

The Victoria Forum 2022

Bridging Divides: Turf, Truth and Trust

August 28 - September 3, 2022





Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the ɬəkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the Victoria Forum 2022 took place, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

The Victoria Forum 2022
**Bridging Divides:
Turf, Truth and Trust**
August 28 - September 3, 2022

Executive Summary

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For further information and to access the list of speakers along with their biographies, please visit the Victoria Forum 2022 website at
www.victoriaforum.ca/victoria-forum-2022/

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Acknowledgment

We sincerely appreciate the Victoria Forum and Connect Seven teams' outstanding work in managing the logistics and communication of the Victoria Forum 2022. We thank the thematic co-chairs for curating the forum themes and extending invitations to an incredible roster of speakers. Special recognition to the graduate students for their invaluable contribution to inscribing the roundtable sessions. Lastly, we thank the University of Victoria photo services for their excellent photography services. Your efforts made the event a success, and we are sincerely grateful.

Foreword

In 2022 the Victoria Forum showed how relevant it has become to the international conversation about our future.

As the world faces great uncertainty, the Forum is emerging as a fresh and imaginative generator of powerful ideas. It brings forward a “way to think” and a “language” about equipping ourselves as a society to confront the turmoil ahead. It addresses the social, economic and environmental divides and proposes directions for bridging these divides.

There is urgency for society, its leaders, stewards and citizens to take action in the face of major world upheavals: war, climate, migratory displacements and challenges with immigration, economic instability, polarization of beliefs and values and attacks on the truth.

In this gentle forested University of Victoria environment, 500 delegates from around the world gathered to hear experts, to explore ideas that could transform our ever fragmenting world and communities and to imagine how we can find ways to solve the divisions.

The meandering pathways of this campus expose us to the rich West Coast nature and lead to insight and learning. There is something magical about this place, beautiful and forceful because it is the land where Indigenous societies have lived for thousands of years. This space is an invitation to listen to the wisdom of those who came before us.

The honesty and wisdom of Indigenous leader, Ovide Mercredi - the generous and insightful storytelling of Ambassador to the UN Bob Rae - former Governor General David Johnson’s powerful ideas about trust as a bedrock of society and the need for education and critical thinking - Senator Rosa Galvez leading the conversation about climate change - the openness and endearing imagery and metaphors of Chief Wilton Littlechild were some of the moments that made the 2022 Forum a special one for me.

Powerful listening, generous sharing of expertise, profound dialogue all contributed to the Calls for Action contained in this comprehensive report which we hope will serve as building blocks for governments and for all those who believe in creating a better and more inclusive world.

So many forces divide the world, divide our communities and the Victoria Forum conversations provide direction for policy-makers and deciders.

The added dimension of the Victoria Forum is the power of the partnership between the Senate of Canada and the University of Victoria. The Senators participating in the conversations represent the first line influencers and ambassadors to carry the ideas contained in this report to policymakers.

Jim Munson

Former Senator, Senate of Canada
Executive in Residence, Gustavson School of
Business, University of Victoria



Message from the Chair

Founded in 2016, the Victoria Forum held its third major event last year, under the theme, “Bridging Divides: Turf, Truth and Trust.” Co-hosted by the Senate of Canada and the University of Victoria, the 2022 Forum brought together opinion leaders from around the globe for three days of face-to-face and virtual discussions. It is my pleasure to provide this report summarizing these discussions and the recommendations that flowed from them.

In a world that is becoming increasingly polarized, it is more important than ever to have a clear understanding of the forces pulling us apart and to focus on ways to bring us back together. The 2022 Victoria Forum summary provides a thought-provoking and insightful look at some of the most important issues facing us today, arising from economic, social and environmental dislocations. Examining these issues through the lenses of turf, truth and trust provides valuable insights into ways forward.

Parallel to the main discussions, we also worked with the Commonwealth Games Federation to finalize the Ləkʷəŋən Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples, and with the Global Business School Network to host a global essay competition inviting students from around the world to submit their ideas on how to bridge the divides facing us all.

Despite the forces pulling us apart, there is hope. By working together to overcome our differences and build bridges across the seeming chasms that separate us, we can create a stronger, more united world. By engaging in open and honest conversations with those who have different perspectives and experiences from our own, we can find common ground. In doing so we rebuild the trust that is the glue that holds our societies together.

The Victoria Forum Report provides a platform for discussion and debate on these critical issues, and I am confident that its insights will prove valuable to policymakers, academics, opinion leaders and anyone interested in the future of our world.

I hope that you will find the Victoria Forum report to be a valuable resource, and I encourage you to share your thoughts and opinions on the topics covered in its pages and join us as we continue to develop ideas for a better world.

Sincerely,

Dr. Saul Klein

Dean of Gustavson School of Business
Chair of the Victoria Forum

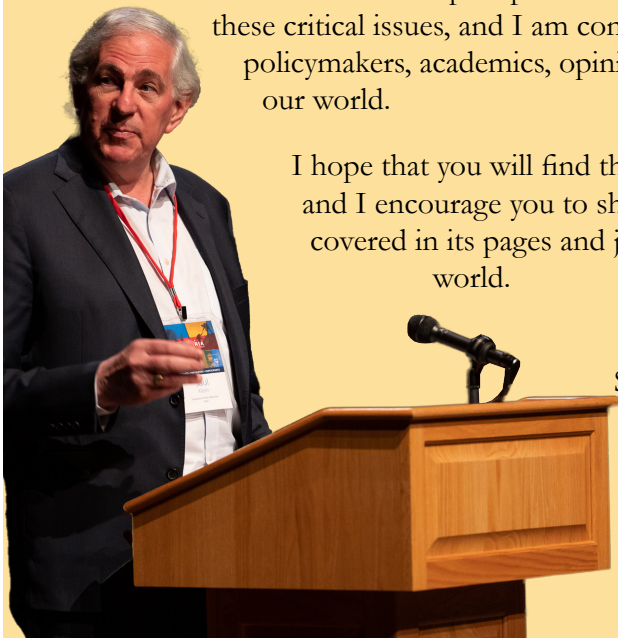




Table of Content

Foreword	4
Message from the Chair	6
Introduction	8
Chapter 1-Bridging Divides: Turf, Truth, and Trust	10
Chapter 2-Power of Sport in Bridging Divides	13
Chapter 3-Bridging Social Divides	16
Chapter 4-Bridging Environmental Divides	21
Chapter 5-Bridging Economic Divides	26
Chapter 6-Bridging Divides and Building Trust	33
Chapter 7-Trust Building in Asia in an Era of Great Power Competition	35
Chapter 8-Way Forward to Bridging Divides	38
Youth Perspectives	41
Bridging Divides Essay Contest: Top 5 Winning Submissions	42

Introduction



The theme of Victoria Forum 2022 centered on “Bridging Divides: Turf, Truth and Trust.” A blend of plenary sessions and roundtable discussions facilitated an exploration of how our world has become fragmented along various economic, social and environmental lines, with a focus on identifying methods to bridge these divisions.

The Victoria Forum 2022 brought together experts to address the growing divisions in the world along economic, social and environmental lines and find ways to bridge these divides. The Forum combined in-person discussions and live-broadcasted plenary sessions.

More than 500 participants and guest speakers proposed ways to promote trust and honesty, addressing inequality, combatting climate change and fostering societal trust and transformation. Proposed strategies included advocating humility, dignity, Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, promoting sports and cultural activities, extending social protection, bridging the digital divide, empowering marginalized communities, incorporating expert perspectives and addressing domestic inequalities.

To address geopolitical rivalries, it's necessary to focus on economic development, regional

challenges and fostering collaboration. Effective crisis management, on the other hand, requires cooperation across different levels of government, as well as a foundation of trust in science and empirical evidence.

This report consolidates the most crucial discussions and recommendations generated during the three-day Forum. The key lessons are as follows:

- Building trust and promoting honesty is crucial to bridge social, environmental and economic divides. This involves embracing humility, acknowledging Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and valuing all individuals' dignity. In addition, this means recognizing past wrongdoings and working towards repairing relationships with marginalized communities, respecting Indigenous rights and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Sports can foster unity and reconciliation. This can be achieved by empowering Indigenous cultures and embracing traditions by incorporating them into sporting events and promoting Indigenous-led initiatives, reducing barriers to Indigenous participation by addressing systemic barriers such as lack of



access to equipment, facilities and funding and promoting a human rights-based approach to sports by prioritizing athletes' rights, promoting fair treatment and equal opportunities and addressing issues such as gender-based violence and exploitation.

- Eradicating the root causes of inequality requires addressing poverty by tackling systemic issues such as wage stagnation, lack of access to affordable housing and healthcare, unequal distribution of wealth, discrimination from biases, creating inclusive policies and environments and promoting diversity and equity. Addressing digital divides, social protection, and education disparities involve ensuring access to technology, skills, income support, housing, health services, quality education and training and skills development programs for marginalized communities.
- Addressing climate change involves a shift towards a low-carbon economy by promoting regenerative thinking and practices. This includes reducing the exploitation of natural resources and investing in renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting energy efficiency.
- Addressing income inequality involves promoting sustainable growth through education, training and infrastructure investment. This will create job opportunities and contribute to an equitable economy.
- Rebuilding trust in society and institutions involves promoting critical thinking skills by encouraging citizens to question information and ensuring access to accurate information. It also requires supporting local communities through the investment in programs and initiatives that support local development, job creation and community well-being. Additionally, prioritizing economic development is crucial. This can be achieved by creating policies that support growth and job creation, particularly for marginalized communities.
- Governments should adopt science diplomacy and sustainable economic growth through job creation to reduce geopolitical rivalries and economic challenges. Additionally, collaboration between different levels of government is essential in addressing these challenges and promoting long-term, sustainable growth.





Bridging Divides: Turf, Truth, and Trust

The Victoria Forum 2022 opened with a much-anticipated panel discussion featuring distinguished speakers: Bob Rae, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations and former Premier of Ontario; Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia; and Ovide Mercredi, Former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Tricia Thomas (Laxewetstnaat) moderated the discussion, setting the stage for three transformative days of constructive conversations centered on bridging the world's most pressing social, environmental and economic divides. The panelists focused on three crucial concepts: turf, truth and trust.

Turf refers to the physical and symbolic spaces considered as one's own, this encompasses identity, power and resources. Disputes over turf can be a major source of conflict, particularly in

regions with resource scarcity or with a history of discrimination and marginalization. Ovide Mercredi emphasized the urgency of a “revolution in people’s understanding” and a shift in policies



and investments to respect the treaties between the Canadian government and Indigenous people.

Truth is the quality of aligning reality with fact. It is essential for understanding and addressing



social, environmental and economic issues. Making informed decisions and taking meaningful actions need a shared understanding of the truth.

Trust serves as the bedrock of society, embodying confidence in an individual or institution's reliability, integrity and competence. Without trust, cooperation and coordination among individuals and groups is impossible, leading to division and conflict.

These three concepts are interwoven in addressing social, environmental and economic divides. Respecting turf is critical for building trust and finding common ground; truth is essential for maintaining trust; and trust requires honesty and consistency. Addressing root causes of inequality—such as poverty, discrimination and unequal access to resources—is also imperative. Recognizing the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples through constitutional change can help bridge divides. Humility, admitting mistakes and recognizing the dignity of others are equally significant. Finally, understanding the interconnection between turf, truth and trust is essential to addressing social, environmental and economic divides.

Recommendations and Calls to Action:

- Build trust and promote honesty as vital steps towards bridging social, environmental, and economic divides. Concrete actions include being transparent about information and intentions, engaging in open and honest communication, being accountable and responsible for one's actions and treating all individuals with respect and dignity. This can be achieved through initiatives such as creating open and inclusive forums for discussion, promoting transparency in decision-making processes and implementing measures to ensure accountability.
- Tackle the root causes of inequality, such as poverty and discrimination, to promote equity and fairness. Concrete actions include promoting access to education and training opportunities and implementing targeted social protection policies. This can be achieved through initiatives such as expanding access to quality education and job training, investing in affordable housing and healthcare and implementing targeted tax policies to reduce income inequality.
- Acknowledge the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples through constitutional changes to serve as transformative steps in overcoming divides. Concrete actions include recognizing Indigenous lands and territories, supporting Indigenous language and cultural revitalization programs and respecting Indigenous decision-making processes. This can be achieved through initiatives such as partnering



with Indigenous communities on initiatives that support their self-determination and supporting the development of Indigenous-led organizations and programs.

- Embrace humility, own up to mistakes and value the dignity of all individuals to foster unity and break down barriers. This can be achieved through initiatives such as promoting active listening and empathy, engaging in regular self-reflection and taking steps to build bridges across divides.
- Understand that the interdependence of turf, truth and trust is critical to effectively addressing and resolving social, environmental and economic divides effectively. Concrete actions include promoting transparency and honesty, fostering a culture of critical thinking and collaboration, and working to break down barriers between communities. This can be achieved through initiatives such as promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding, supporting local community-led initiatives, and working to build trust in institutions and organizations.



WATCH THE OPENING PLENARY ►





Power of Sport in Bridging Divides

During the Power of Sport in Bridging Divides plenary discussion, a panel of experts came together to discuss the role of sport in bringing people together. Moderated by Richard Powers, President of Commonwealth Sport Canada, the panel featured Adam Van Koeeverden, a Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and Sport, Ava Hill, Board Director, Commonwealth Sport Canada, Dame Louise Livingstone Martin, President, Commonwealth Games Federation, Alice Pepper, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Traditional Owners

from Victoria, Australia, and Wilton Littlechild, Grand Chief, Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations. The panelists delved into the five calls to action for sports as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which stresses the importance of implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and promoting equality in sports.

Panelists shared their personal experiences with sport and its impact on their lives, as well as its potential to unite people and break down divides. They also underscored the importance of creating culturally safe spaces for Indigenous athletes and raising awareness of Indigenous cultures and traditions.

To address the challenges faced by Indigenous athletes and communities, the panelists proposed several solutions, which included providing funding for the North American Indigenous Games and reducing barriers to participation in sports. The panel also recommended promoting educational programs that focus on Indigenous cultures and





sports, revitalizing Indigenous languages through sports, advocating for treaty negotiations and justice for Indigenous peoples, creating a partnership forum with Indigenous peoples involved in every aspect of the games and promoting a safe environment for Indigenous athletes through educational and cultural programs in schools and communities.

The panelists also shared their success stories in promoting a safe environment for Indigenous athletes in Birmingham, UK, and the unique perspectives that Indigenous peoples bring to sports, citing the World Indigenous Games as an example.

In conclusion, the panel emphasized the importance of adopting a human rights-based approach to sports and recognizing traditional games as a human right, as well as the need for continued advocacy for Indigenous teams and sports like lacrosse to showcase the rich culture and traditions of Indigenous communities to create a successful and inclusive Commonwealth Games in the future.

Paddling Together Forward

The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) has created a working group on the Commonwealth *ləkʷəŋən* Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples, which was welcomed through a traditional ceremony at the Victoria Forum. A special paddle designed by Darlene Gait of Esquimalt Nation and carved and painted by a team of carvers led by Carey Newman was commissioned to symbolize the declaration. Each country and institution ratifying the declaration will receive a paddle as a gift and by accepting it, they commit to the principles and actions of the declaration. The design, titled “Conquest (Wolf Design),” represents unity, family, and protection and was created with pride for Indigenous athletes in Canada and beyond, making it the first Indigenous declaration for sports.

Recommendations and Calls to Action:

- Governments and sports organizations can take action to promote and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in sports. This can be done by collaborating with Indigenous communities, establishing partnerships with Indigenous organizations, working with human rights organizations and providing education and training on the importance of UNDRIP to athletes, coaches and other stakeholders.

- Promote unity and reconciliation through sports can be achieved by forming Indigenous sports clubs and teams, promoting programs that bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities together, providing funding for Indigenous sports programs and including Indigenous voices in the decision-making processes of sports organizations.
- Reduce barriers to Indigenous participation in sports can be achieved through working with Indigenous communities, providing funding and resources to address barriers, promoting initiatives like the North American Indigenous Games and the Commonwealth Games and advocating for the inclusion of Indigenous sports in high-level events.
- Empower Indigenous cultures and traditions through sports, it is crucial to promote the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures through traditional games and cultural sports programs. This can be achieved by including Indigenous sports and traditions into sports programs and events, working with Indigenous communities and organizations and advocating for the recognition of Indigenous sports and games. This will help showcase



cultural workshops.

- The approach to sports should prioritize the rights of Indigenous athletes and promote inclusivity and diversity. This can be achieved by advocating for the recognition of traditional games as a human right, promoting policies and practices in sports organizations that prioritize Indigenous athletes' rights and raising awareness of Indigenous communities' past and present struggles in sports. Treaty negotiations and justice for Indigenous peoples should also be encouraged to drive a human rights-based approach to sports.
- Create culturally safe spaces for Indigenous athletes, efforts should be made to collaborate with Indigenous communities and organizations.



This includes advocating for policies and practices within sports organizations that prioritize the safety and well-being of Indigenous athletes, including cultural sensitivity training for all stakeholders. Additionally, promoting awareness and recognition of Indigenous cultures and traditions in sports programs and events—through initiatives like traditional dance performances and cultural workshops—can further support the inclusion

the rich culture and traditions of Indigenous communities and support their inclusion in sports programs and events, including traditional dance performances, language classes and

of Indigenous cultures in sports.

WATCH THE PLENARY ►



Bridging Social Divides

Social Exclusion in the COVID Era: Challenges, Experiences and Pathways to Change

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the severe consequences of social exclusion and inequality worldwide. The crisis amplified existing inequalities and intensified the need for immediate action to address these pressing issues. The plenary discussion was moderated by Paul

Genest, Senior Vice President, Power Corporation of Canada, and featured: Jill Hanass-Hancock, Senior Specialist Scientist, South African Medical

Research Council; Ilona Kickbusch, Founder and Chair, Global Health Centre; and Oliver Schmidtke, Professor, University of Victoria. The panel discussed four key dimensions of the pandemic's impact: global healthcare inequalities, forced migration and displacement, the impact on individuals with disabilities and the closure of civic space.

The panelists pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the increased risk of new infectious diseases due to climate change and revealed the fragility of the global health system, particularly for marginalized communities. It has also exacerbated existing inequalities for individuals with disabilities. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, low-income individuals and communities of colour were disproportionately affected by the pandemic's resulting economic instability, with approximately 29 million jobs lost globally. The pandemic has widened the digital divides,

reliable internet and technology and making it difficult for them to access online resources and participate in virtual education and work. According to the United Nations (UN), 4.1 billion people, or 53% of the global population, do not have access to the internet.

The global refugee crisis has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many refugees facing insurmountable obstacles in their quest for a safe place to call home. The pandemic has limited access to essential services such as healthcare, financial resources and the right to seek political asylum. The number of refugees globally was 26 million in 2020, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and the number of forcibly displaced people has increased by over 50% in the past decade. More than 60 new border walls have been constructed since the 1980s, many with the intent to keep out forcibly displaced people, which is a disturbing trend.

To address these challenges, the plenary participants stressed the importance of several solutions, including implementing targeted social protection policies, addressing the digital divides, providing targeted healthcare services, investing in education, supporting social connections, involving marginalized communities in decision-making, supporting

aid organizations for refugees, advocating for increased funding for refugee programs and supporting policies that provide refugees with access to education, healthcare and other essential services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the devastating impact of social exclusion and inequality, highlighting the need for collective action to create a fairer and more inclusive future. We must prioritize action on social exclusion and work tirelessly to build a more compassionate and inclusive world.

Any pathways toward our shared goals of people, planet and prosperity will need to place action on social exclusion at their heart.

Indigenous Perspective on Bridging Divides

The development of Indigenous economies and self-sufficiency strategies is gaining momentum in Canada, with the potential to drive regional and national prosperity while respecting Indigenous governance, culture and community development. However, to achieve success in this area, it is important to establish a strong foundation of Indigenous governance that reflects traditional knowledge and values. To explore and learn from successful examples, we hosted a dialogue aimed at facilitating



collaboration among leaders from Indigenous governments, other levels of government, business and social service sectors. The ultimate goal is to advance Indigenous economic innovation and well-being across Canada through the sharing of wise practices and collective efforts. This panel included Miles G. Richardson of the National Consortium for Indigenous Economic Development, along with discussants Cliff Fregin of Indspire, Dr. Mary Jane McCallum of the Senate of Canada, and Leslie Varley of the British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

Forced Migration and Displacement of Peoples

Forced migration and displacement are becoming major global crises, affecting millions of people



around the world. As of the end of 2021, the number of people displaced by conflict, violence, persecution and human rights abuses reached nearly 90 million, doubling the figure from a decade ago. To address this growing divide, the roundtable discussion aimed to explore the need for a global human rights regime that prioritizes the rights of all individuals, regardless of citizenship status.

The discussion brought together leading experts, including Sharmarke Dubow, Councillor, City of Victoria, Skw'akw'as (Sunshine) Dunstan-Moore, Community Climate Justice Coordinator, VIDEA (Victoria International Development Education Association) and Dr. Deondre Smiles, Assistant Professor, University of Victoria. The roundtable was moderated by Peter Taylor, Director of

Research at the Institute of Development Studies, and Crystal Tremblay, Director of CIFAL Victoria at the University of Victoria.

The discussion centered around the urgent need for action to address forced migration and displacement. The experts emphasized the importance of understanding the root causes of displacement and working to address these issues through effective communication, education and awareness-raising efforts. They also discussed the role of UN agencies in protecting the rights of refugees and migrants, and the impact of migration on cities in terms of urban planning and service provision.

Inequitable Access to Quality Healthcare

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep inequalities in the global healthcare system, particularly in marginalized communities. A group of experts and leaders, including Dawn Thomas, Vice President, for Indigenous Health & Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Island Health, Mathew Fleury, Manager of Research and Knowledge Exchange, First Nations Health Authority, Ry Moran, Associate University Librarian, Reconciliation, University of Victoria, The Hon. Kim Pate, Senator, Senate of Canada, Jacqueline M. Quinless, Adjunct

Professor, University of Victoria, Ronald W. Rice, Executive Director, Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Peter Taylor, Director of Research, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Dr. Crystal Tremblay, Director of CIFAL Victoria, University of Victoria, came together to discuss the impact of the pandemic on these communities.

The pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on marginalized communities, exposing the shortcomings of healthcare systems around the world. The roundtable emphasized the need for action to address the inequalities in access to quality healthcare and for holding those accountable for implementing solutions, including society, municipalities, governments, businesses, media and law schools.

Mathew Fleury also emphasized the importance of incorporating Indigenous healing practices in the efforts to protect and improve the lives of Indigenous peoples. The pandemic has also created an opportunity for increased time spent with families and communities, leading to a sense of unity and knowledge-sharing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the disparities in access to quality healthcare that are faced by marginalized communities. It has become increasingly clear that in order to provide equitable healthcare for all, traditional, Indigenous healing practices must be incorporated into modern healthcare systems. Respecting and preserving the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples can not only safeguard their traditions but also have a positive impact on their health. To ensure that the necessary changes are made, monitoring mechanisms are needed to hold society, governments and businesses accountable for addressing healthcare inequalities. Only by working together can we create a healthcare system that works for everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Citizens Disempowered by Constraints on Civil Society

“Citizens Disempowered by Constraints on Civil Society” was the focus of a two-session roundtable discussion, where experts discussed how the pandemic has exacerbated social inequality and curtailed citizens’ freedom of speech, making it difficult for them to have their voices heard in society. Among the panelists were: Anne-Catherine Bajard, Executive Director of the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation; Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President of Participatory Research in Asia; Senator Marilou McPhedran of the Senate of Canada; and Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe, Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria’s School of Public Administration. The roundtable was moderated by Peter Taylor, Director of Research at the Institute of Development Studies, and Dr. Crystal Tremblay, Director of CIFAL Victoria at the University of Victoria.

The experts discussed how governments have used the pandemic as an excuse to suppress civil society and stifle democratic dialogue. They explored the

effects of the decline in civic space on human rights and the role of civil society organizations, volunteers and unaffiliated citizens in leading the fight for justice. The closure of civic spaces due to the rise of authoritarianism and technology has eroded trust in representatives and made citizens more reliant on their own interpretations of truth.

The roundtable emphasized the crucial role of civil society in promoting justice, equality and public dialogue. The experts called for the protection and support of civil society, meaningful engagement with communities, and bridging the divide in society.



Recommendations and Calls to Action

- Implement targeted social protection policies by allocating funding for programs that address the needs of marginalized communities. This can be done through financial assistance, food support and education services such as job training and housing assistance, as well as mental health support. Ensure these programs reach those in need and provide access to basic needs.
- Bridge the digital divide, it is recommend providing subsidies for internet access and computer equipment and offering digital literacy programs to ensure everyone has equal access to technology. Public-private partnerships can also play a role by providing access to technology and internet in public spaces such as libraries, schools and community centers, which can help to increase technology adoption and improve digital literacy among those unfamiliar with it. Promoting digital equality and bridging the digital divide requires making technology accessible to everyone.

- Invest in community health clinics and mobile health units to provide targeted healthcare services to marginalized communities. Consider expanding access through telemedicine and telehealth initiatives to meet their remote healthcare needs.
- Address disparities in education, it is recommended to provide additional resources for virtual learning, particularly for students from low-income and minority backgrounds. Furthermore, allocating additional funding for educational programs and initiatives, such as after-school programs and tutoring, can help close the achievement gap. Providing training and support to teachers and educators to address the needs of students from marginalized communities is also crucial.



governments and other organizations should engage with these communities and involve them in the decision-making process. This can be achieved by holding public consultations and forums as well as engaging with community leaders and representatives. By involving marginalized communities in the decision-making process, it is possible to ensure that their needs are considered and addressed, resulting in more effective and equitable policies and programs.

- Increase funding for refugee programs and implement policies that provide refugees with access to education, healthcare and other essential services. This can include language classes, job training and support for resettlement and integration into new communities.

Additionally, working with international organizations to address the root causes of displacement can improve the lives of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

- Promote justice, equality and public dialogue by protecting and supporting civil society organizations. This can include providing funding and resources to organizations that advocate for human rights, promote transparency and accountability, and engage with communities on social and political issues.

- Support community-based organizations by providing funding and resources. These organizations can promote social connections and bring people together, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness. They can also play a role in addressing issues such as poverty, discrimination and inequality by working with local authorities and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that policies and programs that affect marginalized communities are designed and implemented with their needs in mind,

- Promote reforms and policies that address issues such as corruption, inequality and discrimination.
- Engage with communities at the local level to drive meaningful change and promote equality and justice. Artistic expression, such as music, painting and theatre, can also promote care, connection and understanding among communities.

WATCH THE PLENARY ►

Bridging Environmental Divides

Shifting Our Relationship with the Natural World from Extractive to Regenerative

The world is facing a crisis of historic proportions as climate change and loss of biodiversity threaten to trigger a “sixth mass extinction.” But progress is being hindered by increasing polarization and misinformation, leading to the urgent need for action.

Four leading experts, Balgis Osman Elasha, Chief Climate Change and Green Growth Specialist, African Development Bank, Kresse Wesling, Entrepreneur, Elvis and Kresse, Rosa Galvez, Senator, Senate of Canada, and Wendy Smith, Professor, University of Delaware, gathered at the panel discussion moderated by Mr. Don Shafer to address the critical issue of the environmental divides that impede progress. The discussions delved into the role of environmental history, capitalism and social theory in today’s social dynamics, and explored the different conversational ecosystems surrounding these issues.

The panelists emphasized the need to shift from extractive to regenerative thinking and practices,

and for a change in our relationship with the natural world. They highlighted that our beliefs and values are tied to historical and cultural contexts and stressed the importance of tackling the root causes of human vulnerability to climate change.

The experts also spoke of the need for transformative solutions that consider both social and climate justice. While climate change poses significant challenges, it is not an intractable issue. They noted that there are many solutions and actions that can be taken to mitigate its effects and adapt to a low-carbon economy.

The panel pointed out that scientists





have done their part in proving the cause of climate change, but politicians and the financial sector are failing to address the issue due to conflicts of interest. The panelists emphasized the need for a change in mentality and for eliminating conflicts of interest by bringing experts in climate science and energy into decision-making processes.

Entrepreneurs, investors and philanthropists can play a crucial role in addressing climate change by contributing to the development of sustainable and socially responsible solutions. However, the panelists acknowledged the love-hate relationship with capitalism. Many claim that capitalism is responsible for instability and production of social harm.

Key takeaways from the discussion included the need for patience for long-term change, the importance of addressing the root causes of human vulnerability, the transition to a low-carbon economy and the elimination of conflicts of interest in sectors. The panelists also called for bridging divides and embracing uncertainty and discomfort to find holistic solutions to the crisis. The world is facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions as climate change and the loss of natural capital and biodiversity threaten to lead to a “sixth mass

extinction.” However, the current polarization and misinformation make it difficult to tackle these issues.

Getting to Net-zero and Climate Positive

The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has issued a dire warning that the world is “sleepwalking to a climate catastrophe.” The Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact aim to limit the rise of global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels through reducing emissions. However, despite increased commitments from countries and sectors, the pace of action is not fast enough to prevent a disaster.

An expert roundtable was assembled to explore solutions for accelerating action on climate change, with the Honorable Rosa Galvez, a Senator in the Senate of Canada serving as the moderator. Panelists included: Jonathan Fowle, Chief External Relations Officer at VanCity; Brad Liski, CEO of TruEarth; and Nathan Gillett, a Research Scientist at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

The Senator opened the discussion by stressing the importance of achieving net-zero emissions, a goal that many countries have committed to in response

to rising temperatures. Nathan Gillett explained that to stabilize the climate, emissions must be reduced to zero, not just stabilized or reduced, as was the goal 15 to 20 years ago. He also noted the findings of the IPCC, which demonstrate the need to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement and keep temperatures below 2 degrees.

Brad Liski highlighted a significant challenge faced by the consumer-packaged goods sector: a resistance to change. He emphasized the importance of education and a better understanding of the impact of our actions and habits on the environment, as well as the need for pressure on companies to transition to more sustainable practices. Jonathan Fowlie underlined the three key factors that need to be addressed for meaningful action: public awareness, public policy and access to clear data. In addition, Liski stressed the crucial role of making the challenge of climate change a tangible and relatable reality for everyone. He emphasized the need for clear communication and engagement with stakeholders to ensure that all actors understand their role in the solution or the problem.

The fight against climate change requires more than just technological advancements and political will. To tackle this crisis effectively, there needs to be an increased public awareness and policy action aimed at overcoming the obstacles to meaningful action. Education can play a key role in fostering a greater understanding of the issue and the solutions that are needed. Furthermore, companies must also be held accountable for transitioning to more sustainable products and processes. While reaching net-zero emissions is a huge challenge, it is not impossible. It requires negative emissions of carbon dioxide, which is a monumental task, but necessary to avoid the

worst impacts of the changing climate. By working together, the public, private sector and governments can ensure that we take the necessary steps to create a sustainable future for generations to come.

Regenerating Our Depleted Ecosystems to Address Climate Change

The roundtable discussion aimed to tackle the pressing issue of regenerating depleted ecosystems in the face of the sixth mass extinction and climate change. Bringing together experts and stakeholders, the initiative sought to find solutions that balance economic growth with environmental protection and the restoration of ecosystems. Serving as moderators and speakers were: Brittany Hull, VP Marketing at Earth's Own; David Ranson, Executive Director of BC Parks; Natalie Slawinski, Director of the Centre for Social and Sustainable Innovation at the University of Victoria; and The Hon. Mary Coyle, Senator of Canada.



The discussion delved into the relationship between people and place, the significance of preserving biodiversity and the challenges of balancing economic growth with environmental protection. The speakers emphasized the need for immediate action and the role of senators in resolving this tension, while sharing their perspectives on personal responsibility and the opportunities for individuals and organizations to contribute.



The panelists discussed the three roles of senators—representation, study and legislation—and highlighted the importance of balancing economic growth with resource protection, while building trust and bridging divides. Despite the historical conflict between conservation and economic development, the speakers expressed hope and identified opportunities for the future.

The roundtable discussion on the environment emphasized the urgency of taking immediate action to regenerate depleted ecosystems and address the impacts of climate change. The speakers stressed the importance of utilizing nature-based solutions to protect ecosystems and combat climate change, recognizing the tension between preserving biodiversity and economic growth and the need for effective solutions that balance these interests. Brittany Hull suggested simple, cost-effective solutions that can be easily adopted in people's daily lives, while the Hon. Mary Coyle highlighted the importance of building trust and bridging divides to address the tensions in the fight against climate change. David Ranson emphasized the importance of preserving biodiversity through space and connectivity, highlighting the significance of the park system in this effort.



Climate Risks and Opportunities

The roundtable discussion aimed to discuss the climate risks and opportunities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report “Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis” concluded that it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land. Policymakers, investors, businesses, and academics are using climate scenarios to project the impact of global warming on society, the economy, and financial markets. This roundtable included the following experts: Michael King, Associate Professor, University of Victoria, Greg Flato, Acting Director, Research Division, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Adam Goehner, Director, ESG Strategy & Risk, BCI, Merran Smith, Founder & Chief Innovation Officer, Clean Energy Canada

and Miguel Molico, Senior Director, Climate Analysis Team in the Financial Stability Department (FSD), Bank of Canada.

Recommendations and Calls to Action

- Address the root causes of human vulnerability to climate change and ensure social and climate justice through transformative solutions. This requires a holistic approach considering the interplay between social, economic and environmental factors. This could involve implementing targeted policies and programs that address poverty, inequality and discrimination, which are critical drivers of vulnerability. It is also crucial to ensure that equitable climate solutions do not perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities. This could involve engaging with marginalized communities and incorporating their perspectives into decision-making.
- Encourage the transition to a low-carbon economy through increased use of renewable energy solutions and promote sustainable and socially responsible practices. This transition should be driven by market forces and supported by policies that incentivize investment in renewable energy and penalize greenhouse gas emissions. Companies and individuals should also be encouraged to adopt sustainable and socially responsible practices, such as reducing energy consumption, conserving resources and minimizing waste.
- Eliminate conflicts of interest in sectors and incorporate experts in climate science and energy into decision-making processes. This could involve establishing independent bodies to oversee and regulate these sectors.
- Shift mindsets to prioritize sustainable solutions and embrace uncertainty, while bridging divides. This requires a cultural shift that prioritizes sustainable solutions and embraces uncertainty. This could involve promoting critical thinking skills and encouraging public discourse on the importance of sustainable practices. Bridging divides requires collaboration and cooperation between different groups and stakeholders and

valuing the perspectives of all individuals.

- Recognize the importance of both historical and cultural context in shaping beliefs and values towards nature. This requires acknowledging different communities' cultural and historical relationships with the natural world. This could involve valuing Indigenous knowledge and perspectives and incorporating these into decision-making processes.
- Take immediate action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, including regenerating depleted ecosystems and utilizing nature-based solutions. This requires investing in technologies and practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to the effects of climate change. This could involve utilizing nature-based solutions, such as reforestation and wetlands restoration, to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Improve public awareness of the impact of our actions and habits on the environment and increase education on sustainable practices. This requires providing clear and accessible information on the impacts of individual and collective actions on the environment. This could involve increasing education and outreach on sustainable practices and encouraging individuals and organizations to adopt environmentally responsible habits.
- Implement policies that support the transition to sustainable practices and products and increase pressure on companies to adopt sustainable practices. This practice requires government action at all levels, from local to international. This could involve implementing regulations and incentives that promote sustainable practices and penalize environmentally harmful actions. Companies should also be encouraged to adopt sustainable practices, and consumers can play a role by choosing products and services that are environmentally friendly.
- Provide access to clear and detailed data to those responsible for taking action to make informed decisions. This requires improving the availability and quality of information on the impacts of individual and collective actions on the environment.

WATCH THE PLENARY ►



Bridging Economic Divides

Origins of Inequality and Possible Pathways to Effect Change

Inequality has become a major topic in the global economic discussion, and a panel of experts delved into the critical issue during a discussion titled “Bridging Economic Divides.” The panel aimed to explore the reasons for rising inequality and to find solutions to the problem.

Moderated by David Miller, the panel included: Pedro Antunes, Chief Economist of Canada’s Conference Board of Canada; Ricardo Hausmann, Founder and Director, Growth Lab; and Carol Anne Hilton, Chief Executive Officer, The Indigenomics Institute.

Statistics show that the wealth of the top 1% has increased in the US from 30% to 39% in the past 40 years, while the wealth of the bottom 90% has decreased to 23%. In Canada, the concentration of wealth in fewer hands has also continued to rise.

The panel addressed this increase in inequality in Canada and the positive developments, such as better wealth equality and greater intergenerational mobility, in comparison to other OECD countries.

Income and wealth inequality remains a persistent problem in Canada, affecting various groups and cohorts.

The panel stressed the importance of changing the way people earn a living and connecting individuals and communities to the world through productive activities. Hilton emphasized the need for a transformative agenda in education for Indigenous nations, aligning increased Indigenous jurisdiction and authority, specifically in education to address the gap of inequality.

The panel also highlighted the importance of non-economic costs, such as the loss of traditional ways of life and family separation, and the need to factor those into restructuring the economy and focus on inclusive growth.

The experts agreed that addressing inequality requires a focus on inclusion-based policies, addressing the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from economic opportunities and providing individuals with opportunities to participate in the

global economy. Improving public transportation and infrastructure, investing in education, and training and transitioning to Sustainable prosperity were also seen as crucial solutions to bridging economic divides.

Building Resilient and Sustainable Communities/Economies

Experts gathered to tackle the crucial topic of “Building Resilient and Sustainable Communities and Economies” at the roundtable discussion. Moderated by Rosemary Thompson, Founding Executive Director of the Coalition for a Better Future, the discussion brought together prominent figures in the field, including: Alicia Dubois, CEO of the Royal BC Museum; Danny Graham, Chief Engagement Officer of Engage Nova Scotia; and Senator Lucie Moncion of the Senate of Canada.

The experts explored the challenges and opportunities in creating more resilient and sustainable communities and economies, sharing their unique perspectives and insights. They all agreed on the pressing nature of the issue and left feeling motivated to continue their work towards a better future.

Fragmentation in society has become a critical issue in recent years, and social confrontation and public mistrust have become increasingly apparent. Traditional economic thinking has relied on the assumption that a growing GDP equates to success, but it has become clear that well-being cannot be measured solely by money and economic growth.

To address this issue, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing was created at the University of Waterloo to provide a comprehensive understanding of well-being through 60 indicators across eight domains. The Index provides a real-time description of a person’s narrative, covering everything from their health and education to their sense of community and experiences of bullying.

Indigenous traditional thinking provides a valuable perspective on the concept of well-being and sustainability in the larger world economy. Indigenous communities have their own political and governance systems, economies, and family and child services systems, demonstrating that the

mainstream Western way of thinking is not the only solution.

Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing, which became popular in Western finance in 2004, shares similarities with Indigenous traditional thinking. Indigenous communities make long-term plans, incorporating the natural rhythms of the environment and their community, and prioritize intergenerational well-being.

Cooperatives can be a powerful tool for communities to use in their journey towards resilient development. A prime example is the Hoffman paper plant, owned by Kimberly-Clark in 1991. When the company was slated to be closed, the community came together and within six months raised the capital needed to buy 49% of the company, with an agreement to buy 51% from the employees. The investment has now returned 18 times their initial investment, providing a range of opportunities for the community. This shows that alternative ways of thinking about sustainable economies, beyond shareholder value, can lead to successful outcomes.

Inclusive Housing and Jobs

Experts in inclusive housing and jobs gathered for a roundtable discussion to share their insights on the challenges and opportunities in addressing inequality in urban areas. The panel included representatives from the South Island Prosperity Partnership, the City of Victoria, the University of Victoria, Aryze Developments, and BC Infrastructure Benefits Inc. The discussions centered around the need for policies and solutions that address the lack of affordable housing and job opportunities in urban areas.

The participants emphasized



the importance of network governance in addressing problems in urban areas, as the majority of Canada's population lives in metropolitan areas. They also stressed the need to consider the intersectionality of gender, race and ability in housing and employment, and highlighted the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the gender gap. Changing the lacking diversity culture of the construction and trade industries was also discussed as a crucial step towards creating a more inclusive workforce.

The panelists also agreed on the importance of connecting international efforts, such as those of C40 Cities, to local implementation and addressing political processes that often hinder the connection between policy and outcomes. Data and information, as demonstrated by Luke Mari's data platform for Victoria, play a critical role in urban planning and development.



Understanding the Fragility and Vulnerabilities of the Global Supply Chain

Experts in the field of inclusive housing and jobs gathered for a roundtable discussion to explore the challenges and opportunities of addressing inequality in urban areas. The panel included prominent voices in urban planning, construction, and data analysis. They included: Dallas Gislason, Director of Economic Development at the South Island Prosperity Partnership; Jenna Dutton, Senior Planner at the City of Victoria; Tamara Krawchenko, Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria; Luke Mari, Principal at Aryze Developments; and Suzannah Kelly, Director of Communication at BC Infrastructure Benefits Inc.

The discussion highlighted the critical need for a network governance approach to tackle urban issues in Canada, one of the most urbanized countries



in the world where 95% of the population lives in 35 metropolitan areas. The panel emphasized the importance of considering intersectionality, such as race, gender and ability, in both housing and employment policies. The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the gender gap were also discussed, and the need to change the cultural perception of the construction industry to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce. The panelists also emphasized the need to connect international efforts to local policies and address the political processes that can disrupt the connection between policy and outcomes.

Sustainable Global Supply Chains for Bridging Divides

The "Sustainable Global Supply Chains for Bridging Divides" roundtable was moderated by Stephen Flynn, Founding Director of Northeastern University's Global Resilience Institute and Adel Guitouni, Associate Professor of Management Sciences at the University of Victoria. The roundtable featured panelists: Alexander Rekik, CEO of Charcolive International SA; Bruce Williams, CEO of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce; and Dr. John Volpe, Professor and leader of the Ecogastronomy Research Group at the School of Environmental Studies at UVic. The panelists discussed the transition towards sustainable global supply chains.

The roundtable delved into the opportunities and



challenges facing the transition towards sustainable supply chains and solutions for corporations to meet their sustainability and corporate responsibility goals. Discussions covered the impact of global supply networks on the environment and society, the role of stakeholders in promoting sustainable supply chains, the significance of sustainability in GSNs and a vision for a positive future for GSNs with a focus on sustainable solutions.

Alexander Rekik shared his company's unique approach to empowering small farmers in Mozambique through the "Bright Future Program of Green Gold Resource," which prioritizes food security and sustainable agriculture. The program aims to benefit the planet, people and create prosperity and profit. Dr. John Volpe highlighted that while efficiency has been a dominant theme in recent discussions about agri-food systems, there is growing concern about blindly pursuing efficiency

at all costs. The green revolution, which took place over the last 50 to 60 years, was aimed at increasing food production through the intensification of agriculture. However, it resulted in a reliance on synthetic fertilizers and a decline in soil fertility, making agriculture the largest single driver of environmental change.

Bruce Williams discussed the challenges to food production and food security on Vancouver Island, where 90% of food is imported and disruptions caused by weather and transportation frequently affect the food supply. The chamber is working to localize food production but faces obstacles such as the cost of land and labor, and the absence of a slaughterhouse on the island. Lastly, Dr. Guitouni emphasized the valuable lessons that can be learned from regenerative farming for sustainable supply chain management. The importance of understanding the ecosystem, not just financial

efficiency, in agriculture is crucial. Regenerative farming practices have shown that crop yield is a byproduct of healthy soil. The contribution of pollinators, such as honeybees, to the coffee value chain is often undervalued and their destruction for financial efficiency can harm the value chain.

Business and Business Schools Bridging Divides

The round table on the role of businesses and business schools in bridging divides focused on the growing importance of businesses in addressing societal challenges, and the need for a more comprehensive sense of purpose beyond just maximizing shareholder value. The panel discussed how businesses and business schools can respond to this challenge and contribute to bridging divides in society. Marty Deacon, a Canadian senator, moderated the panel, which included Eric Cornuel from the European Foundation for Management Development, Mette Morsing from the United Nations Global Compact, and Jill Schnarr from TELUS. The panelists shared their insights on how businesses and business schools can foster a culture of responsible leadership and promote values such as transparency, ethics, and sustainability.

The discussion also touched on the changing expectations of customers, employees, and investors, who are increasingly demanding that businesses play a more active role in addressing social and environmental issues. The panelists emphasized the importance of businesses adopting a more long-term perspective and developing strategies that balance economic performance with societal impact. Overall, the round table provided a forum for business leaders and educators to discuss the role of businesses and business schools in promoting a more sustainable and equitable society.



It's a Small(ish) World: De-Globalizing Winds: The Future of International Cooperation

The discussion explored the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the global community, especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has already disrupted the global economy in many ways, including closed borders, disrupted supply chains, and increased emphasis on national security. With geopolitical tensions rising due to the Russian invasion, there is a new layer of uncertainty added to the mix, which could have far-reaching impacts on Canada's position in the world and its economic outlook.

During the discussion, the panelists explored how a less globalized world may lead to higher prices, hinder international trade and the movement of people, and ultimately reduce our capacity for international cooperation and global citizenship. Participants heard from a range of experts, including Pedro Antunes, the Chief Economist and Primary Spokesperson of The Conference Board of Canada; Jeff Nankivell, the President and CEO of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada; and The Hon. Yuen Pau Woo, a Senator of the Senate of Canada. The panel was moderated by Sohaib Shahid, the Director of Economic Innovation at The Conference Board of Canada. Overall, the discussion provided valuable insights into the potential impacts of geopolitical crises on the global community and Canada's role in the world.

Recommendations and Calls to Action:

- Address inequality through inclusion-based policies. It is essential to implement policies that promote inclusion and equity. This requires

a revision of legal structures that contribute to the exclusion of Indigenous peoples and the implementation of policies that consider the unique experiences and challenges these communities face. This can be done through the creation of Indigenous-led task forces, the implementation of affirmative action programs and the revision of policies that reinforce systemic discrimination.

- Empower Indigenous communities. Empowering Indigenous communities is essential for promoting equity and fairness. This can be done by granting self-governance to these communities and ensuring their full participation in the global economy. This can include providing resources for community development and supporting the creation of Indigenous-led businesses. Additionally, the government can support the creation of community-led



initiatives, such as cooperative models, to promote economic empowerment.

- Incorporate Indigenous thinking into sustainable economic planning. This is essential for promoting collective well-being and can be done by prioritizing the preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage and incorporating this knowledge into decision-making processes. This can include working with Indigenous communities to create culturally

sensitive policies and programs and creating opportunities for Indigenous participation in economic planning.

- Consider the intersection of gender and race. When addressing inequalities, it is essential to consider the intersection of gender and race. This requires reframing discussions on gender inclusion, equity in the housing and job sectors and employment policies to consider the unique experiences and challenges faced by Indigenous women and people of colour. This can include creating programs that specifically address the needs of these communities and implementing policies that promote equity and inclusion.
- Connect international efforts with local implementation. To effectively address inequalities in housing and employment, it is important to connect international efforts with

local implementation. This requires collaboration between local and international stakeholders, including governments, NGOs and community organizations. This can be done by creating local partnerships, implementing programs that promote economic development and promoting a safe and respectful culture in the construction sector.

- Align economic development with education. This is essential for promoting equitable economic

growth and addressing income inequality. It requires investment in education, training and infrastructure to equip individuals with the necessary tools for economic participation. This can include the creation of training programs, the development of infrastructure projects, and the implementation of policies that promote access to education for all.

- Focus on sustainable growth. Instead of solely focusing on GDP growth, it is essential to focus on sustainable growth that addresses

income inequality. This can include considering alternative forms of organization, such as cooperatives, as tools for community development and resilience. Additionally, it is vital to assess the impact of economic development on the environment and society and to prioritize sustainable practices that promote long-term well-being.

- Adopt a holistic approach to agriculture. This is essential for promoting sustainability and addressing income inequality and requires a focus on the impact of agriculture on the environment and society, as well as investment in regenerative farming practices that prioritize soil health and ecosystem preservation. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the impact of agriculture on local communities and to promote sustainable supply chains and investment in local food production.
- Foster collaboration among stakeholders. This is essential for promoting sustainable supply chains and increasing investment in local food production and requires collaboration between governments, NGOs and community organizations.
- Raise awareness of the crucial role of nature in global supply chains, highlighting the significance of natural resources and ecosystem services, such as the role of pollinators in the coffee value chain. Encourage stakeholders to shift towards regenerative supply chains that prioritize conservation, restoration and protection of natural resources rather than extraction and degradation. Doing so can create a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

WATCH THE PLENARY ▶



Bridging Divides and Building Trust

“Bridging Divides, Building Trust: The Role of Trust” was a panel discussion that brought together two prominent figures in the Canadian community to discuss the crucial role trust plays in society. Susan Black, Chief Executive Officer of the Conference Board of Canada, and The Right Honourable David Johnston, and former Governor General of Canada, shared their insights on the

current state of uncertainty in the world and the importance of trust in overcoming challenges and bridging divides.

The discussion was centered around the themes of trust and education, with The Right Honourable David Johnston highlighting the key principles outlined in his book “Trust: 20 Ways to Build a Better Country.” He made a clear distinction between trust and other personal traits, such as courage and empathy, emphasizing that trust is a fundamental aspect of society that serves as both “a lubricant and adhesive.” The panelists also stressed the importance of critical thinking and evidence-based decision-making in a world overwhelmed with information.

The panelists also addressed the role of Canada as a “knowledge diplomat” and the potential for the country to be a leader in knowledge sharing and education. The Right Honourable David Johnston emphasized Canada’s reputation for trustworthy governance and accessible education and encouraged the further improvement in these areas. The panelists discussed how current events—such as the pandemic, inflation and the digital revolution—have affected trust in public institutions, and by



starting with Indigenous communities and focusing on building trust within local communities and social organizations, trust can be restored.

The panelists emphasized the importance of aligning values and actions, in both private and public life, to build trust. They also highlighted the potential for positive cross-cultural exchanges, such as connecting young Brazilians to young Canadians to promote positive values and influences. The panelists urged individuals to focus on building trust in their local communities and social organizations in order to rebuild trust in larger institutions.

In conclusion, the panel discussed the current climate of uncertainty and highlighted the potential for society to create a better future through trust and education. The panelists encouraged individuals to develop critical thinking skills and strive to foster peace and harmony in society through trust and knowledge sharing.

Recommendations and Calls to Action

- Recognize the importance of trust and education to promote peace and harmony in society. This can be achieved by promoting transparency, honesty and open communication within organizations and governments. Providing access to quality education and encouraging individuals to develop critical thinking skills and make evidence-based decisions is also essential.
- Encourage critical thinking skills. Fostering critical thinking skills among individuals is essential in promoting responsible decision-making and building trust in society. This can be done by facilitating access to quality education and resources and encouraging individuals to engage in independent research and exploration.
- Build trust in local communities. To restore confidence in larger institutions, it is important to first establish trust in local communities and social organizations. This can be done by promoting transparency, fostering open communication, and empowering communities to make decisions that impact their lives.
- Canada's leadership in knowledge sharing and education. Canada has the potential to make a meaningful impact on global peace and harmony by sharing its knowledge and leadership in education and governance. This can help enhance Canada's reputation as a trustworthy and responsible country and also serve as a diplomatic tool. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure that education is accessible and affordable to all in order to promote equitable opportunities for all individuals.
- Cross-cultural exchange programs. Exposing



young people to positive influences and values through cross-cultural exchange programs can help promote positive relationships and understanding between different cultures. For example, encouraging young Brazilians and Canadians to learn from each other can help foster positive relationships—promoting peace and harmony in society.

- Rebuild trust in institutions through a bottom-up approach, starting with individuals and focusing on building trust in local communities and social associations. This can be achieved by promoting transparency and open communication and encouraging community-based decision-making processes. Additionally, supporting local communities through infrastructure investment and resources can help rebuild trust in larger institutions and promote a sense of community ownership.

WATCH THE PLENARY ▶

Trust Building in Asia in an Era of Great Power Competition

Senator Yuen Pau Woo moderated a panel discussion on building trust in Asia during an era of great power competition, bringing together three experts in geopolitical relations: Kristi Govella, Deputy Director, German Marshall Fund; Van Jackson, Political Scientist, University of Wellington; and Atsushi Sunami, President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The experts shared their perspectives on the challenges facing the region.

The panelists discussed the growing mistrust in Asia and the region's relationship to shifting balances of power and competition for influence. They noted that mistrust is a symptom of deeper political dysfunctions and trends, such as the emergence of China and the intensification of security and economic issues.

They pointed out that the trend towards populism and protectionism, as well as the weakening support for free trade, has disrupted the regional and economic trade system, leading to declining trust and stability in the region. Territorial disputes in

the South China Sea, for example, have increased tension and mistrust among the nations involved.

The panel also discussed the debt sustainability crisis in the Indo-Pacific region and its potential to exacerbate inequality and threaten regime security. They emphasized the importance of addressing domestic inequality and structural problems in rival nations and managing geopolitical competition over emerging technologies through science diplomacy and collaboration.

The panelists underlined the importance of economic development and suggested that OECD countries must take responsibility to address the crisis of debt sustainability. The panelists emphasized the importance of finding solutions within the region rather than becoming passive players in the larger power dynamics. They suggested that Asian solutions would be better suited to address the challenges faced by the region.

The panel of experts on the Asia-Pacific region

concluded its discussion with a focus on several key takeaways. They stressed the fact that the growing mistrust and tension in the region is a symptom of underlying political issues and dysfunctions. The panel also noted the importance of economic development in addressing these challenges, and how the rise of China has caused concerns and mistrust among regional actors. The panel highlighted the expanding political tension in the region, which now includes economic issues such as trade and investment. Additionally, the panel acknowledged the impact of populism and protectionism on the decline of support for free trade in the region.



The experts also emphasized the role of regional pragmatism and the prioritization of economic development in managing security dilemmas and territorial disputes. However, they also warned that geopolitical rivalry could be activated by exploitative and unequal political-economic systems. China's emergence was also discussed, as the panel pointed out its role in causing economic insecurity and coercion in the region. Finally, the panel called for the need to address the crisis of debt sustainability, emphasizing the responsibility of OECD countries to take action in this regard.

Recommendations and Calls to Action

- Address domestic inequality and structural problems in competing countries to reduce

geopolitical tension. Countries can focus on creating equal and stable societies by reducing domestic inequalities, thereby reducing geopolitical tension and increasing cooperation between nations. This can be achieved through targeted social protection policies, education and training programs, and infrastructure investment that addresses marginalized communities' needs.

- Manage geopolitical rivalry in emerging technologies through science diplomacy and collaboration. By working together on these technologies, countries can ensure they are used for the benefit of everyone rather than as a source of political tension. Science diplomacy can be leveraged to facilitate collaboration while promoting international norms and standards to ensure that these technologies are developed and used ethically and responsibly.

- Address the crisis of debt sustainability and have OECD countries take responsibility for remedying the issue. Addressing the crisis of debt sustainability requires action from all parties, particularly OECD countries, who have a responsibility to help mitigate the impact of this crisis. This can be achieved through

investment in economic development, debt restructuring, support for local communities and addressing the underlying causes of debt sustainability, such as poverty and inequality.

- Prioritize economic development to address mistrust and tension in the region. By prioritizing economic development, countries can help create equal and stable societies, foster cooperation between nations, and address mistrust and tension. This can be achieved through investment in education and training programs, infrastructure development, support for local communities, and promoting sustainable economic growth.
- Find Asian solutions to the region's challenges

instead of getting caught up in geopolitical rivalries. By focusing on finding Asian solutions to the challenges facing the region, countries can ensure the solutions are tailored to the region's needs, rather than imposed from outside. This can be achieved through collaboration between countries in the region, investment in education and training programs, and support for local communities.

- Recognize the importance of mini-lateral and trade-related initiatives to build trust and engage with China. By recognizing the importance of mini-lateral and trade-related initiatives, countries can help build trust between nations and include China by promoting cooperation and collaboration. This can be achieved through investment in economic development, science diplomacy and collaboration between different levels of government.
- Address the challenges of building trust within

small groups of like-minded countries and linking up with larger groupings. By addressing the challenges of building trust within small groups of like-minded countries, governments can help foster cooperation and collaboration and link up with larger groupings. This can be achieved through investment in education and training programs, infrastructure development, support for local communities and promoting sustainable economic growth.

- Prioritize economic development and climate change over becoming pawns in great power competition. By prioritizing economic growth and addressing climate change, countries can ensure that they are not pawns in great power competition but are actively contributing to creating a more stable and equitable world. This can be achieved through investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable economic growth and addressing the root causes of inequality and poverty.

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Closing Panel - Way Forward to Bridging Divides

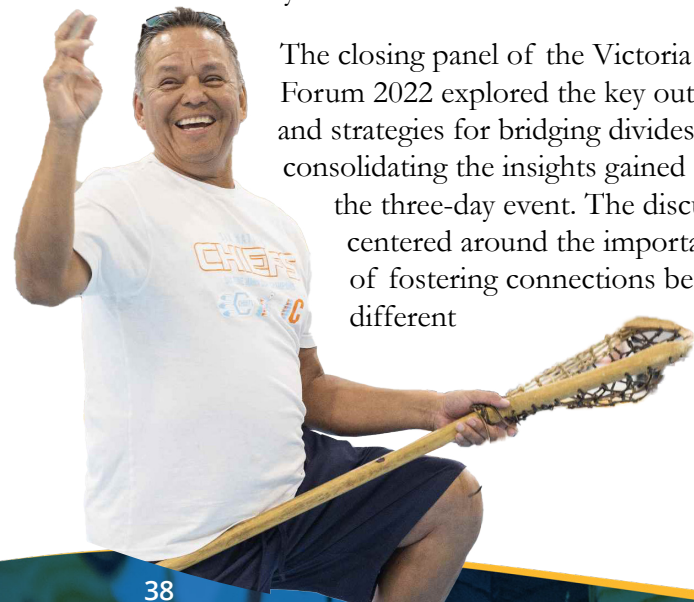
Moderated by Shireen Salti, former Executive Director of the Canadian Arab Institute, the Victoria Forum 2022 Closing Panel delved into the key outcomes of the three-day event and developed a strategy for bridging divides and consolidating insights. The panel, featuring The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and Dr. Wilton Littlechild, Grand Chief, emphasized the importance of fostering connections between diverse communities, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, in today's world.

communities, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and the need for holistic and systemic thinking to achieve sustainability, economic stability and social inclusion.

One of the main themes of the panel was reconciliation, with a focus on repairing relationships and fostering mutual respect. The panelists noted the significance of utilizing each other's strengths to achieve unity, using the Commonwealth Games as a prime example of this theme in action.

As the world navigates through a period of uncertainty marked by the global pandemic, the threat of climate change and shifting geopolitical dynamics, the panelists emphasized the need for open and honest dialogue. They encouraged using this moment as an opportunity for transformative change, powered by collaborative efforts, evidence-driven policies, and the nurturing of creativity and community.

The panel noted that the pandemic has shown that collaboration between different levels of government can be effective and suggested that this should continue in the future. They emphasized the



The closing panel of the Victoria Forum 2022 explored the key outcomes and strategies for bridging divides and consolidating the insights gained from the three-day event. The discussion centered around the importance of fostering connections between different

role of sub-national governments, such as municipal governance, in responding to crisis. Trust in science and evidence-based policy was noted as critical for decision-making during the pandemic. Institutions need creativity and flexibility to adapt to changes.

The discussion also touched on the importance of the four elements of life—physical, mental, cultural and spiritual—in various endeavors. The importance of the Spiritual element, specifically in sports, was underlined as crucial in achieving success. The panel also recognized the significant contributions of Indigenous elders to society as advocates for environmental protection and the importance of including athletes with disabilities in competitions. The example of walking on a railway track together was used to emphasize the significance of mutual support in achieving success.

Recommendations and Calls to Action

- Encourage collaboration between different levels of government to ensure continued success. This can be achieved by fostering communication and cooperation, sharing resources and working together to solve common problems. Governments can also establish inter-government task forces and committees to coordinate efforts, develop joint action plans and share best practices.
- In times of crisis, municipal and sub-national governments play a crucial role in responding to emergencies and providing critical services to citizens. They are often the first to respond and provide critical services to citizens. Governments can work to empower sub-national governments by providing them with the resources, funding, and autonomy they need to respond to crises and maintain essential services effectively.



- Prioritize trust in science and evidence-based policy. During times of crisis, it is essential to prioritize trust in science and evidence-based policy in decision-making. Governments can achieve this by investing in scientific research, promoting transparency and accountability and valuing the expertise of scientists and healthcare professionals. By basing policy decisions on the best available evidence, governments can build public confidence and ensure that information is reliable and accurate.
- Foster creativity and flexibility within institutions to better adapt to changes. This can be achieved by encouraging innovation, empowering employees to take the initiative and promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Governments and institutions can also implement agile management approaches, prioritizing adaptability, collaboration and flexibility in the face of changing circumstances.
- Physical, mental, cultural and spiritual well-being are essential to success in various endeavours. Governments can support well-being by investing in physical and mental health initiatives, promoting diversity and inclusivity and recognizing the value of spiritual practices and cultural heritage.
- Spirituality can be a vital component of success, not only in sports and business, but in many aspects of life. Governments can support this by promoting spiritual practices, such as meditation and mindfulness, and by creating opportunities for individuals to engage in spiritual and cultural activities.
- Indigenous elders play a crucial role in advocating for environmental protection, promoting cultural heritage and facilitating the inclusion of disabled athletes in competitions. Governments can acknowledge the contributions of Indigenous elders by respecting their sovereignty, promoting their voices and supporting their initiatives.
- Advocate for supporting each other in achieving success is an example of walking on a railway track together. Governments can promote this type of collaboration and support by fostering a culture of cooperation and mutual assistance, promoting teamwork, and encouraging individuals to work together towards shared goals.

WATCH THE PLENARY ►



Youth Perspectives



The Promise of Democratic Innovations for Student Voice in Universities

The conversation revolved around the evolution of student engagement in university decision-making, a longstanding opportunity for students worldwide. Traditionally, students have been given a voice in decision-making through avenues such as student unions, representation on university committees, and student experience surveys. However, these methods have come under criticism for their limited inclusion of diverse perspectives and impact on decision-making.

To address these concerns, a growing number of universities and student unions have begun to reimagine student engagement through innovative techniques like democratic lotteries to select student panels. This approach allows for greater diversity of student voices and can have a more significant impact on decision-making.

The panelists, including Jeff Kennedy from Queen Mary University of London's School of Law, Matthew Jenkins from Leeds University Union, Mel Stevens from Democratic Society Network, Ricardo Visinho from LSE Students' Union, and Jennifer Vornbrock from the University of Victoria, discussed new and creative ways to engage students in university decision-making. The panel was moderated by Simon Pek, an Associate Professor at Gustavson School of Business.



STEM Graduate Employability/ Entrepreneurship in Africa: Harnessing the 4IR to Africa's Advantage

The panel discussion highlighted the importance of preparing Africa's youth to bring knowledge and skills to solve problems, make sense of information, and evaluate evidence to make informed decisions. These skills are developed in the STEM disciplines. However, many STEM graduates lack knowledge of the business or entrepreneurship world, making it difficult for them to pursue related career opportunities. The panel featured experts in Africa's

STEM, employability, and entrepreneurship ecosystem, with a focus on exploring how best practices of Canada and the West can be employed to accelerate Africa's growth and development narrative. The discussion will be led

by Neil Turok, founder of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, Greg Moran, Executive Chairman of Academics Without Borders, and Shaheen Nanji, Executive Director of SFU International. The session will be moderated by David Attipoe, Managing Director of Industry Immersion Africa, with the aim of engaging the audience in the dialogue and creating a platform for further conversation.



Bridging Divides Essay Contest: Top 5 Winning Submissions

Students from across the globe were invited to participate in the inaugural Bridging Divides Essay Contest. This essay contest called for original, unpublished essays that share experiences and perspectives that inspire efforts to bridge existing divides. Entries described opportunities to drive change, and illuminated the fault lines dividing local and global communities.

The top 5 submissions were selected from 347 students in 37 teams, from 65 schools, in 27 countries. Each submission includes a written essay and a creative element. These submissions are richly contextualized and real, including accounts of actual experiences and stories of courage, grit, and transformation. Most importantly, they have the potential to shift the conversation in meaningful ways and foster collective action towards a more inclusive and sustainable world.

GBSN and the Victoria Forum 2022 are proud to present the Top 5 submissions.





1st Place:

Exposing the Online Social Divide

By **Andrew Sahaydak**, *Master of Global Business, University of Victoria, Canada*, and **Anne Venema**, *MSc Intl. Business, Johannes Kepler University, Austria*

Over one-in-three adolescents in Canada experience cyberbullying (Dojchinovska, 2022). This translates to over 2.45 million young Canadians who experience harassment in a wide variety of forms over social media, and in nearly every single case without consequence (kliem, 2022). Although these divides are difficult to see in everyday life, they effect people around the world every day.

The Social Media Effect

While platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo and WhatsApp allow us to stay in touch with friends and make new ones, the virtual world also poses huge risks to social interaction. Opinions can be expressed unfiltered in the digital space, protected by the deceptive anonymity of the web. For instance, only 10-20% of users are responsible for 80-90% of political comments on social media (Suciu, 2019). Thus, it illustrates how opinions of a few can become disproportionately large, and how easy it is to become an aggressor online. Since the importance of companies like Meta increases, it is crucial to find measures and solutions to the already existing threats.

The need to react now instead of letting further divides build up becomes especially evident in one alarming trend: online radicalization (Gunton, 2022). In 2016, 90% of extremists were radicalized through social media (START, 2018). We recently read about a horrific attack on a primary school in the USA. A teenager killed 21 people while broadcasting the act live on the internet (TAZ, 2022). As has been the case in some mass violent events, the online community encouraged and supported him in his vicious attack (Suciu, 2022).

Even though the USA has become sadly famous for such incidents, this negative influence of social media can also be seen in other countries. For example, the so called “incels”, or involuntary celibates, are extreme misogynistic online groups that have set the goal of male supremacy. Incels were responsible for an attack in Toronto in 2018 that killed 10 (Griffin, 2021).

Personal Experiences

Social divide has affected every one of us in one way or another. Personally, we can attest to several stories regarding online social malpractice. One instance was during high school, there were often students bullied because of their weight. Malicious images, phrases and videos were plastered on social media about them without their knowledge. After several months, the prejudice against this one student became overwhelming to the point the victim was made aware of the comments.

As a result, the victim of this abuse became agitated, upset and depressed. Despite the overpowering statements easily accessible on social media, and in-person reports made by fellow students and me, educators were powerless and apathetic. There were no penalties. The victim became frustrated with the entire education system and had to switch schools. I even advocated for the student on his behalf to no avail. At this point, I realized there was a major psychological flaw with social media: the ability to say

whatever, whenever and broadcasted to a large audience without consequence.

While this may seem like an isolated incident, we can draw stark comparisons between this instance and the way the aggressor in the USA was treated before he attacked the local primary school (Suciu, 2022).

An additional story comes from university. One of our student colleagues was heavily involved in the online forum “4chan”. 4chan itself is an online instrument of communication that has its roots in the deep web (Dewey, 2014). It is broken up into different topics that users can add to through comments or “replies”. Most of the content is harmless, however, 4chan has been known to spark outrage and encourage incel activity. After befriending our student colleague, we had a front-row seat at what 4chan had exposed: an even thicker wall between reality and a world of possibility without border or consequence. We were amazed at the hatred people had for different topics of the world, and specifically how they were using it to justify committing violent acts. Although our school colleague was not participatory in the more extreme sections of the website, it was a surprise for us both to explore the depths of the website. Shockingly, 4chan is only one of many websites with these contemptible fragments.

Solutions

The expose into the dangers of social media driving social divide is nothing new. Conversely, new generations are being indoctrinated in this scheme to the point of tragedy. School shootings, mass violence, political propaganda and crime utilize social media as a vehicle to propagate misinformation and falsities to achieve their agenda. Finding a solution is imperative, and we have identified three innovative means to counteract the growing concern.

Online education has come a long way since the establishment of the internet in the 1990s, however, it has not gone far enough. Too often are newcomers to the internet persuaded into joining online groups that hide their true aims.

Therefore, a modernized, standardized, mandatory internet education course built into the public school system would be hugely beneficial. So-called “internet licenses” have been proposed by different states in order to help guide children on what is appropriate and how to avoid malevolent activity online (Lackey, 2022). By having a standardized approach to learning about hazards online, we can not only help prevent social media violence as well as scams. While bureaucracy could prevent this approach from happening immediately, knowledgeable students could begin volunteering their time through clubs and grassroots events to solicit education districts and present how to be safe online right now.

Additionally, consequences for online actions need to be established. This does not have to immediately be done at a high level, but school districts need to be petitioned to help introduce in-school punishment, like restricting access to the internet, for using social media as a tool for cyberbullying. Educators need to have the necessary tools to reprimand this activity.

Virtual Reality also needs to be taken seriously when developing solutions for combating online harassment. Currently, Metaverse can be characterized as often manipulating fault lines in society into fringe, oftentimes extremist groups that divide not only local but global communities (Elson et al., 2022).

To circumvent providing these groups more of a stage, they need to be more regulated. While regulations take time to establish, right now we can all work towards promoting groups where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together to discuss a wide range of issues would not only foster collective action towards a more inclusive world but could center the focus on vital issues like climate change, poverty, and affordability. In addition to public education utilization, private corporations like Bell in their “Let’s Talk” campaign could employ the technology for a good purpose (Bell Let’s Talk, 2022). The UN Economic

and Social Council Youth Forum (United Nations, n.d.) and the Victoria Forum (n.d.) are also public policy initiatives with diverse amount of opinions and are suitable examples where VR technology and the Metaverse can be used for good.

As Epidemiologist Geoffrey Rose explained, “There is no glory in prevention” (1985). Even though the problem seems very minimal, it must be taken care of before it becomes out of control. All levels of government, private and public corporations need to be involved as key stakeholders in order to secure the future for the next generation, but right now we can all take these little steps to work towards a more inclusive world.

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2nd Place:

Of Highways and Byways - How People Have Used Resources to Divide Africa

By **Mufudzi Chihambakwe**, *University of Cape Town, South Africa*

Highways have always fascinated me. Partly because of how the same road could take you from squatter camps and dilapidation to high living and polished neighborhoods and in part because of how wide they can be. In Harare, where I grew up, they rarely spanned more than two lanes, yet because so many other roads in the city were so narrow these two-lane highways were considered to be remarkably wide. Later when I had the opportunity to see the sprawling metropolis of Johannesburg I saw just how wide a highway could be, sometimes spanning up to six lanes with cars whizzing by at speeds that seemed barely legal. I could handle crossing the highway in Harare, but definitely not Johannesburg. In Harare it was a fairly straightforward experience of waiting for at least one lane to be clear before venturing onto the tarmac. Usually there weren't any pavements for pedestrians alongside the road even though there were almost always people walking next to the highway creating little dusty paths of their own - a reflection of just who the highway was made for. Urban developments such as these were not made with everyone in mind. To not have the means to own or drive a car in Harare and many cities like it, was to live on the sidelines of a society that seemed to routinely forget a number of its denizens.

Who is development for? There seems to be a growing trend for African states to boast of improved GDP and maybe even improved infant and mother mortality, yet a nation is not made up only of statistics, but people. How then can it be, that despite the actual lived experiences of people on the ground, experts in distant lands can speak confidently about the lives of people they do not know, saying things such as 'Africa is rising' or falling for that matter? Development it seems, is as much a metric to appease the powerful in nations with a lot of money as it is a means for pulling a people out of poverty. It is uncanny how much of the lived experiences of the average African has been impacted by the people that have treated Africa like a 'playground for outsiders' whether at the Berlin conference of 1884 or Davos in the 21st century.

And what is the lived experience of the average African, you ask? Well the question is flawed and the



resource of storytelling have divided the peoples of this place from the dignity of a nuanced story. Africa is too vast and too diverse and the people of this place too colorful and dynamic to be averaged out. There is a highly problematic tendency to speak of Africans en masse as though we all have the same overburdened but deeply committed mother who has been abandoned by our good-for-nothing father as we try our best to make ends meet in our collective hut waiting for someone to save us or inspire us to save ourselves. Things are not all bad nor are they marching on unabated to great heights but rather in the face of economic meltdown or mega-boom life is going on. When protests were unfolding throughout the city of Durban in 2015 during the Fees Must Fall movement, I was student at the time but was busy recording voice overs for an up and coming media company that would go on to employ a number of those same protesting students one day - life was going on. In 1994 when the now-infamous Rwandan genocide was taking place under the blind eye of the world, South Africa was going through the formalities of dismantling Apartheid. Today, Rwanda has become a very different nation and South Africa has not. These are all stories of Africans of which there can be no average, no simplified version for donors and tourists that does justice to the reality.

How then, can these divides be bridged? How do you cross a six lane highway? I am afraid I never did learn that one. I avoided highways in Johannesburg and decided to spend my days on roads that that could accommodate me, roads that had pavements even though such roads often had security cameras that inherently saw me as an outsider, even a threat. And so it has been with many of us Africans who have found ourselves faced with harsh economic and social environments, we have simply moved elsewhere. Even if it means being a foreigner with no real civic life and a constant home sickness, some of the divides of home have been too difficult to bridge; a highway too exhausting to cross. Others have prescribed private business, social enterprise and entrepreneurship as a panacea for all of Africa's ailments as though all that was lacking was individual flare and agency to figure out how to dodge cars and leap across the highway. And while private business has changed the lives of millions in Africa it has failed to ask the question - why have a six-lane highway that served so few to begin with? Why do we have economic structures that normalize hardship? Why do you need to empower the youth? After all, who were our parents building for all along? Entrepreneurship is not for everyone, what happens to those for whom it never works? There are no easy answers to these questions and maybe the point was not to have them but to simply raise them, to diagnose them and to triage. I am not sure if we will go deep enough in our lifetime to the roots of these divides for they run generations deep. However, we can at least start to dig and at least show the generations to follow that we too saw that gap was wide and did our best to narrow it.

And how to narrow it? By asking questions about why economic inequality is resistant to social change in ways that even political inequality have been shaken by. It is not enough to run social programs that help the poor simply make do and be a little more comfortable with their lot in this life. The reasons for their poverty need to be interrogated as do the reasons for the fantastic wealth of a few otherwise we stand the risk of calling ourselves change agents when all we have done is rearrange furniture. At the same time, there needs to be an understanding that there are many paths to increasing the personal agency of the disenfranchised and we may not know the best ones. Better than a program may be a relationship, better than a policy may be a conversation. To bridge divides, we must understand why we are divided in the first place, maybe then we will have a chance of crossing them together.

Harare

Restless”

Is a more accurate description

Than “the city that doesn’t sleep”

For there is a lot of slumbering here,

Lots of eyes closed to suffering

within and without
Numbed consciences
And silenced voices-
Yes, plenty of sleep
But rest evades the city.
Harare is a synonym for hustling
For making do with the little
one has
For never quite fully
Showing your hand,
For defying the odds
For making more bricks from
An ever diminishing supply of straw.
The 'bread basket of Africa'
Has been baking thin wafers
Instead of loaves
For a while now.
Yet through it all
Hope
Has persisted Refusing to die
Resisting annihilation
Raising a nation
Of rebels to despair.

3rd Place:

The Plight of Hijab-Wearing Women

By **Zainab Siddiqi**, *Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, Pakistan*



Abused, oppressed, and unwittingly ignorant - the global notion about hijab-clad women that sweeps from Europe to India. However, little do we know that social dismissal and familial discouragement are two ends of the same stick. The combination breeds a desensitized and distressed woman. She yearns for financial independence, inclusion, and economic freedom. Yet, the struggle to convince her household and the battle with external social stimuli drains most of her vigor. Today, she longs for acceptance to end her predicament.

Employment, Educational, and Public Rights

The European Sociological Review recently published a study confirming employment discrimination against headscarf wearing women in the Netherlands and Germany.

The rates indicated the public withdrawal from engaging with hijabi women, stripping them of their hiring rights. In the Netherlands, a country famously accepting of immigrants, women wearing headscarves in their resume pictures get callbacks approximately 148% less than native women. According to Weichselbaumer's findings, hijabi women in Germany face the highest levels of employment discrimination when applying for top hierarchy jobs, even with the same qualifications as the natives.

Ultimately, the problem does not lie with the scarcity of labor or inadequate qualifications. It is a systematic institutional denial of employment rights for women who visibly identify as Muslims. The plight does not end at job offers. Numerous isolated incidents around the globe have tried to restrict the rights of willful hijabi women. In Karnataka, girls were denied their right to access education in early 2022 only because they covered their hair. They were harassed, intimidated, and scorned by a narrow-minded crowd in public. The French bans are notorious for the diminishing rates of hijabi girls in schools and their eventual educational fall-back among their peers.

While the Taliban in Afghanistan constantly demand control of female bodies by declaring coverings as law, the benign intentions of the European nations wash away when they try to do the same by enforcing the opposite.

It helps radicalize religious identities when restrictions are imposed in public places in the name of secularism and Western values. The headscarf is very different from other religious symbols - hijabi women adhere to it as a way of living. It is impossible to exercise public freedom when the foundation of the hierarchy of needs is targeted.

Bridging the Social Divide

Alienating this fragment of society which has largely been neglected and politicized for governmental agendas, is no longer an option. With incidents of hijab-pulling in public spaces, the rise of Islamophobia, and the deep-rooted aversion to independent women in Muslim circles, the bear the brunt of it all. Society dehumanizes the headscarf-clad person in front of them as a brainwashed and possibly threatening individual, while the family can only see them fit traditional roles. It is mentally exhaustive to navigate through full-blown pressure from both sides of the coin.

Suggesting the removal of compulsory provision of a photograph on job resumes is naive because hijabi women get screened out after the face-to-face interview for the same reasons. Instead, reassessment at the grassroots is necessary. The unjust exclusion stems from several sources. Either from claims of love for the Muslim women domestically forced into wearing it or from the politicians perpetuating separation and hatred. There is no global scheme by the Muslims to usurp the system of Western ideologies as feared by the men in power. In retrospect, only 6% of the population of Europe identifies as Muslim.

Education is key. It cuts through prejudiced media and helps bring people together. Knowledge about all aspects of the Muslim culture is vital in dissipating the contagious dislike. There is no such thing as a perfect culture because benchmarks do not exist, although the morality of practices can be questioned. We need a paradigm shift - view a majority of Muslim women as beings capable of discerning their rights. By attaining information from them first-hand, it is easy to doubt their widespread reputation.

Food and music are the pied pipers of successful integration. Talk to hijab-wearing women, and the intolerant mask will fall off. The more people mingle with Muslim women - they realize that the only thing

distinguishing them is the religion itself.

Otherwise, most of us are the same inside. Human, craving a warm welcome.

DECEPTION

Those marks did not haunt her
But the owls mocked her resolve
Tonight, it was drizzling a fresh slu.,
Buried under blankets of alcoho

She did not blame, she did not da1re
Her thin hued canvas feared the night
So, she slipped into the beckoning snare
As fists tapped on her skylight

Then, flashes of invisible smoke and steel
She screamed and writhed without pain
Tears begged her to shriek, maim, repeal
The forecast went wrong yet again
Soon, the hour for consolation grew near
She befriended warmth in her dreams
But sweet poison melted her soft ear:
To trust the chains of ardent regimes

Blinded by vows impersonating affection
And desperate to fill the gaping crack,
She stared at her distorted reflection-
A slowly deepening lilac

Connecting Women to Abundant Education

By **Panharoth Meas**, *University of Houston, USA*

Gender inequality has historically been a global issue that prevents our society from reaching its full potential and must be solved by providing equal opportunities irrespective of gender difference. Some westernized and Asian countries have overcome gender disparities since the 19th century. Other countries, such as Afghanistan, have banned women's rights following the withdrawal of US troops in 2021. The issue regarding gender inequality also extends into less known countries such as Cambodia, which is my native country.

Growing up, I was exposed to Cambodians' constraints and prejudices against higher education and women. My high school acquaintance left school and married a 30-year old lawyer against her will. My female relatives quit school because their parents could not afford their son's and her tuition fees simultaneously. They have demonstrated the deeply ingrained belief that women do not deserve much education. Growing up, I perceived these injustices as social norms. Personally, my close family and relatives expressed strong disapproval upon learning that I wished to pursue my study in the US and suggested that girls should not leave home and stay by themselves. Despite Cambodia's development, poverty and traditional barriers hinder women's ability to pursue higher education. These problems have led to significant economic and social issues that demand reformation.

Today, poverty forces Cambodians to live in the street, as the country has not fully recovered from the Khmer Rouge of the 1970s. Meanwhile, authorities placed women's education on the lowest priority because it was not seen as beneficial. In 2019, Cambodia's poverty line was updated, which is \$2.30/day in urban areas.

Approximately 17.8% of Cambodians live below the poverty line. These statistics have proven that over 3 million people constantly fight for daily survival. However, women's educational rights could be a key to ending poverty. According to Randi Hjamarson and Lance Lochner's studies, educated citizens lower crimes. Lowering crime rates could further reduce the social divides and increase security. Furthermore, wealthier nations have lower illiteracy rates. Educating both men and women in the families can help end generational poverty. More educated men and women in the workforce would provide opportunities to put the first Cambodian on the moon or achieve other milestones.

The Cambodian government may not entirely strip women's rights like the Afghan women. However, our progress toward equality is subtle, unlike other Western countries. In Cambodia, customs and culture limit women's self-development. Many foreigners may believe that Cambodia could not achieve equal rights because we are a third-world country suffering from poverty alone.

One instance of this issue is shown when Sok Kimsroeung, the Program Manager for the OPTIONS, suggested to UNICEF that poverty and women's education are unrelated. As an important figure in the country, he advocated that girls do not need education beyond 6th or 9th grade. "Chbab Srey" or the "Code of Women" is living proof that contributes to this mindset. These 1837 lessons by King Ang Duong tell girls to be patient with their future spouses and not dispute their rights. In 2007, the Ministry of Women's Affairs ordered these lessons removed from the curriculum.

However, some of these regulations continue in the National Language Book from middle to high school. Parts of writings in the "Code of Women" include:

"...You must be patient and only eat after the men in your family have finished. You must serve and respect your husband at all times and above all else. You can't touch your husband's head without first bowing in respect. School is more useful for boys than girls." - Chbab Srey

Different types of oppression and discrimination in today's society have all been written in Chbab Srey. In other words, if you want to understand more about how women are being treated in Cambodian society, you can read it directly from the book of Chbab Srey. Therefore, Chbab Srey has severe implications in modern-day society. For example, approximately 25% of adult women who endured domestic violence were once taught to be patient with their husbands' abuse, a behavior taught in Chbab Srey. Hence, traditional barriers alone can explain why Cambodia ranked 95 out of 138 countries for gender divide in higher education attendance; girls enroll less than boys.

Worldwide, gender bias extends beyond education and into employment seeking. Even in well-developed countries where more women have access to education, women need more education than men to decrease wage inequities. Since coming to America, I quickly learned that women outnumbered men by a 3:1 ratio in college enrollment.

Yet, women with degrees earn 18% less than men with the same amount of education. The salary disparity is 25% in blue-collar jobs with basic vocational education. Higher education is needed to keep up with industrial development and discrimination simultaneously. According to Pew Research Center, those with a bachelor's degree or above have a better income, lower unemployment rate (less than 4%), and lower poverty rate (less than 6%) than those with a two-year degree or high school diploma.

Most women never got to enter a school campus or learn to read and write because of boundaries such as poverty, along with the mindset that girls don't need as much education as boys. Therefore, we must send girls to school globally. The government can start by mandating that parents must send their kids to school once they reach the age of 6. This solution is inspired by the US Compulsory Education Law. In 1852, Massachusetts required every city and town to offer primary schools focused on grammar and math.

Parents can be penalized for refusing to send their kids to school. This practice is later accepted in other states in the US. A Cambodian adaptation of this mandate sounds promising; however, many Cambodian families struggle to send their children to school because of the tuition fees. In Cambodia, students pay an average of \$2,500 for a bachelor's degree, \$3,000 for a master's, and \$9,000 for a Ph.D. These tuition costs may cost significantly less than American university tuition, but the Cambodians' average salary is also drastically lower. Therefore, the government should allocate a larger portion of the national funds to focus on the education sector and help Cambodian households pay for college.

Women must stand up for themselves alongside the media and multiple government agendas. Social reconstruction is insufficient to solve the traditional and rigid mindset of a society that has put men above all else for centuries. We need to begin by promoting gender equality such as airing and broadcasting women empowerment and other women feminist TV series openly. This public display can allow more people to understand the importance of women's education, effectively instilling mindsets in women to trigger the necessary movement that leads to the necessary progression in women's rights and education.

Cambodia still lacks federal funds, government agendas, and individual commitments, no matter how well these solutions are presented. When will social changes, such as educational gaps occur?

It is hard to modify the fixed perspective implanted in society with the long history of women being mistreated. However, we may gradually raise awareness and solve each consequence of our changes despite some difficulties. Education is key to economic growth. Cambodia will flourish and have more workforces in all sectors by sending more girls and women to school. Through abolishing traditional obstacles, we will be able to produce massive and outstanding human resources and solve some women's issues that also correlate to poverty.



A Promising Heritage at the Age of a Divided But Interdependent World: Conversation

By **Duygu Tan, Ko** *University Graduate School of Business, Turkey*

We are living in an increasingly interdependent world. This interdependence is so strong that it compels us to think about traditional boundaries dividing our local and global communities. What are these boundaries? In the simplest term, we have national boundaries determining each country's location in the world. National interests are competitive in politics. The dilemma of state sovereignty is at the core of international law. When it comes to local communities, we observe backsliding in the rule of law and democracy. The rising voices of polarization and discrimination undermining human dignity are scratching our ears daily. Besides these divides, the world we live in has centripetal forces, namely, international trade, climate change, pandemics, nuclear weapons, and so forth, demonstrating to us that our destinies are interconnected.

The inadequacy of rulers and law in the governance of both divides and centripetal forces indicates the need for a paradigm shift: adopting an approach that centres on “we” rather than approach that centres on the state, the rulers or the law; “we” need to manage our interdependence. The echoes of this necessity may also be found in the words of some famous quotes. The African philosophy of “ubuntu” says, “I am because we are.”- or it can be translated as “A person is a person through other persons.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. notes, “We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be - this is the interrelated structure of reality.”

Such a paradigm shift is built on the following pillars: love, trust, goodwill, fraternity, and conscience. There is a realm where all these pillars are actualized: conversation. The term conversation is translated into Arabic as “muhabbet” - also used by Turks. “h-b” and “h-b-b” in the etymological origins of “muhabbet” mean love and friendship, respectively.

Let's imagine an environment of a wholesome conversation. It could occur when a few friends walk in the park or two strangers travel on a plane. The participants of such conversation trust each other based on the assumption that each has goodwill. You may easily observe a synchronization not only in the flow of words, but also in their body language. Such conversations are fraternal, as it comprises a humility in which the participants render each other as peers, and this mitigates hierarchies as much as possible. As people make themselves vulnerable during the conversation journey, they tend to feel closer to each other.

So, here's the question: Can we not envisage such experience among the opposites, e.g., liberals and conservatives, or feminists and anti-feminists - or we may generalize them as disagreeing people? The answer of most would be: “Not at all.” However, my answer is that it depends on us again. I can hear your loud objections from here but please give me a chance to explain.

First and foremost, we should distinguish conversation from some concepts. Obviously, conversation is not a transaction having an instrumental concern for a momentary case. Moreover, transactions do not go beyond the goodwill whose framework is stipulated by the general principles of the applicable law. Debate is not a conversation either. Even though the debates seem to be convenient means for solving a problem and accordingly, the debate competitions are proudly presented, there is a missing point: how can a person who listens to their opponent with a rush to mount a reply-argument explore and accept reasonable points

made by their opponent? Can they change their mind? Can they put aside their prejudices and differences, or can they draw an objective path to evaluate both theirs and their opponent's sides? I don't think so. Debate, where the ego comes to the fore, stands very differently from the conversation and its pillars. Lastly, conversation is not mechanical information exchange. If the conversation was an experience only in which one gave information, and the other received the same, we would not be talking about learning and evolving together.

If we go back to our main question, there are two imperatives that everyone can do for a good conversation - even with their opponent: i) Allow for the encounters and ii) Listen with your heart's ear. It is possible to argue that where there is a social divide, there is no encounter at all. As many advocates, social media also plays an adverse role in polarization since online filter bubbles only expose us to the ideas we already agree with and portray our opponents as "boogeymen", making the eagerness to encounter difficult. So, we should lead off by cultivating our curiosity about our opponent. Curiosity is the key to closing the books on our cognitive shortcuts, namely, generalizations, biases, and mindbugs. Paying attention to our opponent and not knowing everything enable the listening with an intent to understand, not to reply, not to offend, or not to have listened first. I'm aware of the fact that sustaining such civic temperaments is challenging, as listening is not a passive act; on the contrary, it takes more effort than talking. Accordingly, asking questions - not manipulative or offensive ones as to prove our rightness - may keep our curiosity and perseverance alive and pave the way for listening through the ears of our heart.

Listening without an agenda allows us to hear the stories. Witnessing each other's stories makes the conversation a safe environment where both parties can potentially make themselves vulnerable. That mutual vulnerability not only brings people closer to each other, but also eliminates prejudices and differences by closing distances that seem too far away. For instance, the *Best of Enemies* (2019), a feature film based on a true story, tackles an unlikely friendship developed between C.P. Ellis, a leader of the local Ku Klux Klan, and Ann Atwater, a prominent black activist during the Civil Rights Movement in the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. Ellis and Atwater are asked to co-chair a committee to resolve the desegregation issue in the Durham Public Schools. Although this encounter initially challenges both of them, over time, they listen to each other, witness their stories, and focus on their commonalities and humanity. At the end of the movie, not only is Ellis' vote decisive in the integration of schools but Ellis and Atwater become close friends.

The conversation empowers the functioning of conscience. Although the conscience is a non-political and subjective process struggling for the individual self and its integrity, it enables feeling compassion and undertaking responsibility for the others. According to Aristotle, friendship is a prerequisite for justice, and I believe so does the conversation that holds the friendship together. We do not need to agree on everything, but the conversation has a promising role in producing the knowledge we can design as our global norms. The golden rule, the principle of treating others as one wants to be treated; the meaning of the veil of ignorance in John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*; and the Kantian categorical imperative are initial evidence of that. There's always the chance to begin creating the oasis realms of conversation and co-authoring our destinies together. As Hannah Arendt indicates, "Action, with all its ambiguities, constantly reminds us of one thing - a person has to die, but a person is not born to die, a person is born to start something new."

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