

A Beginner's Guide to the CHA Annual Meeting

By Andrea Eidinger

Another year, another Canadian Historical Association (CHA) Annual Meeting! Can you believe it's already here again? While it's always a ton of fun to attend the CHA, the conference can be really intimidating whether this is your first or 20th time. So, in this short guide, I'm going to walk you through my top tips for making the most out of your CHA experience. Enjoy!

Table of Contents

First Things First: What is the CHA?	2
The CHA and Congress	2
How do I attend the CHA Meeting?	2
Musqueam Territory	3
The Basics	4
Travelling/Flying	4
Finding a Place to Stay	5
What to Pack	5
On the First Day	5
Information for Presenters	6
Work It	6
The CHA and Twitter	7
Maximizing your Congress Experience	7
Coffee/Tea.....	8
Food	8
Quiet Spaces.....	9
Other	9
Essential Services.....	9
Accessibility and Finding Your Way Around	10
Child Care	10
Gender-Inclusive Washrooms.....	11
Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding Spaces	11
Arrangement for Ramadan.....	11
Necessary Events	11
Good Things to Know	12
Annoying (and Funny) Things that Happen at Every CHA and Conference	12

First Things First: What is the CHA?

The Canadian Historical Association, better known as the CHA, is the national professional association for historians in Canada. While it might seem like this organization only represents historians who study Canada, it's actually for any historian who researches or is Canadian (although non-Canadian subjects tend to be underrepresented). Many people believe that the CHA is only for academic historians, but this is absolutely not the case! Anyone who does history in any shape or form is welcome to become a member and/or attend the conference.

The CHA and Congress

The CHA holds its annual meeting as part of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Basically, each year at the end of May and beginning of June, the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the umbrella organization for all of the different humanities and social science professional associations, organizes a congress, which is a collection of conferences that all happen at the same time. The location for the congress changes each year; this year, Congress will be meeting at the University of Regina. In total there will be approximately 70 different associations meeting with more than 8,000 attendees.

Expert Tip: There is a general pattern to the location of each Congress, though it's not a hard and fast rule. It alternates between a central location (Ontario or Quebec), and the coasts. Last year (2018) it was in Regina. This year it will be at Vancouver, and the 2020 venue will be Western University! Also, the conferences in the western part of the country in particular tend to be smaller, while those in Ottawa and Toronto are the largest, mostly due to where most Canadian historians happen to live.

How do I attend the CHA Meeting?

There are two basic ways to attend. The first is to submit a proposal to give a conference presentation. The deadline for this is usually in October. The second way is to register as an attendee. You will need to do this over at the Congress website. To attend the CHA, you must register with Congress as well as sign up to attend the CHA annual meeting. You can [register ahead of time online](#), which I highly recommend – the website is really straightforward and you won't need to worry about anything once you've arrived. You can also register in person at the main hub (more on this below). If you choose to register online, I highly recommend doing so as early as possible – rates go up after March 31st. You will also need to make sure that your membership with the CHA is fully paid up. Again, it's super easy, and all of the information you need to do this can be found [here](#).

Expert Tip: I'd suggest registering even if you don't plan to attend the conference, since you get a quarterly bulletin as well as one year of print copies of the *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, which publishes the best

conference presentations in article form. I'd also recommend taking this opportunity to join any of the [smaller affiliated committees of the CHA](#). For example, I'm a member of the [Canadian Committee on Women's History \(CCWH\)](#). Each committee will hold its own event at the CHA and will often sponsor special panels. It's definitely worth checking out. The CCWH, for example, has [an annual wine and cheese-slash-book launch](#), and you can totally fangirl all over your favourite women and gender historians.

Musqueam Territory

This year's CHA Annual Meeting is being held on UBC's Point Grey campus, on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the e hənq̓əmínəm speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.

UBC has a fairly comprehensive guide to acknowledging Musqueam Nation at various ceremonies and events, developed in association with the Musqueam Protocol Office, available [here](#).

The standard territorial acknowledgement for UBC's Point Grey campus is as follows:

"I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam people."

Please note that this acknowledgement is specific to the Point Grey campus. For events at the Downtown Vancouver campus, the proper acknowledgement is:

"I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered today on the traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations."

Here is how to properly pronounce the names of these First Nations.

- Musqueam: MUSS-quee-um
- Tseil-Waututh: tSLAY-wah-tooth
- Squamish: SKWA-mish
 - If you prefer, check out this video to learn "[How To Say Skwxwú7mesh](#)"

In keeping with Chelsea Vowel's admonition to go "[beyond territorial acknowledgements](#)," I would encourage [you to check out this collection of resources to learn more about the Musqueam history and present](#) of the area currently known as the UBC Point Grey camps. I would particularly encourage you to check out [these videos by Musqueam Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members](#). I would also highly recommend that you check out [this website](#), including an official welcome from

Musqueam Elder Larry Grant, for more information on how Musqueam and UBC are working together.

The Basics

Travelling/Flying

Don't be silly like me, and forget that Congress [often secures discounts for travel. This year, they got discounts for both Air Canada and Westjet](#). If you are flying in, there are plenty of taxis available at the airport on Level 2 in the Domestic and International Arrival Areas.

For future reference, if you know you are planning to attend Congress and will be flying to your destination, keep an eye out for seat sales. Or better yet, make friends with people who keep an eye out for seat sales!

Taxis from the airport have zone fares, depending on your destination. If you are going to UBC, your taxi will cost \$36, plus tip. When you are going to the airport, standard rates apply.

If you would prefer to use public transit, then you will be happy to learn that there is Skytrain service from YVR (Vancouver's airport), via the Canada Line. If you are going downtown, you should only need the Skytrain. However, if you are going to UBC, you will need to use Google Maps to plan your trip, since you will be required to transfer to a bus to get out to campus. There are a good half a dozen buses that you can take, and Google Maps can help you decide what to do. The cost for using the Skytrain and Vancouver bus services depends on how far you are going, and [this website can help you determine what your fare will be](#). On average, the trip from YVR to UBC is an hour.

Previously, to use the Vancouver transit system, you needed to purchase a ticket. However, [we now have a tap-in service that will also accept credit cards](#). If you prefer to purchase a ticket or a daypass, [they are available at kiosks at every Skytrain, and some additional locations, as part of the Compass Card system](#).

Expert Tip: As someone very familiar with Vancouver transit, I would recommend taking a taxi from the airport if you can afford it. It beats lugging around a suitcase on the Skytrain.

While most of the buses and street cars are wheelchair-accessible, not all of them are. Some of the bus and street car stops are not wheelchair accessible. Most of the Skytrain stations have elevators, though not all of them are currently functioning. At the moment, [new escalators are being added](#) at the Yaletown-Roundhouse, Vancouver City Centre, and Waterfront stations (all on the Canada Line). Just be aware that things are currently a bit less functional downtown than they usually are. The [TransLink Trip Planner](#) can help

you find a route that is wheelchair accessible and/or has minimal walking. More information accessibility is available [here](#), and you can check [TransLink Alerts and Advisories](#) for real-time updates on issues with elevators.

Finding a Place to Stay

Aside from booking your flight or making travel arrangements, you will also need to find somewhere to stay. While you might be lucky enough to have a friend you can stay with, chances are you will need to book a room. If you can, stay at the university where the conference is being held. The room rates are great, and the location can't be beat. However, these rooms will fill up super fast and, since these are dorm rooms, you will likely need a roommate (though you can also be assigned one). Otherwise, the Congress books blocks of rooms at local hotels at a discounted rate for attendees. You can find more information about all of this [on the Congress website](#). Again, book as early as possible, since the closest and/or cheapest hotels get booked really far in advance! While most academics tend to procrastinate on everything, this seems to be one exception. You should also figure out how to get from your hotel to the university and back. Again, the link above will have all of the necessary information.

Expert Tip: Are you a poor graduate student or recent graduate? Try applying to work at the Congress. It's a great way to still attend, but have some of the cost defrayed. Applications are closed for this year, but it's something to think about for the future. My husband did this a couple of years ago and he loved it. He also got to work the book expo, the lucky duck.

What to Pack

There are lots of really great blog posts out there about how to pack for a conference. Some of my favourites include this guide from the [Geeky Artist Librarian](#), this one from [More than Just Desserts](#), this classic from [The Professor Is In](#), and this one from [My Laser Boyfriend](#) (not just for fashionable lady scientists!) The only thing I would add is that comfort is the most important thing. While I wouldn't personally wear jeans, you don't need to look super professional unless you are presenting. Most historians just wear slacks and shirts, and sometimes dresses and skirts. And I cannot recommend a pair of comfortable shoes enough! If you'd like some specific tips for Canadian historians, [check out this blog post, on teaching in comfort and style](#).

Expert Tip: Since UBC's Point Grey campus is on a peninsula, it tends to be slightly cooler than the rest of Vancouver, and there is almost always a breeze. So make sure you pack a scarf, cardigan, or jacket, regardless of the forecast. And an umbrella is always a good idea, just in case! Thanks to Tina Adcock for this particular tip!

On the First Day

The first thing you need to do once you're arrived for the first day of the conference is to pick up your registration package (or register if you haven't done so already) at the Congress Hub. The Congress Hub is located on the first and second floors of [the Nest](#), a.k.a. the student centre. You can ask one of the helpful Congress guides for information

on where to go, or just look for the largest concentration of people wearing glasses and carrying papers or briefcases. ;) Resist the tempting call of the Book Expo until after you register. Or at the very least make a valiant effort.

Expert Tip: Though many conferences have started offering pronoun stickers to be used on your nametag, this isn't the case yet at Congress. However, you can still add them yourself if you feel comfortable doing so! For information on why this is so important for creating inclusive conferences, go [here](#), and for more on when and how to ask folks about their pronouns, go [here](#).

The building that registration takes place in is the “hub” of Congress. There are lots of talks that are also given in the building, but the main attraction is the [Book Expo](#). This year, as is usually the case, the Book Expo is held in the same building as registration, Congress Hub. Basically, all of the academic publishers in Canada and some from the US and the UK set up shop and show us their pretties. The books are often cheaper to buy here, and if you're a historian, chances are you're a bibliophile too. Just remember two things: you'll have to lug those things around with you all day and then you'll have to lug them home on the plane. Shop wisely.

Expert Tip: The CHA office is located in the Buchanan Tower (BUTO), Room 104A, open 12:00-5:00 pm on Sunday, June 2nd, and 8:00 am – 5:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, June 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Near the office, there are often pastries, tea, coffee, and juice. Stock up - they get raided really quickly.

Most of the CHA Panels will take place in Buchanan Building (BUCH), blocks B and D.

Information for Presenters

Generally speaking, most of the classrooms in BUCH B have computers, while none of the classrooms in BUCH D have them (though there are projectors) So if you are planning to use PowerPoint, I would recommend bringing your own laptop and adaptors. If you would like to find out about the features of the specific room you will be presenting in, [you can check out this website](#).

I would also recommend [checking out this guide for accessible presentations, created by Congress](#).

Work It

How you approach each conference is largely up to you. I'm not going to give you any specific advice, since there are already tons of great blog posts out there with advice on working conferences. The absolute best comes from [Tenured Radical](#), and although it's about the American Historical Association, nearly all of its advice applies to the CHA as well. Seriously, read that post. The other must-read comes from the Professor Is In. This isn't history-specific, but the advice is golden. There are three parts ([part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#)), so make sure you check them all out.

Expert Tip: If you are shy, I'd also recommend checking out "[I'm Sorry I Wasn't More Clear](#)": Gendered Pitfalls in Presentations—A Guest Post," though some of the language isn't as gender-inclusive as I would like.

The CHA and Twitter

There are a number of fantastic people, including myself, who will live-tweet every panel that they attend. This means that they will be posting summaries of papers as they occur on Twitter. To follow along, even if you aren't at the CHA, all you need to do is use the hashtag #chashc2019. Additional hashtags to keep an eye on include:

#congressh

#histcan

#cdnhist

#cdnhistory

If you are new to Twitter, you can learn how to keep up with all things Canadian history on Twitter [here](#), where you can also find a helpful list of Canadian historians on Twitter! And don't forget to follow the official Twitter account of the CHA, @CdnHistAssoc.

Expert Tip: You might want to set up a saved search, the instructions for which you can find [here](#).

SUPER Expert Tip: Twitter doesn't archive material, so unless you take steps to save tweets, they will disappear after a certain period of time. I always create an archive of tweets from each conference, using TAGS. It looks intimidating, but it's definitely worth the trouble. I'm also planning to upload an archive to Unwritten Histories once the conference is finished.

Maximizing your Congress Experience

Most of us don't realize this, but each year, Congress actually puts up helpful information for people who are not local. For instance, they always have a helpful [campus map](#); the [best places to grab some lunch or have dinner on campus](#) (though not necessarily the cheapest); suggestions [for places to explore](#) (not that you would ever skip a panel...); and information about [the amenities on campus](#) (like where to print your paper because you only finished writing it on the plane...)

WARNING: UBC is currently undergoing significant construction, and some roads have been closed. For a detailed map of active construction sites and road detours/closures, go [here](#).

However, since I happen to actually work at UBC, I have some more specific suggestions for you!

Coffee/Tea

The closest coffee shop to Buchanan is [Great Dane Coffee](#). It's not very big, but it's really nice and also carries some nibblies. Nearby there's also Ike's Café in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre where you can acquire the legendary "[Ponderosa Cake](#)," though my husband was less than impressed when he tasted it. The Blue Chip Café in the Nest (student centre) has good coffee, pastries, muffins, and sandwiches; it's also run by the student association. There are also six Starbucks on campus, including one in the Student Union Building, and another in the Bookstore. Both carry the full range of Starbucks offerings, including food. If you don't mind walking a little further, in the U Boulevard Neighbourhood, there is also [a J.J. Bean](#), widely considered the best café on campus. If you use reusable water bottles, then you're in luck because [Andrea Chung created a wonderful interactive map with a list of all the water fountains on campus](#). Just be aware that this list hasn't been updated since 2015, and there are no longer any bottle-filling stations. There are water fountains on each floor of BUCH B, but there aren't any in BUCH D.

Food

There are three hubs for food on campus:

The Nest is the giant building that looks like a bird's nest. It's pretty centrally located and has a nice open area out front for eating, as well as lots of seating inside. My favourite place for eating at the Nest is the Gallery Patio and Lounge. It's on the 4th floor, and has a nice selection of pub food and a rooftop terrace. You can check out [the menu here](#). Their gallery appy platter is particularly good for sharing. You can sit wherever you'd like. Just grab a menu (near the door) when you come in. Once you know what you want, you just go up to the bar to order. They will give you a giant number on a stick, and you just put it on your table. The food will come to you when it's ready! If you want something quick and halfway decent, PI[E]R² PIZZA has a good selection. They are on level one, and the menu is [here](#). For a complete list of all of the restaurants at the Nest, including menus, go [here](#). My husband recommends The Delly, which has a wide assortment of food, and makes sandwiches to order.

Expert Tip: If you are looking to buy groceries, you are also in luck. Grocery Checkout (yes, that's the name) is located on the first floor of the Nest. They stock fruit, veg, some meat, dry goods (including bulk bins), and pre-packaged items.

The **Student Life Building** (the former student centre) has just reopened after being under renovation for a couple of years. Aside from the Starbucks, it has a Subway and a Booster Juice. There are also lots of long tables, as well as cozy seats, if you need a place to sit and work, chat, or just be.

The U Boulevard Neighbourhood is slightly further away, near the bus exchange. The go-to in this area is, of course, Mahony and Sons, and [they have classic pub food as well](#). But there is also a great new selection of restaurants across the street, including places selling ramen, Lebanese food, and tacos. And make sure you check out [Rain or Shine](#)

[Homemade Ice Cream](#). Seriously, do not miss this place. And they have ice cream Taco Tuesdays!

If you want more suggestions or information, then [this list](#), from UBC Food Services, can tell you what is open and provide more details on where to find everything. And [this website has more great suggestions!](#)

Finally, if you are interested in checking out places to eat and explore downtown, Tina Loo and the UBC History department [have put together a comprehensive Google Map to help you out!](#)

Quiet Spaces

If you're like me and can get easily overwhelmed, you should know that UBC has a ton of beautiful quiet spaces where you can relax. This list has [some great suggestions](#). I would also recommend the space behind the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, which has lots of benches, and the lounges located all over BUCH B.

Other

If you enjoy going on walks, there are lots of wonderful opportunities at UBC!

- There are five 30-minute walking trails all around campus, and you can find information on them [here](#).
- You can check out some of the public art installations with the UBC Outdoor Art Tour [here](#).
- UBC Campus is right next to the Pacific Spirit Regional Park, which offers several walking and hiking trails. A map of the trails is available [here](#).
- Don't forget about the UBC Botanical Garden, [though you may be required to pay a fee](#). The garden [offers several walking tours for a small fee!](#) Or you can walk around by yourself, and [check](#) out the highlights.
 - Don't miss the beautiful [Nitobe Memorial Garden](#).

Please note that at UBC, and in Vancouver generally, we separate our waste products into four categories: food scraps, plastic/metal, paper, and garbage. You are responsible for sorting your waste yourself. Placing organic and recyclable materials in the garbage is strictly banned.

The login information for Congress wifi is as follows:

- Network Name (SSID): Congress 2019
- Password: Encore2019

Essential Services

In more recent years, Congress has made an effort to make the conference as inclusive as possible.

Accessibility and Finding Your Way Around

Congress has created an [Accessibility Guide](#) for anyone who has disabilities or accessibility needs. When you register for the conference, you can make arrangements to access particular services (such as specialized seating, priority seating, sign language interpretation, assistive listening devices, real-time captioning, alternative formats of written materials, mobility assistance on campus, accessible podiums, and seating for presenters). If you missed submitting the form when you were registering, you can contact Congress directly at congress@ideas-idees.ca.

Local mobility products are available for rent from [MacDonald's Home Health Care](#).

UBC and Congress claim that they will be providing a mobility assistance shuttle, wheelchair assistance, adaptive workspaces, and quiet spaces. However, there doesn't seem to be any information about any of this on the Congress website.

Expert Tip: Please note that the UBC campus is fairly hilly, and there does not seem to be a topographical map available that I can find.

They also claim that each building has at least one accessible entrance that will be labelled. But I can tell you from previous experience, these can sometimes be difficult to find or require significant detours. The same goes for wheelchair accessible washrooms.

However, [UBC does offer a Wayfinding service](#), where you can enter the building you would like information about. If you select the "Footprint Map," there is information about accessible entrances. [This link provides information](#) on accessible entrances for BUCH B and D. Unfortunately, the map doesn't appear to have been updated in several years, so there is little to no information for newer buildings like The Nest and the Student Life Building.

Most of the older buildings on campus do not have proper air conditioning, and most of the newer ones do. Luckily, BUCH B and D have air conditioning, though its effectiveness varies.

Child Care

Congress now offers [child care services](#) for children up to and including the age of twelve. For children between the ages of 0 and 6, daycare services are available from June 1 to June 7, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. The cost is \$20 per hour, up to a maximum of \$100 for eight hours per day. Registration is required by April 15, 2019. For children ages 6 to 12, there is UBC Camps, which is basically a summer day camp service. Half-day options are \$32 per day, and a full day is \$64. Registration is required by May 3, 2019. There is also additional programming for families, but unfortunately as of this writing, [the link with information on this programming does not work](#).

Gender-Inclusive Washrooms

While Congress doesn't officially provide this information, you should know that in BUCH B and D, as well as BUCH Tower, all bathrooms are gender-specific. What's more, they alternate floors. So one floor will only have a women's bathroom, and the next will only have a men's bathroom. However, the new Student Life Building, and some of the newer buildings, do have gender inclusive washrooms that are clearly labelled. UBC does offer single-user gender-inclusive washrooms across campus, and you can find a map of these locations [here](#), and additional information, including examples of signs, can be found [here](#).

Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding Spaces

UBC is a breastfeeding/chestfeeding friendly space. For specific information on private, semi-private, and designated breastfeeding/chestfeeding friendly spaces, go [here](#).

Arrangement for Ramadan

UBC and Congress have made special arrangements for individuals observing Ramadan. A guide is available at all Congress Info Kiosks on campus.

Necessary Events

Which panels you attend are totally up to you. But there are a couple of major events that happen at every CHA that you should attend.

Expert Tip: If you are a graduate student, don't miss the Graduate Student Committee General Meeting, which is happening May 27th, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at 1101 Kramer Blv.

The first one is the Keynote Address, which basically serves as the introduction to the conference and usually features a great speaker. This year it's on Monday from 10:30 am to 12:00 pm, in BUCH A101 and the speaker will be Allan Greer, who will be presenting "Settler Colonialism and Beyond."

On Tuesday, you can attend the CHA Presidential Address from 3:30 to 4:30 pm in BUCH A101, followed by the Annual General Meeting from 4:30 to 5:30 pm in the same room. There will be a short reception from 5:30 to 6:00 pm, presumably nearby, followed by the CHA Prize Ceremony from 6:00 to 7:00 pm, also in BUCH A101. Starting at 8 pm, Cliopalooza will be happening at the Pit in the Nest. This is a dance party that always features karaoke, awkward dancing, and inebriated historians. You have been warned...

Expert Tip: If you belong to an affiliated committee, you should try to attend their business meeting. The times and location vary, so check out your program.

Good Things to Know

- Most of the presentations will be in a small group of rooms, usually in the same building. Otherwise, herding historians is like herding cats.
- Panels that are held first thing in the morning and last in the evening tend to be sparsely attended. This is doubly true for the last panel slot of the conference, since many people leave early. Recently though, The CHA has been getting sneaky with this and putting really interesting panels at the end.
- Each year there are certain special panels that will be the talk of the conference. You can usually tell which ones these are by looking for big names, topics du jour (often political), or large crowds of historians going into one room. But there are always a couple of surprises, so don't be afraid to go to the panels you are interested in!
- The CHA is much more relaxed than the AHA. While networking is always good, most of the people who attend do so for the scholarship and the chance to see friends who live far away (whereas many young scholars interview for jobs at the AHA).
- Try not to stalk your favourite historians or get star-struck. Most historians are super nice and approachable. Though admittedly, my former supervisor has been trying to cure me of my star-struckness for years, with limited success.

Annoying (and Funny) Things that Happen at Every CHA and Conference

- Someone will ask a question at a panel and then use it to talk about their work until time is up.
- Someone will ignore the time warnings and go over their allotted speaking time, thereby reducing the amount of time left over for questions.
- People will enter the room late and leave early or bounce between panels.
- People will only hang out with their friends and/or people from the university they came from.
- Panels or papers will be completely unrelated to the theme of the conference or the title of the presentation.
- Almost everything will be in English, even though this is a bilingual conference.
- A few presenters will be woefully unprepared and spend the entire time talking about nothing.

Other than that, try to have fun! The CHA is always exciting, filled with some great scholarship, and amazing people. I'll see you there!