

# RAIC College of Fellows

**Subject:** In 2019, the Officers of the College of Fellows and Regional Chairs met to discuss comments from its members on the use of the word “Fellow” and have suggested that it be replaced or discontinued. The continued use of “Fellow” has become an obstacle to inclusivity.

Last February, the College of Fellows National Committee presented a proposal to the RAIC Board of Directors which was approved unanimously.

**Key issues:** The use of the title “Fellow” is perceived to be an obstacle to inclusivity on three fronts:

Gender: Fellow connotes the male gender in public perception.

Official languages: There is no equivalent word in French.

Colonialism: Traces of colonial discrimination and cultural dominance are not consistent with the objectives of reconciliation.

Impact examples: Not being able to translate Fellow has been a long-standing concern for francophone Members. Using Fellow in French is not respectful. Moreover, a French speaking female Architect is doubly discriminated by the title of Fellow.

**Etymology:** Definitions of Fellow note that the term has been used for at least six centuries and the basic meaning is “partner” or “one who shares” etc. Historically, it did not refer exclusively to a male person however there are limited examples of its use for women. Consequently, given the historically suppressed role of women, the etymological definition should not be considered a valid argument for the continued use of the title of Fellow.

**Common use:** In recent times, the title of Fellow is used for all genders in Academia, in “learned of “Fellow” Societies” and professions such as the RAIC College of Fellows. Nevertheless, the current public colloquial use of Fellow clearly implies the “male” gender. The broadening definition of gender is a compounding issue that can be effectively addressed with this initiative.

**Inclusivity:** Issues of inclusivity are at the front of public attention. Inclusivity is not about correctness or politics, it only concerns the removal of conscious and unconscious biases that are obstacles to fairness and equity found in many forms. For a national organization such as the RAIC and its College, inclusivity must be a core value. Non-inclusivity is a barrier to engagement from the professional community, RAIC members and, very importantly, in attracting non-members of the RAIC.

**Recommendation:** To change the name “College of Fellows” and the honorific use of title of “Fellows” to substitute with an alternative name and title to be determined.

**Survey:** [Please complete this survey to provide us with your thoughts and/or comments on this subject.](#)