

Images Festival

CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

NORTHERN VISIONS INDEPENDENT VIDEO AND FILM ASSOCIATION ("IMAGES FESTIVAL")

Draft: November 2020
Approved: February 15 2021

BACKGROUND

This policy was created in 2020 to provide a comprehensive set of procedures to address conflict within Images at different levels of the organization.

PURPOSE

Images recognizes that conflicts occur in organizations for various reasons. If conflicts are identified and recognized promptly and treated appropriately, the knowledge gained can enrich and improve our organization.

Images also recognizes that an unaddressed conflict, whether because it is avoided or improperly handled, can escalate causing people harm and having a negative impact on the organization.

Prevention and early intervention efforts are key to fostering collaboration and to maintaining a healthy and respectful work environment.

The purpose of this policy is thus to provide an effective, consistently applied, and transparent method to address disputes and conflicts. Such issues may arise in relation to Images' functions, its governance, or the conduct of its directors, employees, members, and members of the public.

POLICY STATEMENT

Images is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment characterized by equitable, professional, and supportive relationships. Employees of Images are expected to contribute to a collaborative work environment conducive to fulfilling the objectives and mandate of the organization.

All persons involved with Images have an obligation to communicate openly and respectfully with one another and to provide reasons for particular decisions or actions. When disagreements arise, greater understanding by all is needed. The presence of conflict, if recognized and dealt with effectively, offers an opportunity for individual and organizational learning, including the identification of behaviours, structures, policies, and practices that need to be improved. As such, all parties to a complaint are expected to actively participate,

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and strive to achieve a collaborative resolution and outcome at the earliest possible stage of the process.

The Executive Director is ultimately responsible for ensuring that conflicts involving employees and volunteers are resolved in a satisfactory manner. They have a duty to inform the Board of Directors of any conflicts that impinge on the organization's ability to function or may damage its reputation.

For conflicts involving the Executive Director and other employees, the Chair/Co-Chair of the Board of Directors are ultimately responsible for resolving conflicts.

For conflicts involving the Board of Directors—including those between the Board and the Executive Director or other employees—the Chair/Co-Chairs are ultimately responsible for resolving conflicts, with support from the Executive Director.

Conflicts should be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity, and keeping in mind the timelines laid out in the procedures below, as unresolved conflict can lead to a stressful and even poisoned work environment.

Images recognizes that each of its employees or members have a range of sensitivities based on their lived experiences and identities. We are receptive to those sensitivities and will support our employees and members in resolving disputes and conflicts brought forward in good faith. However, Images will not entertain disputes or conflicts that it deems to be vexatious, frivolous, or raised in bad faith.

DEFINITIONS

Dispute: Any occurrence between two or more employees, an employee and their supervisor, an employee and a Board Member, an employee and a member of the public/community, or an employee and a stakeholder, where the affected employee feels that the terms and conditions of their employment have been compromised and/or violated.

Complainant: The individual (or group of individuals) lodging a complaint against another individual, policy or practice.

Conflict: An ongoing experience of varying degrees of tension, usually involving multiple events and misunderstandings, possibly leading to the building up of layers of interpersonal discord.

Resolution: If the chosen process yields an acceptable outcome to both parties, the matter will be considered to be resolved.

Respondent: An individual (or group of individuals) against whom a complaint has been made, and/or someone responsible for the policy or activity complained about.

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SCOPE

This policy applies and is available to all Images Festival employees, contractors, volunteers, as well as its Board of Directors. Conflicts addressed in this policy may involve members, collaborators, partners, patrons, or other individuals within Images' workplace environment. The workplace environment is not limited to our physical office space: it extends to any space, physical or virtual, within which we work, and includes communication platforms (including email, telephone, Zoom, or Slack), as well as our many gallery, cinema, and event spaces used for festival or other programming and events.

This policy aims to address conflicts that may arise between:

- Employees
- Employees and Supervisors
- Employees and Executive Director (ED)
- Employees/Supervisors and Board
- Board and ED
- Membership and staff/board
- Contractors and permanent staff
- Organizations working in collaboration

Either the Executive Director or the Board Chair/Co-Chair has an obligation to act immediately in addressing a complaint if the physical and mental health and safety of any of the parties is perceived to be at risk. This may include setting up alternative working arrangements for any of the parties involved.

If threats to persons are made, or the Executive Director or Board Chair/Co-Chair perceives a possible danger to a party or to other employees, including the possibility of one party being a danger to themselves, external professional assistance will be sought immediately.

Please see subsections of the procedures as appropriate.

This policy does not include incidents that may constitute discrimination, harassment, or solicitation, which are covered in Images Festival's [Discrimination, Harassment, and Human Rights Policy and Procedures](#).

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Complaints and conflicts shall be dealt with in a confidential manner. Meetings to resolve a complaint shall be open only to the parties and those attempting to resolve the complaint. For formal complaints, the parties may have an advocate or supporter present.

All parties involved in complaints are expected to maintain confidentiality, and may be asked to sign confidentiality forms beyond those already signed as part of their contract.

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Any written or digital records of meetings will be maintained in confidence at the appropriate level of oversight. In cases of informal resolution involving a third-party or supervisor, only the outcome/resolution will be formally recorded. In cases of formal resolution, an Incident Report Form will be drafted and other documentation may arise through the inquiry process, which will be formally recorded alongside the outcome/resolution.

Complaints or concerns can be raised anonymously, but the informal and formal procedures outlined below cannot be enacted while maintaining anonymity. That said, the supervisor, Executive Director, and/or Board/Co-Chair will not initiate an informal/formal resolution without the consent of the complainant.

PROCEDURES

Informal options for resolution of disputes:

People should reasonably expect to receive and acknowledge feedback about how their behaviour, actions or decisions are a problem for another person or group, and make efforts to recognize this feedback (see code of conduct).

An informal conflict resolution effort happens when a person seeks information, expresses their concern(s), engages the other party to the dispute in dialogue, and is able to resolve a dispute without recourse to a formal complaint.

- a. Employees and volunteers (including Board members) of Images involved in a dispute will exercise their best efforts to respectfully resolve the dispute or disagreement with the other employee(s) and or volunteer(s).
- b. Employees and volunteers (including Board members) involved have an option to discuss the matter with each other with a supervisor or third-party present as facilitator (in a medium agreed upon by all parties).
 - i. In informal dispute resolution involving a supervisor or third-party, only the outcome/resolution will be formally recorded
- c. A person may bring forward suggestions for alternative approaches to informal resolution (e.g. talking circles). If agreeable to all parties, Images will support these suggestions in good faith, with consideration of the resources required and constraints involved.

Images encourages the use of transformative justice, Indigenous models of community accountability, and other social justice-based forms of dispute resolution and accountability. See appendix for examples of other conflict resolution strategies.

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Formal options:

If a dispute cannot be resolved informally, if persons are unsatisfied with the outcome, or if the circumstances are such that the person(s) with a complaint is unable or unwilling to communicate directly with the person(s) whose actions are the cause of their complaint, employees and or volunteers (including Board members) involved may escalate to a formal complaint.

Employees should expect to submit their concern in writing to their supervisor. They should make use of the [Incident Report Form](#) when drafting their concerns.

Option 1:

- The supervisor or Board member will communicate with all involved parties.
- The supervisor or Board member will then make and communicate a decision based on the situation and appropriate policies and procedures.

Option 2

- Employees involved have an option for facilitation or mediation with a third party present as facilitator, in the following circumstances:
 - parties are unsatisfied with Option 1;
 - there is no resolution from informal options;
 - the supervisor or Board member is a party involved in dispute;
 - or on recommendation of the parties, the supervisor, or the Board member.

Option 3

- A person may bring forward suggestions for alternative approaches to formal resolution. If agreeable to all parties, Images will support these suggestions in good faith, with consideration of the resources required and constraints involved.
- See appendix for examples of other conflict resolution strategies that may be useful.

Use of External Adviser for resolution of complaints

At the discretion of leadership or on request of employees as laid out in the above options, an External Adviser may become involved in resolving the conflict.

The role of an External Advisor could be to act as a facilitator, mediator, investigator, consultant etc. for the purpose of:

- assisting in problem solving and making recommendations toward resolving the dispute, including alternative models or tools as identified in the appendices
- any role where the goal is to help the parties restore a positive working relationship
- an inquiry or investigation that would lead to recommendations on potential outcomes
- a decision-making/arbitration role

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If one of the parties (complainant or respondent) in the dispute is the Executive Director or a member of the Board of Directors and a formal option is enacted, an External Adviser will be used in the resolution process.

Complaints involving partner, vendors or third party affiliates

If the dispute or complaint involves a partner, vendor, or third party affiliate, the employee may contact their supervisor or the Executive Director.

The supervisor or Executive Director will communicate with all involved parties and make a decision based on the situation and appropriate policies and procedures. This may involve pausing or ending the partnership, association, or contract.

The Executive Director will inform the board of any conflicts with external affiliates that impinge on the organization's ability to function or may damage its reputation.

Complaints involving members of the public

The document that governs all public behaviour within the scope of Images Festival is outlined in our Code of Conduct.

If the dispute or complaint involves a member of the public, the employee may contact their direct supervisor.

The direct supervisor, in consultation with the Executive Director, will make a decision based on the situation and appropriate policies and procedures. This may include limiting or ending the participation of members of the public at Images events.

The Executive Director will inform the board of any conflicts with external affiliates that impinge on the organization's ability to function or may damage its reputation.

REVIEW

In compliance with current legislation, this policy document will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The document is scheduled for review by January 1, 2022.