

BCCIE Summer Conference 2018 theme:  
Things we should be talking about in International Education

*We didn't start the fire  
It was always burning  
Since the world's been turning  
We didn't light it but we tried to fight it.*

(NB for folks who stream music and don't utilize old technology, except for the hipsters who think they discovered vinyl: These lyrics are from a popular music song released by the artist Billy Joel, including in its text brief, rapid-fire allusions to more than one hundred headline events between 1949, the year of Joel's birth, and 1989, when the song was released.)

International Education has been around since Socrates, but we are now its stewards. Like the colour of our eyes and hair, the uncanny genetics of our hips and waistlines, our health and our handwriting, like the old dining room suite, the cups and saucers and feeding Uncle Rodger every Christmas, we may have inherited much of this sector but now we own it. Even proud parents have to admit that their children are not good at everything, and that sometimes they are downright awful.

We apparently need to talk about our relationship. We might start by reflecting on what we think we are doing, and why, by poking holes in some of the assumptions embedded in International Education, by looking at things ***we are*** talking about, by suggesting things ***we should be*** talking about.

(And talk we do. As a small aside, it might here be noted that our sector already does a lot of talking, and needs to go to a lot of places and attend an orgy of acronyms to do just that, in no particular order: NAFSA, AIEA, EAIE, APAIE, BCCIE, CBIE, CAPS-I, LC, UC, CICAN, FAUBAI, NAFSA Regional, IPSEA, AMPEI, CACUSS, CUMEX, ICEF, GOING GLOBAL, CONAHEC, BUTEX, USAC, CUSAC, NACAC, CUSAC, USAC, CIEE, PNACAC, CEE, IIE, WISE, CAFCE, ACE, CAIE, AIEC, AIU, and so on ad infinitum. But please do come to BCCIE.)

As you are reading this, it is safe to assume that you are already engaged in the sector, possibly a member of the parish. Many of us know with evangelical zeal that the positives we do so far outweigh the contrary that we can be forgiven for thinking there are no substantive negatives, no issues where we are on the wrong side of history, that all is bread and roses.

Important motherhood issues already dominate our conversations: tolerating difference in dynamic geopolitical environments, turbulent times, a philistine assault on the academy and liberalism; Trump and Brexit, nativism, populism; temporary foreign workers, refugees, immigration and migration; internationalization; sustainable financial models; the Pacific Century; outcomes and diversity; global citizenry, and the concomitant need for better classroom management here and more study abroad there; using technology to do whatever, wherever, whenever; pathways and transitions; mentorship and succession planning; transnational delivery; marketing and admissions: the global South's burgeoning middle

classes (our emerging partners) and how we create ambassadors of tolerance and democracy with our world-class education.

Our sector casts a long shadow and there may be other things we should be talking about: climate change and the culpability of our sector with its large carbon footprint; how globalization and its well-intentioned offspring internationalization have spawned the populism and nativism we are so offended by; fake news and the abhorrent lack of inculcation of critical thinking; how cosmopolitanism, inter-culturalization and indigenization have on the streets already overtaken internationalization as *prima facie* rationale for what we do; housing, mental health, campus suicides, student support and stewardship; culture, sexual assault and predatory behaviour; nature vs. nurture and male violence, the great majority of which is directed towards other males; regional growth and rural engagement; our addiction to unsustainable growth; reconciliation and residential schools; fentanyl, opioids and binge drinking; our complicity in the brain drain, the scourge of globalization; our culling of the top economic strata from the global South's burgeoning middle classes (our emerging markets) to fill our classrooms, quotas and coffers; our wilful ignorance of the demography and elitism of study abroad, building programs and pedestals for the 1% to springboard their careers.

There are uncomfortable conversations to be had to be sure. Events such as this year's BCCIE Summer Conference, with a wide-open and hopefully welcoming theme, constitute opportunity to network and learn but also to present new research and thinking, to dispel reigning myths, to offer new ways of looking at things, and new things to look at, to allow us to ponder the existing dialogue and add new topics, to truly create a new narrative.

We have achieved much on this file in BC and in Canada, with a deserved global reputation for quality education and service, word of mouth that you can't buy, complicity and support from immigration, record levels of unsustainable growth, generally happy crises of too many and not enough. But nothing lasts forever. It may be time to ponder consolidation and introspection.

Listen to ["We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel](#)