some other parent discipline, such as psychology, sociology, geography, or economics. Intended at the time to be the only Congress focused on leisure research, with no plan for subsequent meetings, discussions among the delegates revealed the desire for a second congress.

Those discussions and the success of the first Congress encouraged a small group of individuals in Ontario to organise a *Second Canadian Congress on Leisure Research*, which was held three years later in Toronto, Ontario, in 1978. During this second Congress, a continuing series of conferences was first envisaged, together with the idea of a permanent organization to: (a) promote leisure research generally in Canada, and specifically, (b) take responsibility for the regular convening of the Congress. A group of delegates met and charged a small committee made up of both academics and government officials to prepare a proposal and constitution for a formal organization, which would be presented to delegates at a subsequent Congress tentatively scheduled to be held in Edmonton, Alberta.

So, at the *Third Canadian Congress on Leisure Research* in 1981, a proposal and constitution for a Canadian Association for Leisure Studies / Association canadienne d'études en loisir (CALs) was unanimously endorsed by the delegates. Two years following the Congress in 1983, CALs received its Federal Charter. The newly formed organization also settled on the triennial pattern for the convening of the Congress, typically during May, which continues to this day. The Fifteenth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research (CCLR15) is scheduled for May 2017, to be hosted by the University of Waterloo.

From the outset, CALs was intended to be a relatively informal organization of persons interested in leisure research which has, as its primary responsibilities: (1)

awarding the triennial Canadian Congress on Leisure Research to organizations, usually Universities, interested in convening it, and (2) maintaining communication among members between Congresses. All delegates who attend a Congress are automatically made members of CALS until the next Congress. Over the years, small changes have been made to the Bylaws of CALS to better reflect its evolving structure and incorporate new activities and responsibilities.

Mandate of CALS

The mandate of CALS can be summarised based on the goals described in its original articles when the organization received its Federal Charter:

1. To further the interests of its members in the study of leisure in Canada;
2. To promote and advocate for the application of findings of studies of leisure;
3. To hold meetings, conferences, or workshops on leisure or subjects related thereto; and
4. To publish or exchange information, papers, books, or other publications related to leisure.

Over time, these goals have remained relatively consistent even though the means by which they are achieved have evolved. For example, a principal means of communicating the findings of research to members and more broadly, along with the triennial Congress, has been the publication of the official journal of CALS, *Leisure / Loisir*. Sole responsibility for the journal was taken on by CALS in 1995 after several years of sharing the role with another organization.

To further enhance communication and advocacy, CALS joined the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS) in 1996. The CFHSS is a federation of over 160 Canadian academic organizations that promotes research, learning, and an understanding of the contributions made by the humanities and the social sciences, including leisure studies, to public and the public policy communities. Each year, the CFHSS organises Canada's largest academic gathering, the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, bringing together more than 8,000 participants each year, and CALS has regularly participated in these gatherings. Membership in the CFHSS is useful to CALS in order to be part of the larger body of social science and humanities researchers in Canada, and to be kept abreast of developments on the national scene with regard to promoting the value of the humanities and social sciences.

Governance

CALS is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors and an Executive Committee of four officers (i.e., President, Past-President, Vice-President/Treasurer, and

Secretary). The Board of Directors and Executive officers are elected by the membership at each Congress and serve a three-year term until the next Congress. The one exception to the election of officers is the outgoing President who remains on the Board as Past-President. CALS has no paid staff and only a small budget, obtained from a modest per capita levy added to the registration fees of delegates at each Congress. Its Head Office moves with the Presidency. Efforts are made to ensure that the Board reflects the demographic and geographic diversity of leisure researchers from across Canada.

The principal duties of the Board are to ensure the hosting of the Canadian Congress on Leisure Research every three years, to ensure the publication of the organization's official journal, to maintain regular communication with the membership about relevant publications, conferences, and other events of mutual interest, and to advocate on behalf of leisure research in Canada. As the principal voice of leisure research in Canada, CALS has routinely contributed policy briefs and position statements to governments and academic institutions on matters of concern to the membership.

Membership in CALS is comprised of all delegates attending the triennial Congress, although individuals can make a request to join the organization at any time. The membership is made up primarily of academics, and along with leisure researchers working in government agencies or in the private or not-for-profit sectors, the total number of members is typically about 250 individuals. University and college students represent about 20 per cent of the total membership.

Communications

Canadian Congress on Leisure Research (CCLR)

The membership of CALS meets once every three years at the Canadian Congress on Leisure Research to share research and advance understanding of leisure, broadly defined and applied. Over the years, the Congress has served to bring together leisure researchers from multiple disciplines to facilitate and communicate interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary understandings of leisure. Each host of the Congress selects a theme, which over time has reflected a particular interest within the field of leisure studies across Canada as well as its evolution as a field. A brief overview of the Congresses is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Canadian Congress of Leisure Research (CCLR) from 1975 to 2017

Congress	Host	Location	Theme
1 st CCLR (1975)	Laval University	Québec City, QC	Leisure research as an interdisciplinary area of study
2 nd CCLR (1978)	Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation	Toronto, ON	The growing sophistication in research related to leisure in contemporary society
3 rd CCLR (1981)	University of Alberta	Edmonton, AB	Interface: Towards more relevant leisure research
4 th CCLR (1984)	Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	Trois-Rivières, QC	–
5 th CCLR (1987)	Dalhousie University	Halifax, NS	Breadth and depth in leisure research
6 th CCLR (1990)	University of Waterloo	Waterloo, ON	Leisure challenges: Bringing people, resources, and policy into play
7 th CCLR (1993)	University of Manitoba	Winnipeg, MB	The change and the changed: leisure research in the 1990s
8 th CCLR (1996)	University of Ottawa	Ottawa, ON	A celebration of leisure studies
9 th CCLR (1999)	Acadia University	Wolfville, NS	Exchanging ideas and advancing our individual and collective knowledge
10 th CCLR (2002)	University of Alberta	Edmonton, AB	The anniversary meeting of CCLR and CALS
11 th CCLR (2005)	Malaspina University College	Nanaimo, BC	Two solitudes: Isolation or impact
12 th CCLR (2008)	Concordia University	Montréal, QC	A time of significant growth in leisure research by Canadian scholars
13 th CCLR (2011)	Brock University	St. Catharines, ON	An evolving tapestry: Weaving together the threads of leisure
14 th CCLR (2014)	Dalhousie University	Halifax, NS	Our new leisure society: A critical examination of technology, demographic shifts, culture and ideologies on leisure in a changing society
15 th CCLR (2017)	University of Waterloo	Waterloo, ON	Engaging legacies: Co-creating histories of inclusive communities through research, excellence, knowledge translation, innovation, and action

Key to provinces: QC = Québec; ON = Ontario; AB = Alberta; NS = Nova Scotia; MB = Manitoba; BC = British Columbia

Conference Proceedings are produced at each Congress by the host University on behalf of CALS and distributed to all delegates. Within one year following each CCLR, all abstracts and/or papers published in the various Proceedings² are provided to the Leisure Information Network (LIN), a national knowledge-based digital forum for sharing value-added information regarding individual and community nourishment and well-being through recreation, parks, and healthy living. LIN collects and disseminates a variety of sources of information via its National Recreation Database (NRDB) that advances leisure as an essential element of quality of life. All CCLR Proceedings can be retrieved from the LIN website (www.lin.ca/conference-papers), and the site also provides copies of the Congress programmes and, from the early years of the meetings, copies of the *Catalogues of Leisure Research in Canada*.

CALS listserv

CALS maintains a members-only listserv to distribute information of interest to the leisure research community. Most messages to the list concern upcoming conferences, calls for papers issued by various journals, announcements of new books and new issues of leisure-related journals, job advertisements for academic positions, and on occasion, general inquiries from members for information on selected topics. The list is not moderated and relies on the members to exercise good judgement when distributing information.

Leisure / Loisir

Leisure/Loisir is the official journal of CALS. Previously published by the Ontario Research Council on Leisure (ORCOL) beginning in 1970, CALS obtained full responsibility for the journal in 2009. Beginning in 2010, the journal has been published quarterly by Routledge, a division of Taylor & Francis based in the United Kingdom. Details concerning the journal (i.e., guidelines for authors, listing of all published articles since 1999) can be found online (<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rloi>).

The journal has a long history of publishing research related to leisure and recreation. Begun in 1971 by ORCOL with the support of the then Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, the journal – first named *Recreation Review* – was a vehicle to share relevant literature and recent applied research to recreation professionals throughout the province. The journal subsequently went through a number of name changes, which reflected changes both in foci and in transitions of the field of leisure studies. In essence, the journal became less of a professional periodical and more of a peer-reviewed scholarly outlet for leisure researchers. In many ways, the journal's

² Proceedings for the 4th Canadian Congress on Leisure Research (1984), held in Trois-Rivières, Québec, were not distributed.

orientation has mirrored the way in which University programmes became increasingly oriented toward the discipline rather than the profession, although the application of findings of research is still emphasised.

In brief, the history of the journal can be summarised as follows:

- *Recreation Review* (1970 to 1976) with support from the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation and published by the Ontario Research Council on Leisure (ORCOL) to provide professional updates, reviews, conference summaries, and so on.
- *Recreation Research Review* (1976 to 1989) – the addition of “research” to the journal’s name reflected the increased focus on empirical research rather than review articles and commentaries.
- *Journal of Applied Recreation Research* (1989 to 1998) – with the encouragement of the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, the journal began emphasising the application of empirical research to professional practice in an effort to provide a forum for both scholars and practitioners.
- *Leisure / Loisir* (1999 to present) – following a partnership with ORCOL, the journal became the official publication of CALS in 2009, is officially bilingual, and is now generally regarded as an international scholarly journal publishing papers on all aspects of leisure.

Leisure / Loisir strives to publish a diverse collection of scholarly papers in all areas of leisure, recreation, arts, parks, sport, and travel and tourism. Reflecting the multi- and interdisciplinary nature of these areas of study, the journal invites papers that embrace a wide range of epistemological perspectives and research methodologies and methods. Papers submitted to *Leisure / Loisir* include, but are not limited to empirical research papers (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), conceptual papers, research notes, comprehensive review papers, policy and economic impact analyses, and pedagogical aspects for leisure educators. Leisure is a global phenomenon, and therefore, the journal embraces international perspectives. While *Leisure / Loisir* is based in Canada and offers a primary outlet for individuals affiliated with Canadian institutions, the journal encourages international submissions. As a Canadian journal, both English and French manuscript submissions are encouraged.

Challenges

Even though the Canadian Congress on Leisure Research is only held once every three years, it still represents a significant challenge for the volunteer organisers at the host University. There are very few University departments focused on leisure studies across Canada with the capacity to host the Congress. In recent years, the shrinking of

some programmes, the amalgamation of others into institutional structures with broader mandates, and even the closure of some departments, mean this challenge will become even greater.

Effective advocacy with governments and institutions continues to represent a challenge. In societies where the discourse is dominated by the economy, advocating for leisure as the means to a higher quality of life for all frequently encounters scepticism from those in power who only look for the economic impact of any activity or policy initiative. Nevertheless, with the global shift away from purely economic measures like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as an indicator of social progress, the contribution of leisure to quality of life is increasingly being recognised as an integral part of the human experience.

The future of CALS

The future of CALS appears secure and even bright. The majority of the Board of Directors is currently comprised of the “next generation” of leisure scholars, all of whom are committed to the advancement of leisure studies as a unique and important discipline in the social sciences. The field is shifting towards a more critical lens of inquiry and is focusing increasingly on social issues where leisure can play an important role – social justice, poverty reduction, gender issues, diversity, inclusion, equity, and wellbeing. This evolving focus places leisure studies at the heart of social science research devoted to enhancing the lives of Canadian individuals, communities, and society at large.

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