



CONGRESS OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

As Canada's largest academic gathering, the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences works to promote research and teaching for the advancement of an inclusive, democratic, and prosperous society. The annual event is the convergence of over 70 scholarly associations, each holding their annual conference under one umbrella. Congress 2021 marked the 90th year of the flagship event.

CONGRESS OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Typically spanning seven days in late May and early June and attracting over 8,000 attendees, Congress is organized by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences in partnership with a different Canadian university each year. The Federation, partner university, scholarly associations and partners develop a full week of presentations, workshops, panels, public lectures, cultural events, and receptions. It also features Canada's largest academic trade show. The result? Luminaries, researchers,

practitioners, policymakers, and students from across Canada and abroad meet, share ideas, and engage in discussions that have a direct impact on Canada and the lives of Canadians.

Congress programming is open to attendees, academics, and non-academic audiences. From theatre research, literature studies and history to education, sociology and communications, Congress represents a unique showcase of scholarly excellence, creativity, and leadership.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress 2021 was an entirely virtual event, organized in partnership with the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The theme for this year's Congress was "Northern Relations".

Quick FACTS

Venue: Virtual

Host: University of Alberta

Date: May 27-June 4 2021

Delegates: 6000+

6000+ DELEGATES FROM
72 COUNTRIES
around the world

1,750 ZOOM MEETINGS
and webinars over nine days

1 million people
REACHED ACROSS MEDIA PLATFORMS

500 TEAM MEMBERS
(staff, contractors, volunteers)

3500 VOLUNTEER
HOURS

DID YOU KNOW?

Edmonton All In is Explore Edmonton Corporation's Business Events team. Explore Edmonton Corporation is Edmonton's visitor economy and venue management organization. We tell Edmonton's story, elevate the Edmonton experience, and generate inbound visitation.

EDMONTON
All in.



THE EVENT

The 2021 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences was the largest virtual academic conference of its kind in Canada. The event put Edmonton and the University of Alberta on an international stage as a host for virtual events, and as a centre for intellectual excellence.

Over 9 days, the virtual congress engaged with more than 6000 attendees from 72 countries around the world, 28 associations and more than 1700 live zoom sessions. This experience could not have happened without the over 3500 hours of time that hundreds of volunteers donated.

The host city of the Congress typically has a strong relationship with the Federation in developing the terms of hotel contracts and accommodations. In the case of Congress 2021, the partner university also worked closely with Explore Edmonton, the City of Edmonton's Destination Marketing and Management Organization, to build a strong relationship early-on, which included sponsorship funding directed to both partners. Explore Edmonton demonstrated a keen interest in making Congress a high-impact event for Edmonton. While these initial financial and logistical commitments were withdrawn in the context of a virtual delivery of Congress, Explore Edmonton became a valuable resource in the planning and execution of many of the event's exciting virtual elements.

Beginning with the bid stage in 2016, Explore Edmonton worked with the University of Alberta through all stages of the event production, which culminated in providing an experienced Edmonton All In team member who sat as a volunteer on the organizing committee for several months.

Working through the ever-changing factors of the COVID-19 pandemic required the exploration and updating of strategies as needed throughout the planning process. Event planners built an elaborate multi-level contingency plan (plans A through F) with various scenarios outlining how to rectify any, and all situations as quickly and smoothly as possible. Each level of the contingency plan was actioned, highlighting the sheer difficulty of managing an event during these uncertain times, and the obstacles that can be faced when working within the virtual realm. This roadmap was essential in Congress' success and ability to go forward.

Due to the rapid rise of COVID-19 infection numbers in late March, early April of 2021, a difficult decision was made to run two Command Centres (East/West) and have all contractors and volunteers work from home. This required the hiring of additional contractors, engagement of a different volunteer pool, and ensuring that more resources were available to engage and support a larger virtual network.

The Explore Edmonton team helped to develop innovative ideas to highlight the city, as the event moved forward with its online delivery, and found ways to engage the attendees on the virtual platform.

THE MORNING SHOW

The Edmonton All In Morning Show was a sponsorship deliverable for the Congress 2021 of the Humanities and Social Sciences. As the conference pivoted from an in-person event hosted in Edmonton to a virtual event, Edmonton All In saw this as an exciting opportunity to engage with the Congress attendees and highlight the city in a brand-new way. With over 6,200 registered attendees, tuning in from 72 countries, Congress 2021 was the largest academic virtual conference in Canada and provided a massive audience to market our city and the work our Destination Management and Marketing Organization (DMMO) does.

Working in collaboration with local video production company, BAD Films, the two 30-minute morning shows ran during the peak attendance days. Edmonton All In enlisted Shawn Kanungo, one of most engaging and thought-provoking speakers in the country, and handpicked prominent local Edmontonians to conduct interviews and panels. Topics covered included: arts & culture, youthfulness & livability, Edmonton All In's role within Explore Edmonton, sustainability & food, and equity, diversity, & inclusion (EDI). The topics discussed provided Congress attendees with an opportunity to learn more about Edmonton and the progressive leadership in our amazing city.

The production included seven separate shoot days, numerous hours of planning which included logistical scheduling support, scripting, onsite direction, editing and post-production, along with the added element of the live event.

The Edmonton All In Morning Show was a beautifully produced part of a massive project taken on by Explore Edmonton Corporation, that reached over 1 million people across media platforms and via media coverage. It gave Edmonton the exposure that will now entice the attendees to visit when they have the next opportunity to do so.



EXPLORE EDMONTON VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE HALL

The Explore Edmonton Virtual Experience Hall featured nine of Edmonton's top local attractions and stories. Congress delegates could be taken on a virtual Streetcar journey across the iconic High Level Bridge, learn more about the city's growing craft beer scene, take a virtual tour through the TELUS World of Science and so much more! The 9 featured attractions Included:

- High Level Bridge Streetcar
- Edmonton's Craft Beer Scene
- The Story of Strathcona Spirits - North America's smallest distillery
- Art Gallery of Alberta
- TELUS World of Science
- The First Métis Man of Odessa Audio Drama
- Threads That Connect 2021
- Royal Alberta Museum
- Snow Warrior – short film

EXPLORE EDMONTON'S PRESENCE ON THE VIRTUAL PLATFORM INCLUDED:

- ▶ 2 Live Morning Shows
- ▶ Edmonton All In Networking Lounge

- ▶ Explore Edmonton Virtual Experience Hall

“The Explore Edmonton team is a very creative resource that helped to develop new ideas to highlight the city. As we moved forward with an online delivery the team found exciting ways to better engage attendees on the virtual platform. - Al Chapman Project Manager, Congress 2021, University of Alberta”



EDMONTON ALL IN NETWORKING LOUNGE

Within the virtual event platform, attendees had access to community-building and networking spaces, as well as virtual wellness and arts programming. Between sessions they were encouraged to visit one of the many networking lounges to connect with their colleagues in an informal setting or to attend a social event.

The Edmonton All In lounge was an open-lounge networking space where Congress attendees could learn more about what Edmonton All In does, how Explore Edmonton can work with them in the future, and showcased the passionate and friendly innovators and entrepreneurs who call Edmonton home.

CONCLUSION

Edmonton is an innovative, big idea, all-hands-on-deck kind of city. Its people and innovators are great at coming together around a common goal, they say yes when they know it matters, and they figure out the who's and the how's afterwards. They set aside obstacles and build bridges towards these goals that have exponential impact on our city, country, and the world. In concert with many different partners, the Edmonton All In team was able to deliver a virtual conference of astronomical size that focused on online accessibility, community building, networking, virtual wellness, and arts & culture programming.

The impact that COVID-19 had on Congress 2021 has left all involved with a stronger understanding of the notion that "it takes a village." Through the unique and creative ideas set forth by all partners, expansive contingency plans, and hundreds of hours, the Explore Edmonton team was able to assist with pivoting the conference and engaging the virtual audience in new and exciting ways, all while making it available to all. The Congress was fully accessible, with ASL, LSQ, closed captioning, and simultaneous translation on all sessions and keynotes.

Through producing the Morning Show, Edmonton All In was able to virtually showcase the city to a new and larger audience than they ever could have had the event been in-person. The virtual event had over 72 countries represented, as opposed to the 45 countries that would have been represented at an in-person conference.

This opportunity to reach a wider audience allowed Edmonton All In to amplify the city's diverse arts and cultural experiences and multicultural communities, bringing those traditions and stories to an international stage. Each Morning Show filming location and topic was purposefully selected to raise awareness of little-known areas within Edmonton and our communities.

As Explore Edmonton's Business Events team, Edmonton All In was an ally to the University of Alberta and the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences' before, during and after event production. The team's big city energy and hometown heart spirit provided connections to access a skilled team of planners, as well as an entire city that is ready to go 'All In' to make sure every aspect of this event was an undeniable success.