

## DemocracyXChange 2019 Summit Transcript - Main Stage (Saturday)

EMCEE:

Thank you for coming out on this fresh wintry morning. We are excited to have you all here. Let's get started. I would like to introduce the associate Dean.

SPEAKER:

Good morning everyone. My name is Catherine and I am the associate Dean at Ryerson University. I would like to give the land acknowledgment. We do this as a symbolic act. One among many to follow. Ryerson is on the territory of the tribes. It is covered by treaty 13 and the Williams treaty. We are honored to our obligations with these treaties.

Here is how we hope to begin that work. Our faculty is committed to hiring more indigenous faculty and bring more indigenous lenses to our curriculum. We want to create scholarships for students. Work and submitted to supporting research that is housed in our faculty that provide support for indigenous communities towards their path of self communication. I would like to welcome you.

I would like to thank the organizers for putting on this important event. We are proud to have this as a co-presenter. There is a more critical need to bring all of us together. To become more critical minded. Each of us have an interest in bringing more inclusive structures. We are delighted to announce that our faculty is launching the Institute for Future Legislators.

This Institute will provide training on how to become an effective legislator. We are grateful to the University of British Columbia to develop this program.

This opportunity will open up new pathways to our students as well as anyone in our community who has aspirations. The Institute is just one example of its commitment to research and democracy. Over the past few years, we announced our democracy chair. We launched the Democratic engagement exchange met by John BB.

Both of them will be presenting tomorrow. We have the privilege with working with faculty, chairs, and faculty that are organizing and attracting speakers. We hope that you can all join us on February 5. We will host a panel with our current governor.

Thank you very much. I look forward to it to the dynamic dialogue to where we can affect change.

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(Applause)

EMCEE:

Thank you Kathleen.

Next up, I am happy to introduce the cochairs of the democracy exchange.

KARIM BARDEESY:

Thank you so much for coming. We are so pleased to have you here. I'm the cochair of this conference along with Anna and Chris.

One of the cofounders of this conference is an action oriented think tank based here at Ryerson. Dedicated to building new things in life.

CHRIS COWPERTHWAITE:

We have two programs democracy kit and democracy exchange. We would like to thank everyone.

They are all anchors in this new insurgent effort to build up our democracy. The democracy that works for everyone. A democracy that some people say, if you look at the service, is not going so well.

The client and trust. Concerns about how many people are voting. Lack of public engagement. The rise of toxic authorities.

SPEAKER:

We are looking past the surface. What we are really interested in listening to we know that you are listening. Could you just turn around or turn to your side and say hello to your neighbor.

We are going to be here for the next three days.

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There will be more hellos later. This is what happens. When we created this last year this is what happened. On behalf of the entire planning committee, the people on the screen behind us many of them will be spending time with us this weekend. We are thankful for their generosity for the time they took to help build the summit.

We are very excited. The fact is, this year's conference, we have more than doubled our participation numbers. I have to read this, because I cannot believe this. More than triple the number of activities are sold out. Let's give ourselves a hand.

(Applause)

Do you know what that means? That means that you are going to develop more democracy soulmates this weekend. That is really important for us because as you will hear many times this weekend, change starts and ends with us.

SPEAKER:

Thank you Anna. We have different perspectives and come from different places. Some of us work across partisanship. Some of us are non-partisans. And partisans. Some swear off ideology. Some of us are experts. Some of us are executives. Some of us are all or none of those things. Some of us fight the activists, executives...

We believe that better is possible. Something that is hopefully true, we believe that the democracy belongs to all of us. Not just the already powerful. Not just the people running the institutions.

I think we believe that our democracy is working well, that we govern and that power is there to be gained. Shared. Or at least fought for.

You will see in your packets, we believe that democracy is a verb. That involves activities like speaking, listening, gathering, eating, and we have lots of different food options for you today.

The democracy, all of those verbs are best practiced collectively. It's a collective act. As you can see from some of these messages. We really hope that you see this is more than just a weekend in January. We hope that you see it as something greater. Whether it is a campaign that you are going to start in your community, or developing your identity as a changemaker. We will be using the hashtag DXC19.

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At others in social media. Remembering that we are here to support your vision. Whether it is the city of Providence or the country. I think the best thing about the summit is that we are here because you don't have to go it alone. We are here to connect.

SPEAKER:

The good news is actually there are institutions willing to support all of us. Our sponsors are behind me. All of our gold sponsors.

Whole bunch of other partners that I'm not going to read, but without those kinds of institutions helping us, it's impossible to do this kind of work.

It's handcrafted by love. Love, yes! By sweat, tears, and the commitment of so many volunteers. This stage was built by those people. Including my dad.

It's really exciting to have those types of people here.

SPEAKER:

Some blood was shed too. Mostly some paper cuts. We will hear some people who had more than just paper cuts and have more at stake.

SPEAKER:

Many of them are wearing volunteer T-shirts. If you have any questions at all, ask for their help.

SPEAKER:

We got started yesterday. Over 100 dozens of you participated and got to see the amazing work that is happening across the city. Today, we have over 60 presenters from across Canada, the United States and beyond.

We have a reception tonight. And screening.

SPEAKER:

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On behalf of the open democracy project, thank you once again. Before we begin, just some logistics. There will be programs on the screen. It will tell you... And the map. We are all on this floor. We saved a couple of workshops on the eighth floor. We will try to stick to the schedule. On the end of each day you will get a survey for your feedback. You can find that at participant HQ.

There are washrooms all around this U-shaped space. When we are on this stage you want to use the upper right stairs. I think that's it.

SPEAKER:

One more thing, we made our best effort to accommodate the various needs that people might have of this conference. We have live close captioning for people who needed that in two of the rooms. This room, and in room A.

We tried to accommodate the needs that people have. If you have any concerns, please come see Natalie or one of the co-chairs.

SPEAKER:

In order to start us off, I would love to call Michael Champagne to the stage!

(Applause)

MICHAEL CHAMPAGNE:

I'm confused as to where to stand because this is the bright area. I'm allergic to podiums. Let's see what we can do. All the better to see with. Good morning and thank you very much for coming out here today. My name is Michael Redhead Champagne.

If you ever heard any stories about the first nation from which my family comes, or the community that raised me, odds are you have only heard one story. I think it's important for us, if we are going to be real about democracy to get real about the stories that we tell one another.

And the stories that are coming out in media, social media and in our lives as we build relationships.

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The very first thing was the beautiful land acknowledgment that happen here. Can we give it up for the folks here at Ryerson for doing a beautiful land acknowledgment today?

What is really important when we talk about acknowledgment, and so much more important than acknowledgments or actions. To hear this institution list off the actions that they are going to take to ensure that first Nations are included, not only included but elevated to the position that they need to be. So that we can work well with one another. It is so very exciting.

Founder of a group called AYO!.

I know it's early in the morning but we are going to try this again.

That sounds like democracy! It's a beautiful concept. Every four years we go, we check a box, and then four years later we do it again.

I think it's very important for us to challenge what democracy means to us especially here in these spaces. For me, it has very little with voting every four years.

Those young people said that they wanted to do politics differently. It's politiX.

We invite bureaucrats and any helper that has system knowledge to sit with us as urban indigenous young people and explain processes, policies and how systems work.

This component of system navigation and literacy is critical to if we are going to engage young people in politics.

One of the young things that is exciting when we have this team, not only do we learn about how these systems work, but we engage. We engage as constructive as possible. When we are talking about important concepts, and I think a lot of folks in 2019 are having conversations around reconciliation, it becomes critical for us to ask ourselves the question "What do these words mean to us, democracy, reconciliation and my favorite word that was mentioned appear this morning love?"

As we are having these conversations and discussions, I want us to be able to think about is this the right way for us to be framing this conversation? Is this the right way for us to be moving forward?

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As an example I wanted to share something with you for my culture and language, as somebody who comes from the child welfare system in Manitoba, this process reclamation of my identity, language and role as a storyteller is an important piece of me living a good life.

If you are like many of us, frustrated with the amount of abuse that words like democracy or reconciliation are treated with, then want to join me and challenge how we do this.

Wanted to start by sharing something with all of you. In my language, which some people call us Cree. In our own language we call ourselves Inninu. In our language we have a better phrase, that one is the one I'm about to teach you for those of you who can see it.

The phrase is (unknown term). It means the good life means we're all safe housed, food in our bellies, the love, opportunity, or gifts are acknowledged. It means everyone is taken care of.

For me in my life too often, phrases like democracy have meant that doesn't include me. Even phrases like reconciliation only include me in the other people. What I do want is this for myself, for you and for your families.

I believe we can have that. In Winnipeg's north end, in the inner-city were all our various initiatives operate what we are trying to do and what we are creating is creating a good life.

What we call it in Winnipeg, there's use opportunities, their control, all these different initial legislation: citizens to show up on a regular basis. Not every four years, but every seven days.

We call those gatherings collectively "The Village." It is a beautiful feeling to be a part of the village. In the village we believe we can all access it. We can all live the good life. It only excludes. It only welcomes. It is based on love.

A lot of folks will say this, especially in political and professional environments, I say the thing we need the most is love. You know people say to me? Michael, that is out of scope. Guess what? We are going to have to get out of scope here if we want to ensure we do not leave our relatives behind anymore.

That is what this conference is about. To me, real democracy happens in the village when young people

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show up at these gatherings every seven days and vote with their time, they vote with the little bit of money they do have. They vote with their bodies. To me that is democracy.

I want to ask you this question once more. Does democracy mean showing up every four years and letting other people make the decision or does democracy mean taking action and creating it in every single opportunity that presents itself to us.

That is what I believe we need to do if we are going to move forward in a good way together. We are going to be able to address some of these toxic systems and roles all around us.

The final thing I want to say, is that in the work that I do with urban indigenous young people, most of us coming out of the child welfare system or living lives of poverty - the most important thing I can do with these young people is help them identify and share their gifts and ensure they are being heard and listened to.

I want everyone to look around this room right now. I don't see the amount of indigenous young people or youth in general in this room that we need. Let's think about who is not here and let's take the steps to deliberately build that relationship, welcome them into spaces and guess what it might be out of scope, but it's the work that we do.

I welcome you all to this journey and encourage you all to walk with me as we try to find the good life. I feel like if we take action we can get there.

One more final thing, the importance of learning and share with our relatives that have experience in these democratic systems, it's going to become important for us to welcome those fresh perspectives of what democracy can mean what reconciliation can mean what community means or even what Canada means.

I think it's absolutely critical for us to be thinking about redefining what these words mean because they have literally been abused to the point of no meaning. Let's make it better. No more of this talking only business. Let's take action. The more action that we take, the more lives we are gonna save, the more relatives we are going to bring into the circle and the more true democracy we are going to have.

I am really excited for us to be able to challenge these notions of democracy throughout this conference. But this is only the starting. If you come to a conference and when it's done you're done and you say that's the end, that's weird. Don't do that.

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Let's make sure we apply the things we learn. We honor and build those relationships with one another. Again, I just want us to challenge ourselves to think about who is not in the room. I don't think it's out of scope. I will leave it at that. Thank you for listening. Have a great conferenc

EMCEE:

which is well on who to be the opening challenger of the conference. Following him is yet another challenging, part of what makes Astra so challenging she defies being put in any kind of box. She is pretty remarkable.

You don't often invite people whose recent works have been reviewed by Pitchfork, the New Yorker, the intercept, the nation. Those things usually don't converge into wanting to see what a person has done.

I will stop talking because I think you want to hear from her. Astra Taylor.

(Applause)

ASTRA TAYLOR:

What an honor to be here. Thank you all for listening to me. Thank you to Anna, Kareem and Chris for inviting me. It's kind of a formidable task introducing this conference. Thank you Michael.

I was invited because I am in the process of releasing a film called What Is democracy? May 7 this is your book to this film is coming out. The book is called "Democracy May Not Exist, But We Will Miss it When It's Gone."

These projects have been labors of love. Now it makes sense. People take for granted that it makes sense that I will be working on projects about democracy. That was not the case when I began them. In 2013 and she responded so enthusiastically about these ideas about making a philosophical film about democracy. I don't think any other institution in the world would have accepted that as a pitch for a film.

I just want to thank the National film Board and call attention to the fact that it is because what they do that this is the production of ideas and not...

What is democracy? The film does not definitively answer the question. If you come see it tonight, it's kind of a spoiler. There are no car chases. It is a different kind of romance film. It's not a film about boy meets girl, it's about public love.

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Love is something I thought about a lot and I felt as I made the film. I wanted to ask a deceptively simple question. What is democracy? I asked this question because I wanted to ask it for myself. And I wanted to ask it with others. I wanted to create a cinematic experience that would invite people to think. We thought of this film as an invitation to think.

I wanted to make a film that was a true exploration and not exposition. It was an investigation. Not just an exposé of democracy's many flaws.

I want to talk about this desire to prompt conversation and contemplation. At this conference I was a bit overwhelmed because all of you are engaged with this topic. There are elected officials and activists and scholars in this room and concerned citizens. It's fair to say we are all here because we have a shared interest in democracy and are all concerned about it. Is there a single person in this room that thinks democracy is doing great? No.

There's a temptation in my mind to lay it out and remind us how urgent the situation is. We use this word crisis. Crisis is a word from the Greek and it's a turning point in a disease where you get better or you die.

I always have the image when I hear that word, it's a really dire word. The crisis of capitalism and the concentration of wealth and how that undermines political equality. The extraction of resources and how that destabilizes the environment. Climate change. The legacy of settler colonialism and racism. There are all these problems that make this a really urgent conversation.

All of this might emphasize different thoughts and challenges to democracy but the thing is there is a fundamental consensus and that is basically that we would come to a conference call Democracy X change.

10 years ago I would never have come to a conference on democracy. Even at that time it was sort of a social justice filmmaker engaged in politics or on other issues. But the word democracy really did not speak to me.

That is what I want to talk about. The fact that this work, and I think Michael got to this well, that it leaves so many people call. Even people who should care about it.

It was not that I was disenchanted with the word democracy, because I was never enchanted with it to begin with. I think part of it is growing up in the Otts, George W. Bush, president of the United States was

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bringing democracy to the Middle East.

It just seemed like something very mealymouthed and debased. Words like equality, freedom, revolution, socialism, liberation spoke to me. The word democracy just seemed kind of beside the point.

It was a word also to with presidents and prime ministers say it and my anarchist friends. North Korea called itself a democracy. What does this word mean, so many people use it.

I was disconnected from democracy. I think it support to point out there are different ways of being unconnected to democracy. I wanted to distinguish my sense from another one.

There is a piece in the New York Times and I don't know if it relates to Canada, people who are the most hostile to democracy today are centrists. ... Running strong and centralized decision-making to amassing more inclusive processes. This is astonishing to me. Half of Americans who identify with the political center view elections as an essential feature of democracy. Only half of them agree that civil rights are crucial to democracy. I was coming from a different place. I felt the skepticism I got was pretty common. People do not encounter democracy in this everyday life.

They don't have it in their job or schools. We should revere and pay tribute to it but we do very little of it in our lives. This is where I want to kick us off from. Not to answer the question, but to remind us how urgent the challenge is to ask it. Or even to think that it connects with them in a genuine way.

I think the goal is to expand the way who feels connected to the term and who feels that way with us. When you create a democracy file it is easy to forget that this connection.

It's easy to become a bit sanctimonious or schooling. Why don't people pay attention? Why don't people vote?

Those are decent questions. They always call... There is a great quote, "In a well ordered city everyone flies... In a bad government no one cares to get to them"

People are not flying to the polls. Can you imagine a democracy where people are not enthusiastic about democracy and they fly to them as enthusiastically as we go to lunch?

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That the utopian vision. There is the sanctimonious. People come up to me and say, do you believe that people don't even vote? I understand why people are disengaged.

I spoke to a lot of strangers when I was making my film. I got to ask people about these issues. I found that when I listened to them, they are reason for not engaging was not necessarily coherent.

There is a scene of Streeters in Miami, I asked these two young guys, do you vote? No, never. After, pursued the conversation with them. They had some interesting points. These guys were probably 10 years old in 2000. Do you remember in 2000 their reason was this thing called hanging chads.

Registering to vote as a joke. He was just like, should be automatic, easy, and he actually had a pretty good analysis. It had just made him cynical.

Part of a one challenges the charade is that our government makes it difficult. We have issues of fair representation that goes back to that levelers and English revolution.

How do we count votes fairly? And today we see the issue of electric reform where people care but it's being pushed off the political agenda. We have to acknowledge people's cynicism and get a conversation about these bigger issues.

There is a scene in the film were a wonderful scholar talks about the fact that the ancient Athenians are aristocratic not democratic. The rich and the wellborn have an advantage. They devised these technologies of randomness so that the people who were included as citizens, slaves and foreigners... They employed this very interesting model of cetacean to ward against it.

There is an interesting book that is about to come out, "Legislator By Lot."

What if we had a political system where there are two houses and one was elected in the other one was selected. There's a lot of decent research that shows that citizens actually can come together and become informed about complex issues very quickly. They are not going to attract donors and get reelected.

This is where I am at after years of working in this project. I am more committed to small d democracy, but I am also sympathetic to peoples disengagement. I want to call people into the circle of democratic inquiry. I began skeptical about this democracy.

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I began to think about it as something that can be constantly expended. The practice of democracy does not come from the ancient Athenians but the word does. It means that people hold power. The question of who people are and how they are constantly changing advance.

Democracy may not exist. Perfect democracy may not exist but we can democratize our society and politics. We can make progress. That progress can go into reverse as well.

The challenge I took up was to challenge people to take up the question as well. I have solutions that I like from small ones to big ones. The word "should" flies out of my mouth.

You should do this, you should do that. I know the answers. What changed me was becoming an organizer. I need to put my big theories into practice. I have to do political work. For the past seven years, I have been working on a project called, The Debt Collection.

To organize debtors to connect across distance. To fight their creditors. Whether it is student debt, medical debt, you name it. We launched the first one and we won \$1.2 billion of debt relief for our members.

(Applause)

This experience humbled me. Progressives would be winning if political change was right. I think but democracy, this woman says in the film that democracy is our passion to do things together. That is a great definition. It's the capacity to do, and one of the things we need to do is think. We need to act, and we need to think.

They will vote like me and they will not be so confused.

It's very oriented toward the outcome of good decision-making. This authority, because I've been thinking so much about it. Instead of thinking, we emphasize speaking. There is the assumption of speech. The freedom of speech. It becomes speech without thought. I want to say what I want to say.

Listening really deserves to be at the center. It embodies thought of listening.

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A Greek philosopher has this great phrase. "We were given two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."

We have a brain between our ears so we can process and reflect before we do that speaking.

The democracy requires thinking but that thinking requires listening. Leah and I really tried to model and intellectual film that shows intellectual engagement as pondering, not pontificating.

Not speaking authoritatively but listening intently. There is this question of who gets asked questions and who gets listened to. I will ask what is justice? What is the good life? What you think? How do we want to live?

The film embodies that spirit. I think that if we do that we realize a lot of the problems we face did not begin this year. It is not some new phenomenon. Struggles over inclusion, economic equality, expanding the D most... Go back to the very beginnings of democracy. We have to wrestle with these old dilemmas.

Democracy is hard. At the center of democracy is the people. The people is an abstraction. If you live in a monarchy you can point to the king or Queen and they rule. In the democracy we have this abstract that doesn't exist. The people come together and make decisions.

It could be that we make theoretical dishes. What makes democracy so compelling, it is both thinking and action. It is a noun and a verb. It is something that we can only do together. I hope you come to the film tonight.

(Applause)

Did I do good on time? I did like half. I just wanted to keep us going.

EMCEE:

Can we start with a high-five?

ASTRA TAYLOR:

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I was very excited when I found out I was paired with Michael. I saw you speak on the internet about intergenerational love. This is a phrase that I had never heard before. I was wondering if you could talk about that. I think it was something that I attempted to embody without (inaudible) in the film. We have allies who no longer exist.

They have tried to advance freedom and equality. Democracy is this multi generational effort. No more war between the old and the young. I was interested in that idea and why it is so important to you.

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:

I think it's super important for us to challenge narratives that are common. My mother went to Indian residential school. I am the prodigal of the welfare system.

Family separation has been part of my family story, and my nation story for too long. When people learned those pieces about me. They think it's intergenerational trauma. It is real thing. It is true. It is not fun to experience. One thing that folks don't acknowledge often enough is that indigenous people are still here.

The fact that we are still here is evidence, and proves that intergenerational love is much stronger than intergenerational trauma. I think that if we are going to save democracy, get real about it, then we have to get real about the intergenerational relationships we have with one another. Also how does that act out? How are we doing succession planning? How are we engaging younger folks to build relationships with those that had the experience?

That is what we do with our politics initiative with AYO!. ... Intergenerational awesomeness and we welcome families to hang out together and talk about solutions.

I think it's very important as we have these conversations that we make sure we are rebuilding families. For too long in this country especially, family separation has been the norm.

If we prioritize things like love especially intergenerational left that can be the medicine.

ASTRA TAYLOR:

In the companion book I get much more abstract. There's a question in each chapter is a paradox that democracy has to wrestle with. Coercion versus choice. How much spontaneity versus how much structure. Local versus the global but also the time question. What is the time of democracy?

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On one hand democracy is to be quick, there are urgent challenges. We also have to have the long when you think about generations to come.

The generations that are alive have a lot of say. They write the constitutions. A bunch of the dead old white men had this disproportionate power over people who are alive right now.

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:

I was just a part of the Bank of Canada replacing... I feel like this is real progress in Canada. It's not impossible.

ASTRA TAYLOR:

I think this issue of time is really interesting. You manifest that word three work with young people. But Leah and I have been quite interested, and I've done quite a few screenings, occasional someone who claims to love the film... Is the fact that I put young people front and center in particular.

There's a scene in the school right asked students about democracy in their school and they are quite mistreated. The response has been on the have to listen to their elders and have wisdom and in their place. Wait till they turn 18 and magically become human. Do you think that will change as you get older?

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:

I certainly hope so. The reality for indigenous young people unfortunately and I think a lot of young people is that we are entrenched in systems where we feel we have zero control. I think it is important for us if we are going to actually mentor and eventually have these young people take over as our elected officials, prime ministers, executives, CEOs.

I don't believe you love democracy unless you are building the system and navigations for young people. There's so many elected folks and alleged this in Winnipeg and asked them so individual who is been elected... Constituents. They don't usually have an answer. It's a great question and I would encourage everyone to ask their elected officials what are they doing to build system literacy.

Because too many folks are benefiting from the pack fact that the general population does not understand what is going on and they can go to their talking points and pull the wool over people's eyes.

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If you build up system literacy, then we are in a position to call bullshit when they do so.

ASTRA TAYLOR:

When people become democratic citizens, what does that mean? It does not only mean becoming an elected official.

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:

It gets exciting. The young people I work with have now after learning about all these different systems of politics are able to understand how to do very complicated navigation of existing structures and also try to replace them.

In Winnipeg we have a lot of challenges of substance abuse right now. Crystal meth is really hurting our community right now. We have young people with the system literacy that has been built from the folks that support us we have been able to navigate the bureaucracy of systems to be able to have a culture based program for people who use drugs that is formed by people who use drugs.

I think being able to bring those experiential voices to the table would not be possible if we do not have helpers building our system literacy so we understood how to even make that happen.

It was not a popular decision and still was not a popular decision bringing those folks who currently use those substances to give us the intel on what we need to do. I think that is the benefit.

I think for the young people I work with, the movie that you have been able to put together What Is Democracy?, I want to ask you a tenure challenge question.

10 years ago did you ever imagine that you would be Ahhh! Democracy person. How did you get here?

ASTRA TAYLOR:

I was already the philosophy person. I was already halfway there. Philosophy was born with democracy, this silly scary Democrats that about my mentor Socrates to death. When I was a kid I had I had a newsletter about the environment. I've always felt democracy was irredeemable. Not a word worth fighting for.

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The process of making this film has really made me... Has changed my thinking and maybe connect with the concept. I had to undo a lot of learning about that and then to a lot of associations. I had to change my idea - part of it was expanding the circle of who I listen to. One thing the film does is try to change who is an expert.

This is where you're getting at with bringing people into the circle. When you start talking about democracy and its issues with regular people with people who are excluded, people from all walks of life there's actually so much wisdom and capacity.

I keep out of making his film feeling that if we gave people a chance we could make something really great. As the film finished, the last week of shooting was actually Donald Trump getting elected.

It's a strange sensation to be going against the grain like that, but I did not know this is where I would wind up and I honestly have no idea where I will be in 10 years.

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:

One thing very interesting to me is the concept of influence. A lot of folks go into becoming elected officials so they can gain influence. I would argue that you as a filmmaker (inaudible)... Do you see yourself as a democratically position person? Did you get voted in is my question.

ASTRA TAYLOR:

I have two answers. I think films have a limited impact. I think we need to build social power and engage in forms of adversarial politics. Trying to build new forms of solidarity so that people who come from very different walks of life who are different ages, races, different jobs don't feel as they are exploited. To me organizing political strategies like that is real power.

The filmmaking is in the realm of philosophy. They represent who they see and how it works in their imaginations. That's white so important to put diverse people from center so they can be heard in their insights can be valued because as a 12-year-old girl speaking and then the next minute there is quotes from Plato and Russo.

It creates a mood in the audience so they can hear the brilliance that is being expressed for people who they may not otherwise listen to.

The color of reconstruction has this beautiful phrase and it talks about excluded wisdom and how

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democracy needs the excluded wisdom of black people, working people, women, and it talks about children. I think the film sort of does that. The film is powerful because it reaffirms stereotypes or can break the stereotypes, but it's not organizing and it's not the end-all be-all.

For me I have to have both aspects in my life.

MICHAEL REDHEAD CHAMPAGNE:

Love it.

ASTRA TAYLOR:

Thank you, Michael.

EMCEE:

Thanks very much Astra, and Michael. I cannot imagine a better start to kickoff our summit. John Young the CEO of HMR said you must meet Michael in Ontario if you have not already. He is amazing. Of course the National film Board who has done a remarkable job with this film Leah and Astra is just a rock star.

System literacy stuck in my head. As we move through the three days we hear the philosophical using's of these really thoughtful people. Now let's go down a little bit to the data.

I would like to bring up Keith Neuman from Environics Institute for Survey Research to give us a little bit of these data points. Not that they should inform the left part that is the most important. It can somehow help us understand a little better how Canadians are thinking about democracy. Keith, come on up.

(Applause)

KEITH NEUMAN:

Testing. Thank you Hannah. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in this wonderful gathering and share the stage with wonderful people. They are a tough act to follow. Here we are, somewhat about democracy. I could tell from the program that this is not going to be a celebration or a wake.

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I think it's about action and change. It's the work of advocacy. I'm going to take a different diversion. I'm going to describe it as more of a diagnosis. The diagnosis is how we, as a country view our democracy today.

We have a tremendously large and diverse gathering here. But what about the other 35 million Canadians who cannot be here. I expect that Anna and her team would probably have them here if Ryerson could find a way to accommodate everyone. I want to talk about being a public researcher and a way to understand the public mood. This is my profession to do public opinion research. I do it for small nonprofit. Our mission is to help Canadians understand ourselves better as a country. The graph we really do not. We do not understand ourselves quite as well as we might. Part of that might has to do with the part that we are so distracted about what is happening elsewhere.

It's not always where the focus ought to be. I want to make the case that public opinion research is by no means the truth. I would argue that it's an important institution of democracy.

It makes an important contribution with the caveat that is done responsibly. By providing a snapshot of what we think and what we value. Provides a check against the claims of those who may say from time to time that they speak on behalf of the people. Is it the case or not? It provides us with a basis to empathize with people who may be different than ourselves.

I think this is different to hear from all parts of societies. Not just the parts that we are most comfortable with. Public opinion matters. We need to know what it is.

I think to quote one of the fathers of public research.

Following with another quote "survey is produced with what democracy is supposed to produce. Equal representation of all citizens."

I'm not trying to make the case that survey research is all we need for democracy, but it's an important part. I want to prevent some of the relevant survey research evidence on how Canadians view their democracy. How this is changing over time. How we are comparing with other countries.

I will focus on a few key points. My good colleague is going to be on the program tomorrow at noon. He will go into more detail on this.

What is some of the evidence? I want to answer three questions. Do Canadians have confidence in their

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democracy and national institutions? This is a question that we asked in a survey from 2017. It has followed previous surveys. How satisfied are you with the democracy today? I think you conclude with the numbers, most Canadians are not enthusiastic about the state of democracy. Relatively few are dissatisfied.

The trend over this period of time is stable. This may not be the pattern that we are assuming is taking place. Another question which is a bit different, is democracy preferable to other forms of government? We have seen from the side that there has been a softening since 2012, 2014 to 2017, this may be picking up a bit on what was said this morning, where we look where the changes happening it is among the Canadians under 45 years of age.

People may not be as committed as before.

Those are the ones that may be less committed that democracy is the best form.

What about populism? We concede that on this theory that most Canadians do not agree with this statement. The proportion who disagree seem to be declining. There seems to be reduced resistance with this populism.

I will point out that this is most notable who identify on the right of the political spectrum. On the other hand, this may be constitutive. Agree, disagree. Those who govern this country are interested in what you think?

Canadians are more positive about this now. This may be counterintuitive in the sense that we are assuming Canadians are becoming less satisfied.

What about trust in our national institutions? Data from 2017. A number of institutions, level of trust, we can see that there is a wide variation in the likelihood that they have strong trust. Armed Forces tend to have the most. Political parties, the least so.

If you point out that look at those that have little, or no trust, it's a relatively small proportion. Even with the ones that are on the bottom of the list. We need to put this into perspective. On another survey we asked whether they thought that the government that served them are either working or broken?

There is no clear one, or the other. More likely or not they think they are working with problems.

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It's a relatively small proportion. 8% in 2016. That is the affected group. It is a small group as well.

We asked a question on a 2016 survey about various changes to the federal electing system.

Yes, much more supports than opposition. A lot of people do not feel strongly. Making it mandatory to vote in federal elections. The takeaway I would take, there is definite interest in making changes. Not as strong public demand at this point in time.

For most Canadians, most of the time, issues of democracy is not front and center. They are not thinking about it. They see this as a problem. Nevertheless, to illustrate that fact, from a couple of surveys what is the most important problem in Canada today. Democracy is not top of the list.

The second topic I want to cover is how democracy compares with those in other countries. We tend to be in our own bubble.

It's useful to provide benchmark comparisons to see how we are doing. Thank you.

Are you confident in our national government? This is from a survey from 2005 to 2018 data. We can see that 61% in 2018 say that yes, they are confident.

Generally high over this period. The blue line is the average. The data in 2018 is not yet available, but I have a table here with the comparative countries.

The level of confidence in national government is higher than the other countries we compare ourselves with. There are half as much in the United States. Where the confidence as in elections. Same data. We can see that over 70% of Canadians think so. We are well above France and the USA. Confidence in the judicial system. 70% of Canadians are confident.

We can see a fairly even trendline. Well among countries in Europe and the USA. Sometimes what is happening in other countries is not happening the same way.

You cannot read the slide, but I will tell you. Basically, if you look at the upper right, there is a small number of countries that score high both on the economist democracy index, and we asked people if they were committed to democracy with elected representation.

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Canada stands out in many ways. Most recently, the element trust barometer comes out every year. You may not be able to read the details. The 2019 numbers were released last week. Canada is not at the top but we are near the top.

The Canadian trust level has improved. Certainly, whatever trend we are seeing is going in the positive direction. The final question I want to address is indirectly relevant to democracy. This may be relevant to this particular conference. I want to end on this note.

Just to show you a few slides. What do Canadians think about immigrants coming to this country? Do they help benefit the country or make it a worse place? No consensus. But Canadians are much more likely to say that immigrants make the country a better place than a worse place. More importantly than the slide, it shows that between 2011 and 2018 there has been no change.

Despite all of the issues that have happened over the last couple of years with refugees, Canadians view on immigration has remained stable and in some cases improve.

This is a trend aligned that has been asked for 25 years or so.

This is an issue for many Canadians. They are uncomfortable with immigrants that do not seem to be Canadian enough. If you look at the trend line, it is trending down then trending up.

I think speaking to this issue, this slide is more counterintuitive than what we have in our research. We asked Canadians what was the most important to drop when immigrants come. Nativeborn and immigrants agreed. Respect for the law and the history.

Finally, from episodes, the survey that they did in 2018, based on inclusion this, we had the gold medal on this one. We are at the top. In some respects, from a comparative point of view, we do fairly well. What do we take away from this?

As others have said already, democracy is challenged in many specific ways. Perhaps here in Canada as well.

Here in Canada we are not seeing a loss in public confidence that may be happening elsewhere. I think

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most Canadians are feeling OK, if not great about the state of their democracy. It has remained stable over the last decade or so despite the events that we have seen or expected to erode that confidence. We see that the Canadian public is more confident in broad terms than publics in many other countries that we compare ourselves with.

Here's the question to leave you with. Are Canadians complacent and missing something really important is going on?

Or is this a flag to the rest of us and we may be missing something. Some of us tend to focus on the glass draining rather than glass filling. The predominant narratives in our media and so forth, gives us the things that are falling apart. I don't have an answer to the question. You probably don't either.

I think it's an important question. To finish up, I would like to say is when the people speak they are not always right. If they need to be moved, we first need to know where they are. Have a wonderful conference. Thank you.

(Applause)

EMCEE:

Knowing where the people are will help all of our presenters figure out how to move them. We are taking a break. Before you go, there are two things to note. We are going to go into our split sections. For people interested in civil societies will go to room B. Prior to that, there will be a short, short break if you don't need anything, and you want to see the woman's panel. Stay here. Those who want to move, start moving please.

EMCEE:

As I was saying people ran, not walk to the session. This is a really hot topic. We have great folks on this conversation of women, power and intersectionality. We thank you already for the generosity of your time.

Reachel Pulver who is the executive director in general is for human rights is going to introduce our panelist.

RACHEL PULFER:

Thank you Anna. We are all tremendously privileged to be in this room. I will also own my own privilege as a white heterosexual woman from Anglican dissent so we can get the table stakes out of the way. I am

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delighted to introduce starting with Bhutita Karpoche. Who probably needs no introduction to this group. She is the first person of Tibetan dissent heritage to be elected in North America. Pretty damn cool!

Sitting next to her is the extraordinary Michelle Woolfrey who is a Ryerson student, disability activist and the owners of Blind Girls, Inc.

After her is the fabulous Kyla Khalifa Scott. She's the founding measure of an indigenous innovative collective and she lives in Yellowknife with her husband and two daughters.

Next to Kyla is Denise Siele. She is a former conservative nomination candidate in Ottawa.

Last and by no means least, it is an extra in a personal honor to be on the same stage with Kathleen Wynne.

(Applause)

Who put Ontario on the map as the first female out gay premier I think in modern times. Is obviously now the NVP for Don Valley West. When I travel people say that is the cool province with the lesbian grandma who is running the show. And I say yes.

(Applause)

For the purpose of this panel the title the panel is women, power and intersectionality. I want to say in interest again in the interest of laying out table stakes what we mean when we talk about sexuality. We are referencing the externally work of Kimberly Crenshaw.

In first point the term of intersectionality represents the multiple barriers to... This was extrapolated to include class, sexual orientation, multiple disability, ability and other identities. Another craft that control gives his and General Motors were a woman of color could not get employed in a secretarial pool on the shop floor because of her color.

The format will be conversational. I will be asking a series of questions and running down the lawn. We have about 60 minutes for the discussion and then about 10 minutes for discussion from the audience. I look forward to an amazing conversation.

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Without further do we are going to get in the first set of questions. Had to be both an intersectional leader and a representative of quote on quote marginalized groups. Starting with Kayla Howell in your various leadership journeys have you represented those with less access to power?

KAYLA KAKFWI SCOTT:

For me I completely understand the access to power. But for me when we are talking about access to power we are actually limiting our view in what power is and we are accepting the traditional understanding of a very, the pyramid style of power but the elites are on the top.

I think in terms of fighting for access to power, instead of everybody, group, person trying to climb up the pyramid and trying to be part of the minority who have access to the table is a powerbroker or decision-maker, I would like to see work of actually flipping that goal in putting the power back in the majority of the people. Power should not be in the hands of the few, it should be tribute among people.

That is what true democracy is. In terms of my work, it's not necessarily access but ensuring access to power but reminding people that we all power in ourselves we just need to exercise that.

(Applause)

RACHEL PULFER:

Denise you had an interesting response to that in the pre-chat let us get to know one another a bit better. If you want to jump in on that.

DENISE SIELE:

Certainly the way I have walked is to be present. To be present in those rooms and be vocal in those rooms were quite frankly I have the privilege of being in. Moreover, not just vocalizing diffuse as I understand them for my community of interest so black conservative woman born in Kenya and now Canadian, but also ensuring as I enter those stores it's not just a slight opening but it's breaking it down so that people who look like me and sound like me and believe in the things I believe in can come in no holds barred.

I think for me it's less about understanding access to power but actually exercising it when you're in that room to be able to do that.

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RACHEL PULFER:

Kathleen you had interesting view on this we're talking as well.

KATHLEEN WYNNE:

I'm probably going to say some different. I did not get into elected office until I was 47 as a school trustee. So my work and community facilitating people coming together whether we were fighting for good education against homophobia at the Toronto Board of Education or whether we were tackling the in time amalgamation by in the city of Toronto. It was about bringing people together and helping people to find a voice and expressive voice.

When I got into elected office, I had a different platform. We had different platforms throughout our lives and there are tables. We talked about tables in the pre-discussion. There tables where decisions are being made. What I have tried to do as an elected official is use the platforms that I've had as an NVP, minister and premier is to take the stables out to community and have government and outside of government working together. There should not be separation.

In my speech that I gave in 2003 I talked about my responsibility to represent all my constituents. I also talked about the groups that I felt, because I had been in those rooms and had the experience, the group that had a special responsibility to.

Young moms were living in isolation or in poverty. Young gay people who did not feel that they could live their dreams that they had access. I think there are those layers and there is the use of whatever platform we have to open up the discussion.

RACHEL PULFER:

Kyla in our chat will be talking you were talking about the work you've been doing the collective.

KYLA KAKFWI SCOTT:

... Out of the movement several years ago which most of you are probably aware of. In organizing around that is people were across the country, our crew in the Northwest territory started talking about the next piece because demonstrations are fun for a period of time. But then what are you going to do with that to the extent that you've garnered some momentum or goodwill, how do you execute that for good and for positive change.

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We have over the years really focused on not so much the access to power is redefining what do we consider to be powerful and what are the spaces we can create that were missing before. Indigenous leadership values historically have been much more about the community and the collective. You don't have all powers centered within one person. You have different people who lead in different contexts and based on the situation that you're in.

Women have had historically much more of a role in that. The imposition of leadership and power structures, you have one person who's the boss and tends to be a man. We really focused on trying to create spaces for women who are leading in their communities to be able to engage to meet each other and not be in their community doing hard work unrecognized and disconnected because they don't have access to the leadership forums or the cultural exchanges of things like that.

We have just really tried to - and all the things we do we have really try to focus not on what is the problem and how are we talking about the problem, but what is the solution are we making that happen.

RACHEL PULFER:

Fantastic. I had the privilege of working with indigenous program and the one piece that astounds me is the wealth of nuanced understanding of governance of complex communities and complex times. I hope more back and come up in this conversation.

Any other reason except that I know you also have an additional element added to the definition of intersectionality or perspective you bring.

MICHELLE WOOLFREY:

I think for myself - talking about intersectionality, especially in a conversation like this is understanding that intersectionality is more than just research under.

It includes a number of different folks' identities. For me it's really important that the voices even in conversation around marginalized communities and equity seeking spaces are still being ignored. Voices of the disabled, indigenous and trans folks. Things like that. I wanted to make sure we are centering maybe a wider understanding of intersectionality and the work that we're doing.

And then to answer the question around what do I do, I try to really - I'm a community worker. I try really hard to be in the community. I checked my privilege. I make sure I'm there to listen and not to talk. When I do have access to tables and power, I'm comfortable standing back and allow someone who doesn't have that access to step up and speak. I think we need to do more of that work.

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RACHEL PULFER:

What strategies have you used to stay connected to the various groups you represent. To ensure your leadership is informed, but also the situation we have to make a hard call. Where leadership is not hijacked.

BHUTILA KARPOCHE:

For me, I think because of my own experiences and how I came to where I am right now, through community organizing, through human rights freedom movements as part of Tibet. I come from many different experiences.

When I am in a position of representing the constituency, I find that my different experiences are places where I can find commonalities with people.

I think that helps inform the work that I do. In terms of strategies, in making sure that I am truly representing the people... I say this especially as a member of Parliament. It is so easy to get lost in this bubble of Queens Park. You think that the whole world takes place around Queens Park when you were in there. Real life, and real work is outside of that building not inside. The people are outside.

People on the outside do not know what's going on on the inside. For me, to remind myself, and to be deliberate in taking actions, to always be connected to the people who are on the outside and on the ground.

It doesn't matter, still go door to door and talk to people. I asked them what I do better or differently. For people to feel that we are working together, it's just not me being a voice for them, but that we have to work together.

Organizing initiatives, like formal government nights. We welcome people to the office and owning representatives on whatever you feel passionate about. I'm right there with them making those phone calls. It's really important not to forget that the real work is on the ground with the people. You have to make sure that your present.

RACHEL PULFER:

Michelle?

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SPEAKER:

Can I jump in on that. I love what Bhutla just said about organizing locally. As a politician, what I have experienced is that there are a couple of levels that you have to operate on. Making sure that you keep knocking on doors. You open up your office.

You have those organized opportunities with them to do that real work as a minister, I want to make decision-making things. I think that's critical. There are moments where there have to be symbolic actions taken. I will give you an example. When black lives matter was camped outside the police station in Toronto, and none of the leadership was coming out to talk to them, and they came up to Queens Park one day.

My staff were apoplectic about me going out or not going out to talk to black lives matter. It was a debate. I love those moments in my political career when someone will say, well, that is not been done before. That's a good thing. That means it has to be done.

Because of my background, and I have demonstrated on Queens Park at the board of education I've been dragged out of the gallery at Queens Park. I've been taken down to security. Security knew me because they dragged me out of the gallery. Not because I was elected. I walked out and talked to black lives matter.

It was really important that I made that connection from inside Queens parked outside Queens Park. There should not be that barrier. I wanted to raise that symbolically.

RACHEL PULFER:

Denise, if you want to share your experience.

DENISE SIELE:

I am born from in community, out of community and always back to community.

To paint the picture in terms of Ottawa's black population. There are probably 35,000 identifies black. 45% are under the age of 15. It is a very small community. When you come from the community, there is an awesome accountability.

The minute that you step out on stage, as Denise, as founder of the black civic engagement, automatically there are a whole cadre of people who are watching and keeping you accountable.

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In terms of the strategy, and particularly in Ottawa the community is so small and tight knit that there is no room for mistakes or errors. If anything, you will get caught out when you start to spit out what is the collective, norm, the understanding.

In terms of, there ought to be spaces as well for people to step out of what is comfortable. Even with being your own communities of identification. She is able to say, I will be the first to do this.

It may not capture everyone's imagination but as Kathleen said, someone has to be the first to do. This is the place where as women, intersectional leaders, we can start to push those boundaries. Push them further, and further until we do not need to be having these conversations about the first.

We are engaged in this exercise of pushing things beyond your own personal orbits.

RACHEL PULFER:

Fantastic. Michelle you are an intersectional leader of a different path.

Can you share how you have stayed with your roots, but own conversation?

MICHELLE WOOLFREY:

I think as someone who has not hold the position, it's a different game for me. It's less of a public I kind of game. It's more of the, I get to do it the things that make me feel good. I agree with, and I feel good about.

One of the things I really tried to do in my leadership is to continue to have this conversations around being the first in pushing yourself outside of the comfort zone. I tried to stay connected to the community. What they need, it is what they want.

We had had a conversation about this idea of hijacking power. What you do of when the interest of the people you are representing don't line up with the source, or funder. Or another position of power that is coming in it that is saying they are going to do it differently.

For me, I go back to community activism and doing things like marching on Queens Park to ensure that

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the voices continue to be heard. If I am in a position where I have to bring someone in that community, may not agree with it is about holding space to have those difficult conversation and push ourselves outside of a comfort zone to see if we can get along. If we can find common ground.

If we can come to some kind of agreement about how to move forward without anyone feeling like they are being ignored or not listened to.

KAYLA KAKFWI SCOTT:

Dene Nahjo is the name for the blanket group of the First Nations living in the Northwest Territories. It means doing things in a good way. As a principle we cannot create spaces and community where we are talking about different ways of exercising power, or recognizing power where it exists if we are not operating ourselves.

We don't have a head of organization. There are 10 of us who are founding members. We have both indigenous and nonindigenous people in that group. When we were first forming, part of it was that we all had a discovered shared experience.

I grew up removed from culture, and language. It was lonely and kind of shameful. I didn't talk about it a whole lot. In connecting with these group of people, some who I knew very well and some who were acquaintances, we discovered that was a shared experience for all of us.

We figured that should be a shared experience for a lot of them. Most of them are not from that place, but are indigenous.

We took that as a first sort of, we can infer that we are connected to and representing that community. It is a need that has not been articulated yet.

We have a pretty diverse experience and expertise. Different things that we are super passionate about. Our first circle of staying connected is that we do not do anything unless we have consensus within the group.

By the time we are ready to roll, it has gone through some serious critiquing. We have an elders group that helps keep us accountable. Those are the ones at the beginning where we are apologetic about is the seed of value that we are trying to create.

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You don't need anyone's permission to have had the experience that you had and want to do anything about it. That is valuable to have that support. Whenever they feel like we are veering off track, they will veer in and let us know in that their gentle older way.

As we got involved in the community we get a ton of feedback. Most of it is about, why did you only invite 20 people? I wanted to go to. It tends to be positive reinforcement that there is a need and we need to scale as fast as we can so that we are able to better meet the need for everyone. Not everyone loves what we're doing.

We take all of the feedback we get. Often it is stuff that we spend a lot of time talking about. It validates the process that we went through.

RACHEL PULFER:

Reminds me that you don't need permission to own your experience. And Michelle Obama spoke about the line where she says, "It's my story and that's one thing I know I can own, and no one should ever be afraid of that."

Denise you touched on a point of the idea wanting to get to a place where nobody ever has to be the first or out of their comfort zone from a place of intersectionality. I'm wondering if you can expand on that a little bit in the context of the question, what do you want to see change? So that this kind of panel represents leadership in Canada. No need for any additional flex, what would you like to see change?

DENISE SIELE:

There is a whole list of things. I think the probably most difficult things for me as a black woman is from within my own community to remove this sense an idea that we are all one in the same. Some ways it has to start from within. How are we organizing is a black community in Ottawa to be able to move forward?

I think the tricky thing here - I'm going to be really Frank with this audience here - a lot of folks look at me and they just see a black woman. Not understanding that an Anglo African. Someone in the audience could be Muslim from Somalia wherever it is. Or even AfroNova Scotia. Collectively we aren't black but there's also a need for everyone else to understand when you see a black person it does not represent one in the same. There is so much diversity.

This is the thing I think in being able to change, there's a founding group, the Federation of black communities. It's trying to have a one voice for the black community across Canada. Until we can have people that look like us in those spaces to be able to tease out those differences and understandings, it's going to be really difficult.

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Heading into next week is Black History month. We think about Rosemary Alexander, Jean Augustine these are people have been able to create this conversation for us in meaningful ways. I will say this as an audience, it's not enough to be allies for black community or black women, but it's also important to be very vocal in the understanding of the diversity even within the small group.

RACHEL PULFER:

Fantastic. Michelle what you would add?

MICHELLE WOOLFREY:

I 1001% agree with everything she said. The only thing I would add to it that I would like to see change is the stop of tokenizing leaders who don't look like what we understand leaders to look like. Whether that's people of color, disabled, indigenous, trans from the LGBT community, whatever it may be. I really wish we could stop tokenizing people and saying she got that position because she's indigenous or she's got that position because she's disabled and they just wanted to make the disabled community happy.

When Kathleen first got elected a lot of the commentary I heard in my circles and my community was she is a lesbian leader, gay leader. I think that is very important to acknowledge that someone from a community that does not traditionally get represented is in that position.

I think it's also really important that we don't necessarily just focus on that identity. Kathleen got into that space because she's an amazing woman who has done amazing work. I stand in the front of the lecture hall and give a lecture and I'm not there because I'm a disabled person that they want to talk about accessibility so they are trying to throw a bone to the disability community.

I'm there because I am intelligent and smart and have the background and knowledge that have lived and walked in their shoes. That's one thing I would like to change is people stopping looking at when someone who is other or do not look like they should be in that leadership position - one which is critically think about it.

RACHEL PULFER:

Kyla, the change question, what needs to change?

KYLA KAKFWI SCOTT:

I think that really deep and perpetual questioning thinking through and working through identity, that

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people with intersecting minority identities have to do as a matter of course.

Everything in my life is filtered through I'm a woman, indigenous and almond indigenous women. Those are all three different things. That I'm a mom, a full-time working mom, that I work for the government. That many of my people don't even acknowledge as being a legitimate government. That I have this organization that we form because we think it's meeting in need. No one asked us to format we just did it ourselves.

There all of those things. None of those things are decrements to my work. Those are the things that make it possible for me to do the work I'm doing. Those are the things that make me a valuable and contributing member of my community.

But I feel like it's expected, the people interrogate the things that make them different from the norm, which I hate, but that's what it is. I think that needs to be something that everyone does. Everyone has intersecting identities. Everyone should have the do the work of questioning that. I'm often struck by that in this current, big Reconciliation state that we are in in this country. There is so much discussion about it and I think far too much talk about it from a systemic and I think far away in the big pieces that we need to be doing. Really not enough taking home is the personal work you're doing that no one else needs to know about or hear about, but it needs to happen and it needs to happen for everyone in the country.

And become the new norm. I think that's the change would really like to see.

RACHEL PULFER:

Bhutila.

BHUTILA KARPOCHE:

I think I would focus on the progresses. Many of you in the room here identified as a progressive. I find that among progressives we are satisfied with incremental changes. Small steps. I find that when we don't have the courage to be bold, think big, make transformational change, then that incremental step you are trying to take is really not helping a lot of people and really is not helping people with many marginalized intersecting identities.

If you really think about it, who has the luxury of time? Homeless person doesn't have the luxury of time. Not somebody on ODSB. Time is of the essence. People get cynical about even progressive governments because you compare them with optimism, momentum during the election campaign and then back to status quo governance this is also what has deter people from getting involved in governments.

## DemocracyXChange 2019 Summit Transcript - Main Stage (Saturday)

Once any progressive government gets in, my gosh you have no more excuses to say that it cannot be dramatic or transformational cannot be done quickly.

RACHEL PULFER:

That I'm going to pass it on to someone I think was leading a transformational change agenda.

SPEAKER:

Yeah that went well. Someone said it was brave of me to come and sit here today after what happened to us. I am proud of what we did.

(Applause)

We got turfed out on our ass for lots of reasons. Some of those reasons were because we did a lot and we did it as quickly as we could. I wouldn't talk is the oldest person, probably in this room but certainly sitting appear, it pains me that the echo and some of the same words that we were using in 1967 are words that we are using today.

The pace of change from my perspective has not been nearly rapid enough. I'm talking about attitude shift, move to more inclusive society that I think is the foundation for us socially just society. And of course we have made progress. We have made huge progress.

But I think what we are seeing right now with right wing populism is that a lot of those attitudes that we thought we had... Maybe we thought we push them underground, maybe we thought they actually had changed are still there. They are so toxic and dangerous. We could have a whole conversation about what social media does to encourage, embolden and create those echo chambers for that toxicity.

I come back to if we don't teach children, if we don't provide an opportunity for children to experience the world differently, if we have only those big conversations about truth and reconciliation and about jurisdiction and we do not have the curriculum that we were working on that would've taught her history differently - if we don't do that we are not going to change attitudes.

If we don't observe and create classrooms and schools where equity is paid attention to and where teachers have done self reflection so that they understand why it's important and give kids the space to do it, if we don't do that work that we are not going to shift the attitudes that we all want to see shifted.

## DemocracyXChange 2019 Summit Transcript - Main Stage (Saturday)

We can create more inclusive environments in those power brokering environments, but if we don't create a better place for kids to grow up and did those attitudes are not going to shift. I think we have to work from both sides.

(Applause)

RACHEL PULFER:

One hell of a panel. I'm going to slightly fast-forward a little bit through the questions we discussed before to the urgency question of why this matters so very much.

I think what is been happening in the United States over the past three weeks beautifully illustrates why it matters so much. We see a Congress that is full of on one side of the house a smorgasbord of women of experience of all kinds who put themselves forward and said enough is enough. This is not my America and I want to do things differently.

Then you have the other side who are stonewalling (quite literally) in order to stop the progress. It really, for me anyway, is one of the most urgent topics that we need to get right. I want to hear from all of you in terms of why this is so crucial at this moment in our democracy. Starting with Bhutla.

BHUTILA KARPOCHE:

I think for democracy to truly work and be what it is it has to be participatory. Unfortunately, the system we have right now is not a true participatory democracy.

The figures and voter participation rate is one figure. It's always left up to 50% of the vote deciding who becomes government gets 100% of the power. I think in order to have true participatory democracy we... Would return as the nonvoters or the people who are not engaged in the politics. We want to engage them, that her message has to be something that resonates with them. It has to be bold. It has to entrust their needs.

They have to feel like, OK, she understands my problem. She knows the real problem is. The message has to be something people feel they can believe in and for them not to be cynical and have people promise the same things and again go back to status quo governance.

## DemocracyXChange 2019 Summit Transcript - Main Stage (Saturday)

To really work day in and day out to make sure the message that they were trying to bring forward and resonated with the people is something they will continue to work on no matter the political landscape or situation.

RACHEL PULFER:

Denise, can you unpack that in the sense of urgency in getting this right?

DENISE SIELE:

We need to move democracy from an abstract understanding. This is in many ways, with many of the folks that I work with, it is a far-off thing. It doesn't really exist. It exists in real ways for them. With how they engage with them.

You can talk to a mother with four kids working the night shift, she does not have time to go down to Parliament Hill and declare this, or that. She is making sure that her kids are able to go to school. And is active on parent-teacher counsel.

This idea of democracy is being abstract. I would suggest... As a conservative I have this. It is grounded in community. That's what we see. Whether you are coming from a progressive side or a more fiscally responsive component... I had to throw that in there.

For me, the core piece here is how are we engaging in our own individual ways in our communities of interest.

KATHLEEN WYNNE:

I want to reinforce the notion, in your own lives, what you are doing. I was doing my Masters of education and I had arguments and a lot of courses. I was at home working part-time and going to school. I had three kids. I was going to marches.

I wasn't part of that activist community. I was causing a lot of trouble at the school board. I was helping other people in the neighborhood with their kids. I think that it is really important. When kids ask me, did I know was I going to be what I am?

It's not about joining the party. It's about being interested in something. It's about taking action in your own school whether you are in grade 5, were in postsecondary, be interested. Find a way to be involved.

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That teaches you the skills that you take from that community into whatever form you find yourself in. I think Democratic households - a family that allows for volatility and allows for conversation, is a really important thing. He does not have to be yelling. Although, in my family there was a lot of high decibels.

I will say that for my family and friends sitting in the audience. Having a place and home where it is OK to disagree, and where dad is not going to lay down the law. That teaches kids that it is safe to express themselves. It starts from the beginning. I know that wasn't even your question. It is really important right now because it is under threat.

Our democratic system is under threat from that right-wing populism is talking about. I think conservatism, I think it's a whole range.

We cannot apply those labels to every person that every person who calls themselves a progressive or conservative. Right now, when we thought people in leadership roles will say they are not going to talk to the media. The media isn't real. Believe us because we are going to create our own news. That is very scary! We should all be very aware of that.

RACHEL PULFER:

Michelle, on the topic of urgency piece in particular from your unique perspective.

MICHELLE WOOLFREY:

I think it's urgent for me because people are literally dying in the streets.

We have systems that are OK with turning their backs on those people, and letting them literally die in the streets. Not being able to feed themselves and house themselves, and clothe themselves, and just keep take care of their basic human needs. When we talk about individuals getting involved in the democratic process and speaking up and sharing their views, and values it is hard to do that when you cannot afford rent or put food on your table. For me, urgency is because we are facing a crisis where we are going in the wrong direction.

When I work in community and I talked to community, and I hear the struggles they are going through, I am a disabled university student who eats a fair amount of Kraft dinner because that's what I can afford. That is not sustainable and that's not how we make any kind of change.

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We need to look after people and give them their own basic needs before we can expect them to conquer the world.

(Applause)

KYLA KAKFWI SCOTT:

I appreciate Kathleen's comments. As much as I think democracy is wonderful the idea of being a minority is you cannot elect your way to better representation. You cannot possibly have the virtue of your community would not make it right. It has to be the people.

The urgency of that is everyone who is not you is some special interest group that has to be consulted, but does not weigh as importantly in your decision making.

That might hurt people's feelings. That have life and death applications for people.

I work in my day job for the government of office territory and social services. We have done a lot of safety. We have done this a few weeks ago. We had a former minister who talked about their former experiences while they were in that position receiving racism in that former position.

When I am home I am usually immune to it. No one knows who I am in Toronto and no one cares. When I'm in my weekend clothes someone's going to follow me around the store and that's not OK.

That is not something we can change for ourselves. That's not something that elected leadership can change alone because they are surveying the population that elected them.

The population needs to get it and think it's important as well.

RACHEL PULFER:

It's important that is not on all of these extraordinary intersectional leaders in order to make the situation different.

SPEAKER:

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What is the personal commitment that each of you make leaving the room. What is the personal commitment for our friends, families, coworkers and the people we have the ability to touch in our lives. We are really trying to meet needs in ourselves. We all qualify more. Now we get invited to use things and we think that we are told for that. Many of us have kids.

In the early parts of doing the work I was trying to fix things for myself. My kids were growing so fast that I was trying to fill that void for myself missing my opportunity to do that for them.

That is really become part of the work that we are trying to do and the way that we work. My 10-year-old came to a strategic planning meeting last week and took notes. She contributed her thoughts to what we should be working on in the year.

That is the type of change that I think makes a difference over time. Not just how you are teaching your kids, but how you are engaging them in the work. They will suddenly turn 18 and think, now I should care about democracy. You teach your kids devote from the very first time that they are old enough to register that they are voting. You teach them to care about other people.

You expose them to other circles. I think that's critically important. I think it's also something that I know for our group is something that we care a lot about. It's a volunteer thing that takes up about a full-time job's worth of time. In addition to my other job, and in addition to being a student, and in addition to being a mom, partner, daughter and all the other things that I am.

I hope my kids do not have to work that hard. I hope that it's something that is shared equally with someone they are working with and for. So that is not their burden to carry alone. So it is not their responsibility.

In the same way that it feels like a heavy and compelling responsibility sometimes. But it's also a privilege. I'm super lucky to be able to do it. But it doesn't feel like I take a day off.

KATHLEEN WYNNE:

I want to go back to what Bhutla said at the beginning. The shout out to everyone is that there is positional power and then there is the power that I think they were talking about that each person has. That's where I was going when I was talking about each of us in our own lives.

Challenging people speaking up is really important. Finding the people that can help you speak up. If you're trying to put food on the table and you don't have access to comfort or even subsistence, then you

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need support.

Those of us who can be supportive we need to do that. All in the interest of including all of those voices. I think everyone in this room has the ability to do that. That is the most powerful thing we can do. It will be different.

It will be different for each of you. It will mean something different for each of you. Some of you are teachers. Some of you are students. Some of you are working... All of you have opportunities that raise issues that have not been raised before. Do something in a way. Bring in a different voice. Bring in a bit of discomfort. When Denise talked about pushing the edges. Discomfort is not a bad thing. Conflict is not about them.

We have to be able to have conversations that we do not agree with one another. Where we do not heckle each other to the point where we cannot actually even think about finding common ground. That is so destructive. That is what is polarizing.

To the degree that yes, you can find your allies, and raise your voice, but raise your voice in places where you are not going to have agreement. It's not going to be an echo chamber. That's where change happens. It's OK to be uncomfortable. I think that would be a great segment to have some questions from the audience.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

thanks so much for the insights and perspectives that you provided. My question is more related to some of what you talked about in terms of tokenism pushing against the edges and the concept of firsts. My concern is not about the first but the next. And that those don't become the only. At times I feel like where we make strides we tend to if we had our first and where's that succession... Where the individuals we are developing to take her places once we move on to the next position. Just getting some perspective I think you've touched a little bit on bringing youth along but how do we combat that and ensure we are not just leaving them as the only's?

SPEAKER:

Thank you for that question. I think even just in talking to some of 'the firsts' that are within my circle, it's such a struggle for them to even get to be that first. Once you're in there you breathe. Let's understand this, next to, behind, beside every one of those people who are the first. I think about Jean Augustine. She struggled, worked hard and when she was finally in office she had to take a breath and literally be able to pause, ponder and look understanding that it's representing your community in this place that no one has ever been.

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And then the sheer weight of expectation. That is probably the most challenging thing. I would say in terms of 'the nexts' let's do a good job of supporting 'the firsts'. We talk about women in politics, it's one thing to get them elected let's make sure they stay elected. It's part of that move.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

I think we have a big problem. Female premieres do not get elected. There were six female premieres in this country. I would be asked have we broken through are we in a new reality...no. There are not six female premieres anymore.

Do people get sick of the sound of our voices? Yes I think so. I said during the election campaign to some of my team, I just want to go out and say I'm not your mother, teacher, grandmother so put that aside, and listen to what the hell I'm saying.

(Applause)

I think naming it, trying to pull it apart and then for those of us who have been in those positions to use the experience to encourage others.

One of my projects at the moment is to articulate, because young people come up to me and say it is so tough in people such awful things about you, I want to come back and say it was worth it. It was so so worth it because of the changes we were able to make. I think that's important to encourage people coming along.

BHUTILA KARPOCHE:

I just want to echo what was already said. We have to remember that when you do have these first, the reason we take a moment to acknowledge the first is because currently the system is designed not to have certain people in positions of power. The positions designed not to elect certain people. That is why we have these occasions where we have these first.

Then we have to remember that the system has not changed. That person whoever is the first is good have to fight to survive and fight to be heard. It's a constant battle in a system that's not designed in your favor. If we want to continue the work, absolutely. But it has to not just be a person who is elected but us

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as a community to continue to push and build on that work so it does not become one first and then you never hear about the second or the next.

That kind of leadership building for others to come forward takes a lot of time and investment and it takes a lot of discomfort and sacrifices, but it has to be done.

RACHEL PULFER:

We have time for one more question.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I would like to ask a question as an old white man. I don't want to pull rank on the former premier, but I don't think she's the oldest person in the room.

Let me just ask you, about the nature of the obstacles you face. Are they changing? Are they becoming bigger? To what extent is it associated with gender? To what extent is it associated with race? Can you say something about the enemy?

SPEAKER:

This kind of came up in her discussions a little bit too. It goes back to if you as an older white man identify yourself as an ally to a movement or issue one you have to remember you're not just an ally by name, but you are an ally by action. You have to going take that second step to take action. But when you do take that action, be very thoughtful about that action you are taking because you don't want to hurt or impede progress to the work that is being done.

To stand behind the person you're trying to be an ally too. Maybe stand behind, but you never stand in front of it. Do you understand that you as an ally have a great responsibility. Then you talk about the enemy.... The famous quote about how the civil rights movement the enemy or the biggest obstacle is not the Klan's members but in fact it was the white moderates who impeded progress. We have to make sure we are not in the way of impeding progress for any issue or cause.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

Thank you for that, I think it is really important to say acknowledging all of these things to be true does not

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make you the enemy. Personally, because my dad is indigenous and my mom is not. I have all sorts of wonderful white men in my family.

If someone is critiqued for their stance on women and the response is, "well, I have daughters." Or, "I have friends who are black." My nonindigenous family of course loves me like family, but I'm both as unique as every indigenous woman in the country and is the same in facing structural barriers as every other indigenous woman in the country.

Their responsibility cannot just be to me and my brother and sister. It needs to be to everyone. That is true for all of us.

The ties of the earlier question, as you are opening yourself to be aware of barriers in trying to find ways to address them that question of tokenism is a huge one. I think it's really tricky to navigate in the first only different category because when you are so excluded from power anytime something is offered, it's hard to say no to it.

You can end up saying yes to stuff that does not actually come with any influence. How many organizations have responded to the need to better respect the indigenous peoples of this country and the real history of this country by creating new advisory entities which have no power.

It's a way to say sure we are doing this, yay for us in bringing people into the institution. If you want to have a more representative organization, but indigenous people on your board. There are a lot of them who are super qualified. Look at your hiring policies and barriers to bring people in. There are all sorts of stuff that can be questioned and tends not to be. It is looking at if this is a structural problem it's a systemic issue we will look at our systems and see how we can fix them.

People will say how can we put a new coat of paint on our system that makes us feel better about the work that we are doing and that's really dangerous because it creates the illusion of change without addressing any of the root problems. That would be my response.

RACHEL PULFER:

Michelle you were nodding a lot since then can you share your perspective?

MICHELLE WOOLFREY:

... How a lot of folks call themselves allies. They are an organization and they say we are allying with indigenous communities by hiring or creating this advisory committee that again has no support.

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I think for me I really don't like the word ally shift. It is actually part of the enemy if you want to call it that or the problem. It allows folks to continue to perpetuate the hegemony, patriarchy, racism but their allies so it's a OK. I think we need to be really critical that.

Going back to that tokenism piece. When I walk into a room... You know, I recently had an experience where I walked into a room and spoke and somebody came up to me afterwards. Someone in a position of power. Theoretically more power than I had and said I was really smart for a disabled person.

It's that kind of attitude that we need to change. That is not something that I can do as a disabled leader shouting out from my soapbox in Queens Park. That is something all of you need to do maybe that's the true definition of Ally shift.

EMCEE:

I think that's a wonderful place to end. I want to thank this amazing group of women and as you can see we can talk about this all day, but unfortunately we can't. Let's give them a big round of applause

(Applause)

Thank you very much Rachel for moderating as well. All of you folks standing over there make your way over here to the seats so we can call up someone quite special who will be giving a few remarks.

SPEAKER:

Heading off to our next session, we have been very lucky to have the Honorable Karina Gould saying a few words for us

OK, that means you guys can rest a little bit more. She is on her way. The problem with this set is I can actually not see stage right. I thought she was just behind.

How was the session in room B?

The main stage session was incredible, wasn't it? Hopefully we will have... While we are here, I'm not a comedian so I cannot tell any jokes. What I can say is that we do have interactive sessions in the afternoon. A lot of this stuff that you are thinking about, some insights that you have gathered you can

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exercise them in the much more active and participatory things in the afternoon. Hello, welcome! Here she is!

(Applause)

KARINA GOULD:

thank you, Anna for that introduction. I was looking forward to hearing some of your jokes. We will have to save that for after.

Thank you and good morning (Speaks foreign language)

I would like to thank the organizers for welcoming me here. I would like to acknowledge that we are on traditional unseeded territory of the indigenous people. As the minister of democratic institutions, I see my role as being a champion for democracies in Canada. As you all know, Canada's 43rd general election will take place this year. Elections are an opportunity for Canadians to be heard.

For you to express your concerns through opinions through one of a fund of the untold right. The right to vote. This election will have an unprecedented tend that amount of scrutiny. As we have seen over the past few years, democracies around the world has entered a new era.

We are in an era of heightened threat and vigilance. In 2019 we will see a number of countries have attempted disruption. India, Ukraine, Switzerland, Belgium, the EU and of course Canada.

(Speaks foreign language)

In 2015 we declare that the democracy is in a recession. Citing the recent issue and a number of other countries. That was four years ago. A lot have changed since then. Foreign interference has always interfered in politics but what has changed is how direct the influenced campaign has become.

Evidence has confirmed that the most recent Canadian general election in 2015 was unencumbered by interference. There were relatively primitive events to disrupt, disaffirm, and divide. These efforts were uncoordinated and had no visible impact on the voter. Either online or in line.

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This election may be different. We have seen the tools that we were strengthened to...

We expect that some so-called activist groups will use their cyber capabilities to try and influence our democratic process.

We also expect attempts as we have seen in countries over the years.

We must be prepared for the spirit of Canada's democracy is strong. As evidenced by this conference here today, there so many of you here to discuss the strength and the depth of our democracy. A growing awareness has strengthened Canadians to preserve the things that we treasure.

(Speaks foreign language)

I take this responsibility seriously. I have been working with my colleagues on a whole government approach to recognize, identify, and respond to threats to our democratic process.

In recent years, we have witnessed foreign actors looking to undermine the democratic societies and institutions, electoral processes, solvency, and security. The malicious multifaceted and ever evolving tactics.

We have taken steps to understand the possible steps to our democratic institution. Where they come from and how they can affect our electoral process. We are working to improve the government's ability to anticipate, recognize and respond to the stress.

It is impossible, however, to halt all attacks but we must work together to mitigate the impact of of interference of democratic practices, social media platforms, and citizens.

I say from our platform in Ottawa we have been working with all of the political parties together on this. This is a nonpartisan issue. As digital technologies provide us with more technologies to connect and empower we all know that there are those to undermine our democracy.

In 2017, I asked Canada's community establishment to make public the current risk of cyber threat and current packing of democratic processes. The title report, was published as the world's first publicly shared threat assessment of its kind.

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The report confirmed that cyber activity threat is increasing. Canada can be targeted using cyber connectivity could be...

In December, we passed the Elections Modernization Act in preparation for another electoral cycle. This comprehensive set of laws provides a wealth of measures to enhance security acceptability and transparency of our electoral system. To modernize their administration.

Clarifying prohibitions related to the publication of false statements and to foreign influence. And the prohibition of use of foreign funds for third parties for productivities.

These safeguards will ensure the 2019 general election represents the voice of Canadians.

To further our efforts, our government has established the Canadian Center for Cybersecurity. Under the officers of the CSC. It brings in operational experts from across Canada.

CSC is also providing advice and guidance to Canada as well as members of Parliament and political parties with threats, and systems of vulnerability. It is a focused entity poised to respond to cyber threats.

Its mandate works to improve the government's ability to detect and act against cyber threats.

(Speaks foreign language)

The rapid response mechanism which was developed at the G7 Summit in 2018 was an example of global compromise. Canada will manage triage, share information and identify opportunities for joint G7 response to cyber threats. Traditional espionage will always exist. Yet, increasingly adversaries also resign in cyberspace.

These may be activists. They can masquerade as legitimate, political noises. The face of mass media has turned and our generation from Gutenberg to Zuckerberg. It is a transformation whose impact on society is impossible to overstate.

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Social media, and online platforms are the new arbiters for information and therefore have a responsibility to manage their communities accordingly.

Platforms have acknowledged the risk posed for information and disinformation. This is an important first step. However, we expect social media platforms to review their internal policies, how information is shared and affect our democratic discourse. Our recent act now requires platforms to increase transparency in respect to online advertising. Major online platforms must keep a forum.

This must include the name of the person who authorized the ad as well that itself. Canada is one of the first countries to require online platforms to publish this type of information.

The efforts of government security agencies and social media platforms cannot succeed without the presence of an informed, and engaged public. It is crucial that citizens have access to the information and recommendations that affect them.

A healthy robust democracy.

Canadians and all of you have an important role to play. To think critically about the information that confronts us. To consider the source, the agenda, the credibility of the information we ingest before we digest.

(Speaks foreign language)

There is much talk of the dangers of the threats posed by technology and by dissension. There is no explicit harm, obviously, in difference of opinion.

That is the very essence of democracy. Our democracy is stronger for having the sending voices, the clash of ideas is both invigorating and inevitable. Canada has yet to experience significant description to our collection processes. It is naïve of us to think that the center of innovation would be immune to discrepancies.

It would be critical and interesting junctions in modern times. We must continue to be vigilant and be prepared. Our government will continue to focus its efforts in ensuring our election is free, and fair. As Canadians, we are prepared to combat foreign interference. Our institutions, but more importantly, our citizens are resilient. Canadians can be reassured that as they prepare to exercise the right to vote, we will continue to look at ways to protect and strengthen our democratic institutions.

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Our government is committed to this. Rest assured, as Minister responsible for protecting the integrity of the next federal election I will have more to say about specific initiatives in the coming weeks. If any of you are in the panel that I was just on, you will know I'm an optimist. We can confront the challenges that we are facing, but we can overcome them well.

We must all work together. Like anything, a solution cannot just be imposed by government. It is not just going to take a whole government approach, but rather, a whole society approach.

It will take government, civil society, academia, industry, media and all citizens working together.

Here we are, today, at a crossroads globally for technology. New technology is disrupting business as usual. Where there are challenges there are opportunities. We can confront these obstacles and we can succeed. We must confront the new challenges the digital world brings. We must not be mere consumers of information, but also producers of ideas.

Being here at this conference, at the Democracy XChange, who all of you are passionate and care about our democracy, have incredible hope for the future and for our ability to overcome whatever challenges may face us.

Democracy flourishes where there is a clash of ideas and conflict of opinion. As the minister of democratic institutions, I tell you that Canadians care about our democracy. I hear it from coast, to coast, to coast. From newcomers, young people, seniors, academics and everyone in between. It should represent each and every one of us paired all of us will do our part to protect it. Thank you very much.

Have a successful robust, clash of ideas and debate over the coming days.

(Applause)

EMCEE:

Thank you very much Minister Gould. I don't know if I should be happy that the government is getting involved, or if I should be terrified that this is actually happening at all. Not that the government is doing something about it, of course.

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For those of you who are interested in seeing the citizens in the face of protest that is in room B. For those of you interested in conservative viewpoints is in room D. For those of you who care deeply about why we are getting this interference in blaming - and we need to blame the technology section for that stay here for Political Realities of the Tech Stack.

SPEAKER:

We are running short on time so we can move as quickly as possible to the rooms that would be great so we can catch up.

EMCEE:

OK we are going to get started. There has been a quick schedule change. Unfortunately Nasma is sick. You guys just follow her on Twitter and in the digital justice lab and you will not be sorry for that. Our moderator Taylor Owen has done a quick just change and will now be one of our panelists.

Without further ado I'm going to bring up Jutta Treviranus first who is the founder of inclusive design research center, OCAD U and she's going to be talking about women academics.

(Applause)

JUTTA TREVIRANUS:

Thank you Anna. I hate reductionism but I'm very appreciative and grateful of the time you're going to give to this topic. But I want to talk about is democracy in evidence at the edges. As Anna said I'm the director of the inclusive design Research Center and I the honor of being the director of this growing global community that is concerned about what is happening to people at the edges as our society is digitally transformed and globally connected.

I'm going to start with a very obvious statement democracy and truth are under attack, but I want to talk about... Ah, do what the slides I am seeing. It's interesting that the technology talk is the one where the technology does not work.

Duh, a very obvious statement. The piece I want to talk about is a different threat. Not the cybersecurity threat, but one of the casualties and polarization is that we fail to self criticize and we fail to grow.

What happens when both truth and democracy is under threat is we defend democracy and truth and in

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the process we tend to reduce them. Democracy is reduced to majority rules and truth is reduced to quantified evidence.

I know this is a cheap shot, but what is democracy when it supports a cheap beer over critical health services for someone's child. It's a cheap sort of joke or point to make, but it doesn't express the fury and I don't know how to express the fury I felt when I was encouraged to celebrate beer while looking at the face of someone whose essential services had been canceled.

We saw the survey of what we think the state of democracy is in Canada, but I'm very ashamed by this when I talked to my friends around the world. What is the effect of majority rules on people struggling to survive when the majority takes survival for granted?

What is truth, when it only attends to the large homogenous numbers? What happens to the truth of those heterogenous minorities, how can they count? If you take any population and you plot their needs and characteristics on multivariate scatterplots because we are all complex, what you see is a starburst.

You will see there is a critical mass in the middle and as you spread out the dots get further and further apart. That critical mass in the middle is what everything is designed for, the people we pay attention to. That is where the scope is. Everything outside of the circle is what there is no scope, no influence, no power and where if our democracy is a popularity contest, that is where the unpopular are.

The other thing I went to self critique is a progressive, as a fellow progressive as was stated earlier, is that we defend diversity and inclusion by pulling up the bulwarks around protective identity groups. We want to talk about is what happens to the people that fall through the cracks orchestrated at the edges.

People that don't meet the idea entity of those groups to get the social justice that we think our democracy affords. Of course this is a tech session, I do speak code. I want to talk about what is happening with technology and data-driven decision-making that amplifies and automates these patterns.

I'm going to tell you a story. I worked with the Ministry of transport and they wanted advice on how to deal with automated and connected vehicles. I was able to play with a number of learning models. These are the intelligent systems that are supposed to tell cars what to do and intersections. Do I go forward? Does it change direction or does it stop. What I was able to do was bring a number of - one of those edge individuals to these models.

These were individuals who were pushing their wheelchairs backwards through a intersection. An unexpected way to move through an intersection. When most people encounter them in the intersection the optimal grabbed the chair and push it back to the side of the intersection that they came from. What I

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discovered in testing all of these machine learning models was that they all ran them over.

They all decided this was not a scenario where they needed to stop. They all said well wait a second these models are immature, we don't have enough data, they are not smart enough. Come back and we have made them smarter. What happened when I came back and they had fed the systems learning material about what happens with individuals going through intersections in wheelchairs is they ran them over with greater confidence.

That led me to think about it, will wait that is obvious that is what is going to happen given the way that we think about truth, the way we think about evidence, the way we develop knowledge. Because what is happening here...If it's majority rule, if it's just statistical evidence than that's what happens at the end.

It's not always a good thing. I went back to look at early speech recognition. I had been working in the 80s on dysarthria speech. These are people who have individual speech, but only those who are familiar with them are able to understand them.

We were able to reach 200 words with voice recognition systems. How many of you have used that to talk with your government or get services? I'm sure many of you have done that.

Those same speech models were not recognized by any of the smarter, much more technically advanced systems that are there.

The other issue and the reason I don't like giving lightning talks is that we cannot take steps from our current stance. Where does that leave people who are very different from us, or different from the majority.

It is a vicious cycle. You cannot read everything I have up here. I can't read it.

It perpetuates the role of our systems. Whether it's how we design things, or will be put on the market. Our education, product, services, environments, education, knowledge, idea of truth. If you are not in that middle.

If you are out in the edges of that scatterplot of humanity, you are caught in a vicious cycle.

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Because I need to be brief, I will tell you a few things that I've been doing to try to address this as a techie.

I have been playing with something called the lawnmower of justice. I have taken that Gaussian curve for any of those who are academics or researcher.

We are going to take away the privilege as being the same of any other people. We are going to say that I will not allow the model to view six repeats of a single characteristic or need.

It allows the system to attend to the edges, tails, and extremes.

I have also been looking at the issue of privacy. One of the things is that we have talked a lot about privacy. We don't seem to fully understand what privacy means. We are under the illusion that if we have privacy by design, if we anonymize were de-identify it at the source, then nothing terrible can be done with it.

I want you to know about those edges that if you are the most vulnerable to abuse and misuse, which is your data and the individuals at the edge, then you are most likely to be re-identified. If you are the only black person in a white neighborhood, it's really easy to figure out what data belongs to you.

We have been looking at data platform co-ops. Ways to govern, own and control your own data. The message I want to give about attending to the edge, this is a study that we did.

If you include the edge right from the beginning, and planned not just for the center or the majority, then you are going to save money and you are going to have greater longevity with the services, products, and the environment to create.

It might take a little bit longer. It might cost a little bit more at the beginning. You will have something that is adaptable and something that does not continuously need to be hacked or remodeled.

You will create a much more flexible and adaptive system.

Much of this we promote this notion of the three dimensions of inclusive design. Recognize everyone is unique. We are all different. What we need to do is to understand our own difference. Provide

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self-knowledge. Not just make machines smarter but ourselves smarter. So we can self advocate. We need to ensure that the tables and processes of designed inclusively. We have heard about the people that are the first joining government, but a government that was never designed for them.

The friction that you feel when you were invited to the table, but it does not work for you.

We need to think in systems. Beyond that tweet, because we are living in a complex adaptive system. We cannot re-brief about the really complex and important critical issues that people are feeling. It's not easy to talk about all of the very important things, and critical life-threatening things that people are facing in the society. My last message is intelligent design that recognizes diverse city is better able to respond to the...

It may reduce disparity and it may lift us out of the ruts we are experiencing. Thank you.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

What an incredible first lightning talk for this particular conversation. The political realities. I love the fact that you wove together that what you heard from the panel before with the women in power and how we actually start to understand how to plan for that age. Coming up next we have Vass Bednar who is the head of public policy at a start up. How are you planning for that edge? Come up, and say your piece.

(Applause)

VASS BEDNAR:

Thank you so much. I'm actually not going to be diving into Delphia. I have been cast a little bit as the villain of this panel. I take it, and I will take it. I'm coming from the private sector. We seem to have this rudimentary understanding that it's inherently bad. Some may view, maybe your ears are turned off.

Or you're not even here in the room. That could be some of your cohorts given the way that we have organized the conference. I'm going to give you a bunch of thoughts. The first from a public policy perspective is the reality that much of what we call public policy has been privatized. This has nothing to do with tech it has to do with how public policy is evolving. We outsourcing pay for expertise that may come from a think tank or panel.

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Prior to this I worked on the public policy on Airbnb I was out of think tank that shared democratic...

I'm pro public policy. I also emailed my fellow panelists what does the tech stack mean and no one replied. If anyone knows, I do think it's a little bit challenging to lump all of technology pieces together.

Let's do it and see where we get. I am not a designer because my slides are extremely rudimentary.

What are the political realities of the tech stack. Where to start? Ryerson has help me frame this how we can move forward with unintended consequences but when it comes to thinking about the political realities of starting to govern technology or having government interact more with technology, I think we need to think of three things as foundational. The first is that our outcomes are only going to be as good and as strong as our democratic institutions.

Secondly, if government does not continue to seek to be a little bit more creative about how we find this balance with technology I think we could see more threats to our economic prosperity. We speak out of both sides of our mouth.

We invest broadly and something we call innovation. We talk about Canada's doesn't have the starter problem has a scale up problem.

We are speaking more and more about how we concurred these unintended consequences and govern global platforms that are not necessarily within the jurisdiction of the provinces.

Why do I care? Why should you care? What is this matter to democracy? I wonder, and I worry that as we see that piece of technology, and that user ship, and participation accelerate, what could this generation see as an evolving role for the state?

An example of this is Dot Health.

I don't know if you have participated in that? Thank you so much for putting up her hand. All of audience participation. Maybe that should never be. That is reaction. That is a private sector tech. Maybe that should've never been the purpose. Maybe government should have never primarily owned that. If you're able to do that individually for a small fee from your phone, how could it change what you see as being the role of the state?

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What are some of the... At least what I think should be regulated in this tech act.

One is that these governments tend to be a little slow. They could be quite territorially. Some of these problems don't lend themselves well to any one particular ministry. It's also difficult to pinpoint them as a political priority.

Government is increasingly seen as a vector for scaling. When I worked with the ministry for education, apparently I have had 18 jobs. It was viewed as a vector for scaling. They would come to the ministry with great ideas. Maybe their work was hyper vocalized. It was a pilot or at one school, and the role of the state was seen as something that can infuse this throughout. When you think about how public policymaking has been involved in, we have much more of a spice girl model of public model.

We elect thought followers not thought leaders. Tell me what you are going to do for me and I'm going to hold you to that. I pointed to that tension in terms of economically. But something I will also bring up from... Personable is very complicated to talk about all technology together. There is another insect that I think is happening in our Canadian public policy talks. Most of the public platforms that we have vilified are not made in Canada.

I also just want to point out, and put it as food for thought that there may be an equity who we are deciding who is problematic. Who is having that clash with the state. I like shopify.

I'm not saying that they necessarily should. I'm just pointing out that we do not have this conversations. Another one without the halo is Etsy. They're not on our radar. These activities are the things we are looking at in terms of platforms and actors and what may or may not be conducting on that. What is the future of technology and public policy. What are we seeing and shouldn't see. Fundamentally, I don't think this will change the government should continue to own regulation and enforcement.

We cannot expect public companies to reliably take that on. Even though surveys are showing that the trust survey people are looking for businesses to lead on diversity, women on boards. These are things we are tentatively trying to make public policies around. People are looking for that kind of leadership.

A very crude analogy I will give you, and we can discuss it during questions or not, has to do with driving a car. I don't know if people get drivers license anymore but we have speed limits and they are posted. You know what they are. They make cars and cars go much faster than the speed them. Nobody is calling on Chrysler to make sure when their car is in a school zone it's not going more than 40. What we do is we hold the driver accountable.

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That is what a lot of platforms are engaged in conversation right now to terms of where the vector for accountability is. What's most important and what's realistic. I think it would be odd without looking at what we have already established in terms of some of those baselines and goalpost.

We have to continue to redefine what a reasonable goal is in terms of setting and desirable outcomes, increasingly the lever the state seems to have his taxation.

The excellent article in the global mail this morning is how we are driving blind in Canada as policymakers. We have this crazy data deficit. We have a patchwork of static data sets and we are trying to make informed public policy decisions because these are the data sets we have trusted.

How can we move forward partnering and use more novel data sets to complement what statistics Canada is using in talking about so we have a more accurate picture of sentiment in Canada, priorities, ideologies, what people want and need.

The regulatory era. This is not a sexy sentence. It's not an evil sentence to say. I think the next phase of the digital era is around regulation. I wanted to offer you two follow-up readings the usefulness guard. One is called Regulatory Packing. It makes the case that now we have more entrepreneurs, social innovators that are fundamentally working to make the world a better place. They are going to come up against particular regulatory landscapes that they may have inherited or may have never considered. How do we navigate that moving forward?

The second is my favorite public policy book from 2017 and it's called Everybody Lies, by economist Seth Stevens Davidson. It's about the intimacy of the Google toolbar. I bet many of you would rather I see you close up and naked and share your Google search history for the past month right?

I think they were trying to have a Malcolm Gladwell thing going on. If Google knows things like after the 2008 recession in the US it was predicted in the hardest areas there would be an increased rate of reported child abuse. We looked at the caseloads as policy people, there was no uptick. We thought that was great.

We looked at Google search bars we saw much more of "why does mom all the time" "why did that hit me." What does that mean for policymakers? What should Google do? What are the responsibilities if any of these companies to the public good into public policymaking.

I don't have the answers for you, but I'm very happy that I can raise some of these questions and give you food for thought during this lightning talk. Thank you

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(Applause)

EMCEE:

Thanks very much Vass. Obviously we chose the right person to take on the challenge. I love the phrase vector of accountability. I think that is what we should be thinking about right now. I think Taylor who is the new chair in media ethics in communications may have some idea where that accountability relies in government. I hope that is what your talk is going to be about.

TAYLOR OWEN:

I thought it was doing about an hour ago. We will see what it is about. I was looking forward to moving from moderator to be moderate and be on a panel with Vass. Actually agreed with almost everything she said. That is a little disappointing.

I can talk a little bit about the politics of this book coming from the governance side. What is governance around the tech stack look like right now. When Vass asked what is the text back and nobody knew the answer because it's probably meaningless to talk about the technology sector right now. It's like talking about the electricity sector.

We have a suite of companies and governance mechanisms in society tools that are all powered by technology. We need to figure out as a society is how the democracy of the use of these tools is going to fit within our democratic norms, laws and structures.

When I talk about this text back in my work was on how technology shapes our public sphere. How we get information, how we share information, how the information is used in our economy and our democracy for us to participate actively in our democracy.

Let me make some quick observations about this and we are right now. To preface them, this conversation has happened and evolved remarkably quickly. I would say a couple of years ago there is not an appetite for a conversation about governing the technology sector.

You go there was an opening is to be persuaded about new regulatory mechanisms. Now there's an open search for how we can do it. That is an incredibly rapid evolution, but it demands on us and the community that has been advocating for regulatory shift to engage that conversation.

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The first one I want to make, I think there is a legitimate crisis of trust and integrity in our technology sector. This has to do with how companies are managed and operated on one side, but the flip of it is the effect the companies are having on the integrity of information in our democracy itself.

It's also creating a crisis not just in do we trust these companies and how they are operating and the effect they are having on our lives, but do we trust the information in our democracy at all. I would argue that is a very slippery slope. Once we had down the track it's going to be highly damaging. If you look to the United States, you can see what this looks like months to a few years ahead of us.

The second point I want to make. This is both a supply-side and a demand-side problem. On the supply-side it's the very design of the digital infrastructure itself. It has both positive and negative repercussions to our society and democracy. We can look at that design and the incentives that are built into the design of the infrastructure.

More often than not, because we allocated these goods to the private sector, these are privately driven incentives. We need to examine those. On the demand side, we need to look at how these technologies are changing our consumption and our behavior and even our minds. How they are rewiring society to function in different ways. So both sides of that equation.

Third point. I think we are in a moment now that is roughly analogous to lead up to the 2008 financial crisis. You have a sector of the economy society that is built, highly profitable markets, but whose financial incentives are against meaningful reform.

This is not the fault of companies, it's the fault in the way we structure these companies in our economy. As a result we have a private sector that has led to a market failure and that is the time for governance and public policy. Now is time for the conversation.

The fourth point. And this goes to what Vass was saying that many of these decisions of the companies are being outsourced to themselves. The regulation of speech is now happening to the algorithm of platforms. The regulation of the hotel industry is now happening largely by platform companies.

Yes we are now starting to have a regulatory conversation about Airbnb. They been in Canada for 10 years. They've been making decisions that have a social impact up until then. And to their credit, I think to the Airbnb case less so to others have taken that responsibility relatively seriously and have governed in a responsible way.

If that's the case, we need to figure out how to bring these technologies and the behavior these

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technologies enable into our democratic institutions.

I think we need to do so and it's critical that we do so because it's governments that have democratic accountability. It may be the case that a private company can much more efficiently moderate speech at scale in a society. I grant that. But they don't do so with a democratic mandate and that is a disconnect. Governments need to get their head we can engage with.

But if governments aren't doing it interest that do not have the democratic integrity of Canadian society and their incentive structure are going to make that decision.

That is something that we have to talk about. That may or may not be a good thing.

The final two things I will say is that if we are looking at governing the space I think there are some easy things we can do quickly and there are some really difficult challenges we are about to dive into. On the easy side, it's crazy to say, this is easy but it's relative, we can reform our data policy laws. Their models of how this is being done around the world. We can correlate with other models.

We can talk about identifying automated accounts. We can talk about taxing companies in different ways to bring them into our economy rather than have lack of that tax revenue in our economy. We can monitor competition policy. There are number of things we can do relatively easily.

I would suggest there are some really difficult challenges here too. We need to figure out how we are going to moderate speech at scale in our society. We do not know how to bring the moderation that is currently in evolution within the platform of the system into our own laws.

We need to figure out liability. How are we going to transfer the liability we impose on actions in our society to actions in the digital space. We do not have a good answer to that yet.

Final thing I will mention, the entire algorithm that can automate a system that drives the digital economy also needs to be brought into our norms and we haven't figured that out yet either.

I think we are headed into a pretty wicked set of governance challenges, but we are having them now. That is a consequence of a real shift on how we view the technology that literally happened over the last couple of years. I will leave it at that.

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(Applause)

EMCEE:

Thanks very much, Taylor. Thank you very much for pinchhitting at the last moment. You did a wonderful job at setting up the issues we are now facing. We only have 10 minutes left for questions. I'm actually going to open the floor immediately. I wouldn't mind asking the first question, which is I'd love for you guys to rip on this notion of accountability and specifically associated with the algorithmic biases that you mentioned at the end and that you also spoke about Jutta and who is ultimately going to be responsible for us and how are we going to find a solution around that. How do we regulate the stuff that's already out there?

JUTTA TREVIRANUS:

I think the danger comes when it's based on data sets. It's up to the decision-makers to make apparent what is the basis of their decision. We as the public need to be able to audit what is missing with the evidence that is being used. It needs to be more complex conversation than this privacy, or AI, or intelligence. We need to think as well about data use regulations and the specific dangers of dated abuse.

Anyone that is in a position of power and that is making a decision needs to not say, "oh the machine decided" or "the majority voted in this way" "were the numbers tell us this"

We need to be able to see who is represented in those numbers. Who is missing? What are the gaps? Is everyone who is impacted by those decisions adequately represented within the evidence we are bringing forward?

VASS BEDNAR:

Technology needs more public.

What's the penalties in real time when I did not get hired because of your address or ethics. Those are the real ways that these biases are enacted. This is not the best analogy. I think technology is going to be part of the solution as well. We know, and we have research that shows when we anonymize, when we take out names, will be to get addresses, when we do certain things with drop screening in the future we have better outcomes and we can agree that we want those outcomes to happen.

Those can probably have more efficiency with the platform base. One quick aside, when I chaired the expert panel on youth employment we were talking about the future work a fundamental difference with this generation we often talk about now is the digit titration of the labor force.

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This is hyperinflated the need for social capital. We say to people without thinking. It matters who you know. And that is because the digitization of the labor market. It has increased the pressure on those entry-level jobs. You can get more labor market than ever before you can apply for a job with a glass of wine in your sweatpants.

I think that we could see better use federally of the platform approach to do that kind of matching in a way that we see is more just.

JUTTA TREVIRANUS:

Want to bring up one other thing we talk a lot about algorithmic bias that binds this way into the machine. Even if we removed all of that, the way that we are quantifying the needs, and the way we are basing our decisions only on one person, and one number. It's not going to reach the type of humanity that we talked about in the begin. We need to go beyond trying to limit those algorithmic biases look at the basis what we judge what is true.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

There is a federal panel operating right now operating on internet, television, everything. It is giving zero coverage. You know what they are doing? They are here now. They are in Toronto now at a different conference. I just wonder. It sounds to me like they are going to make recommendations on everything you are talking about. Do any of you know anything about it?

TAYLOR OWEN:

I think they're going to be making forms of recommendations within the context of broadcasting communications. All of these other issues I highly doubt. This is going to be about which industries we regulate within our public engagement policy or not. That's going to be a big fight. Obviously.

It's going to be a broadcaster or digital platform. It's going to be a big argument. That's only a piece of this policy puzzle.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I wanted to ask you question around the cultural context.

My daughter gives a lot of information. She is willing to give up privacy as a part of her image. It's part of

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her showing up in the world. We have conversation about regulation of technology. We have very different cultural contexts.

I wonder what happens now as we begin to look at this regulatory. What is the normative framework we are going to use to get that regulation of technology?

TAYLOR OWEN:

One is I think about not framing this into a race-based conversation, rather than a top-down regulatory one. This is not about limiting people's right or ability to share information if they want. To give the data in exchange for services if that's what they choose to do.

It's about empowering them with the capacity to make an evaluation of that decision. The impacts of it. Things like clear and fair terms of service agreement. I make one sign up to accompany when I am 12 or 13, is that giving access to all data online for the rest of my life? That's probably not the right terms of use, but what is it? We are testing that out right now where it is going to be very regular. Almost any change to the service provided has to have a new opt in.

Data that has value in society, and we know when we use for positive or negative effect, how much control do we have over that? Both how it is used, and the economic activity it stems from it? This could be an empowering conversation.

JUTTA TREVIRANUS:

We are working on an iso-standard on the personal power position standard. Either you give me all of your data to use in whatever way I wish, or you do not use my service. By having a negotiation between the data user, and the data producer, that you can declare as a data producer that this is the data that I chose to use for what purpose, under what condition, for what length of time.

That is part of what we are trying to bring through the process. I just want to quickly mention, privacy to some extent is the luxury of the people who are already secure. Many people who are fighting for survival are giving up their privacy in order to get services and to afford things. I think we need to think beyond privacy. We have to think about what are the risks, and how we regulate the data use.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I'm going to build a very large platform if I am successful. A lot of views that are discussed here, how would someone before building a platform make sure that they have addressed all of those concerns. You three completely different people. Where would you go centrally?

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JUTTA TREVIRANUS:

I would say don't go centrally. Go to the edge. The way that you get something new is to talk to people who cannot use, or who have difficulty using the system that currently exists. You're probably creating the platform to address some need that you think that is not been adequately addressed. You're going to get the greatest diversity of requirements and information about how to build in a way that it will last and be innovative.

By talking to people who can use the current system or have difficulty using the current system.

No, you cannot go to everyone. I would love to talk to you more. We have a toolkit that shows how you can continuously question who is missing, who are we not including, some agile process. We remove the notion of solution from much of what we say because this is complex.

EMCEE:

Last comment from Taylor and Vass

TAYLOR OWEN:

... I think that points at what the key failing in Facebook was. It was always looking at the positive uses of technologies and not looking at it the edge cases, of who could be negatively affected, or the potential abuses which will always happen in open digital spaces.

That points to how everyone should go about the design of technology. What are all the horrible things that could be done with this. Who are all the people and groups who could be hurt by it.

VASS BEDNAR:

I think what we talk about entrepreneurship is over. Our institutions have gotten better at responding to what forms. It's probably going to solve some type of media and make things easier for people. Match them to a service or thing.

It's not a bad thing but this increased awareness is important. We are seeing more partnerships or sharing's between technology and government. Toronto is Ways. We are using that data to complement what we already knew knew about traffic planning that is probably a good thing. At the same time we have driving laws that have tightened up. I have clicked passenger when I am driving somewhere and I need to figure out how to get there.

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There is room to improve.

EMCEE:

Thank you very much. We now have a break. For those of you who have questions for these people you can talk to them. Lunch is quite a bit shorter. How much shorter? We are on a lunch break now. It's 10 minutes shorter. You have 40 minutes.

(Music plays)

MC:

Perhaps the cheesiest thing that can be said from a microphone is, "Give yourself a hand." Thank you to the team who provided lunch for us at lunchtime.

I am the cofounder of the Ryerson Leadership Lab. We are very lucky to have as a co-representing partner for this conference is the Ryerson Center for Arts.

I would like to introduce the Dean of arts at Ryerson University.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

He has considerable height on me. We are delighted to be a co-presenter of the DemocracyXchange. I will introduce Doctor Leah Bassel. And it will be an extremely insightful address. Leah is modest, very humble. Anyone who knows her would agree with that.

She is at the same time extremely impressive. She traveled and conducted research to out here. She shared her thoughts on race, citizenship, politics of gender etc. She received a BA and MA in Political Signs from McGill University, she traveled to Paris, were unlike most academics, worked as an emergency outreach worker supporting silent seekers, she organize a Circus Camp Project for refugee youth.

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She completed her doctorate of international relations where she was a Commonwealth scholar, she held the postdoc position at Oxford, sociology at Belgium. She lectured in sociology for seven years, and she is now teaching in the Social Sciences department at the University of Roehampton in London.

She will discuss her latest book 'The Politics of Listening: Possibilities and Challenges for Democratic Life' (Palgrave, 2017). I am currently reading this book. Perhaps it says just as much about the book, as myself. I took it on vacation with me. I am very selective about the reading I take what I want to relax and enjoy myself.

I chose this book, I do a little bit of limb narrating. I chose it because it was so accessible, insightful, and provocative. Even though I research in a different area, it provided me inspiration for my own work.

A pleasure to welcome Leah Bassel.

(Applause)

LEAH BASSEL:

Thank you, so much. That is really generous introduction. Thank you to the faculty and conference organizer. It is really nice to be back in Toronto, and take a bit of a break from Brexit.

I want to start by reflecting on something we try to do throughout the conference, which is starting sessions with the acknowledgment of territory. It would be possible for me to repeat the University's acknowledgment from the website.

There is a really powerful acknowledgment in the Faculty of Arts from the conference. What I would like to say about acknowledgments, to say those things without doing the hard work of questioning that these to go behind our acknowledgment of territory, and without doing some of the personal work and collective work that underlies it, that is a kind of practice that ends up being performative, and a practice that ends up repeating these words, then acting on the knowledge, and those words, and doing something with them.

I will suggest you is to listen, and to listen in a way that acknowledges that what we hear will require some change from us. And how it can be connected to our political, social lives, and our individual practices.

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Otherwise, Doctor Hayden King, earlier this week said these can become alibis where we don't do that hard work of understanding neighbors, and about treaties of the territory, and learning about nations that have jurisdiction.

The 'Politics of Listening' can require that change, from us the listener, that can change that action. I will discuss in three parts.

How I got to thinking about listening, and what I mean about talking about listening, as a form of politics. Secondly, I will say about why we should do that, and undertake the 'Politics of Listening', and the promise it can hold.

Also, I will talk about how we do this. I hope this will connect with some of the things we already heard in the conference. From what I already heard and said, Maria's keynote tomorrow will be really powerful.

She is really inspirational. From conversations I have been part of these last days, about the inspirational work like the Logan Square Neighborhood Association. Raymond and Brian, I don't know where you are. I am inspired by the work they are doing to take back rights in the neighborhood.

We see the possibility to connect and politics. It offers us pathways to action, and to hope.

First, what is the 'Politics of Listening', and how did I get here? I started thinking about this when I was working in France, working with an emergency outreach, and with homeless people. A lot of areas were parts of cities that had been affected by what was a two as riots, and would soon be affected again by riots.

Some were old, some were French, some were noncitizens. They all had these very complicated, and intense relationships in the places they live, with the social networks around the, with the police, whether it be police or social services and other institutions.

They had strong ties, and conflicts with each other. Policy framework, and in the French National Imaginary it is sensitive urban zones (Speaks foreign word). I learned about those really complicated relationships, about attention.

Despite the stigma of living in these areas, coming from French state and society, despite the challenges they had, there was a dynamism and will to create something together. I was reassured by French officials that the stuff that happened will never happen again.

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Then 2005 came. I was so upset, and angry. There was the difficult, and violent nature of the death themselves and the death of two young men who were fleeing police in the suburb of Paris.

There was a response from the front state and politicians. An imposition of a state of emergency. Teargas first, ask questions later. The statements by the Interior Minister at the time, that the young people being in the housing estates were scum or (Speaks foreign word).

What I want to share with you is a feeling of anger, but also the feeling of paralysis and a feeling of powerlessness. It is not my country, and I sat there and watch, and I was really angry.

When the events of 2011 happened, I was living in North London, a young black man Mark Duncan was shot by police. I stopped saying, "Them," and started Tane "We."

People around me also wanted to react. Me and my colleagues decided to bring together a symposium with fellow academics, and different members of different communities, like activists and members of the public.

Just like in France, it just wasn't 2011 happening, and happening. We wanted to engage in the dialogue where people could share their energy, their opinions, and think about a way forward.

Were talking about this and this came up in the talk about intersectionality, and situations that make you feel uncomfortable. It was a very uncomfortable process to set that up, and be a part of it.

We know these are very difficult challenges, how should we construct the space, what should the space look like, how can we structure that kind of deliberation. That is fairly well reined in our democratic knowledge. As I prepared that event, and participated in it, and other events in 2011, I began to worry more about what I wasn't hearing.

About the omissions, about if you did not immediately evolve over yourself, or failed parents, you were inaudible. The leader at at the time said to explain is not to excuse.

I did work with Muslim women in Canada. They were speaking about the practice of female genital mutilation. She said she wished white women would stop saving us. They only bash if you bash your

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culture. How does that kind of normal of intelligibility or division partition of what we can hear and upper apprehended come about?

That is the project here. I think it's important to see that I'm not going to give you a grand theory of listening. I think there are other colleagues that have been working in that kind of thing. That is not what we you will get for me. I'm not interested in giving a lesson. Instead, this is about exploring the micro politics of listening. It's a social and political process that takes place in specific time and place. That can create responsibility to create rules. To shift who is listening and speaking. This can disrupt relationships in power.

This can emerge by thinking about the ways in which speaking and listening are interdependent. This is what the political theorist Susan does.

Listening, I am suggesting, could be a different way of doing politics when listening, speaking, acting, and connecting in different ways.

This may sound obvious, but the first step is to stop talking. It is surprisingly difficult to do. The sociologist (unknown term) talks about it being an art. He makes an important observation in which many of our cultural spaces are in, which way they are fighting to be heard, and how that damages our capacity to listen. We want to gain attention. Instead an art of listening should be a practice of humility.

It should not be about grabbing the 2011 riots inputting your theory on it, instead of all the fence around it. It could be a way of opening up these false absolute categories that we sometimes come across.

Where everyone is really good or really bad. No one is actually human. An art of listening can take us with these important steps of humility of humanity rather than categories paid what I am adding into that is the politics. Because, my task here and interest is about that artful rendering. But also, how we can act here, and now in this context of equality. How we can ensure that those responsibilities actually shift.

It's really good. Maybe that makes the case to be under the category of sociology. Maybe, that makes it a compelling case for discipline. What I'm asking you? Does that mean that everyone in this room should become a sociologist? There's going to speaks often in those public the bill. Anyone here who has been keeping evidence in a highly immediate sized consultation may have had that experience.

The 2011 riots report was a public submission.

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I tell you from this experience that these more complex stories are very quickly dismissed in those polarized and scripted spaces.

It's when those words are coming from illegitimate speakers. How can we think about listening? In those tense adversarial moments when action has to take place, here and now. Or when that complexity is really endangered.

This is also not a project about what we might call institutionalized listening. I think there's a lot of work around how governments can be more responsive to citizens' preferences.

How listening might have them managerial cure. This is about how power and privilege can sometimes be shaken by the unheard from the bottom up. What the consequences are when this does not happen.

That's what I mean by a politics in listening.

The second point I want to make to you is, why should we do this? What is the point? There are many possible reasons here we may think of. The reason why we argue for it, at the same time it's very simple and impossible. I think this is about political quality. I think that's an intrinsic value and a way that we can combat the forms of misrecognition. Where some people are considered to be abject, or less thinking and whether that is because of race, or gender, class, or disability word the way many of these things combined.

We started talking today about different democratic traditions. We spoke about ancient Greece and Rome. Certainly, I have been very influenced by those agonistic traditions paired with what happens when people don't just wait to be recognized for speaking, but they grab the space. You should be respected, whether or not that is happening on the part of powerful actors.

That can be very powerful in challenging those norms. Thus the audible and them the stigmatized others. There is another important step to take. I want to add that entering into the dialogue of what the previous speakers have said. We are not coming to the study of listening or concept of democracy we are working with.

We are not coming to them with fully formed contexts.

I would suggest instead that there is a need to think about the colonizing the concept of democracy. What were talking about Athens, ancient Greece and Rome we are always observing, yeah, but they were

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slave societies. They were not mutually exclusive.

Why should we go there? Why should you group our current democratic practice in those kinds of ideals?

I think when we start to think that way, we come up against some resistance. That has been my experience when I started to question it. By way of criticizing some of the agonistic and literalistic democracy.

I found myself being corrected on my interpretation of the whole text.

I think that's a really interesting process to reflect on. That is about the power relations around our knowledge production about democracy and listening. There are steps we need to take along that. We are not adding those to that. We start with those perspectives. We build our democratic practice from there.

That is something I have had the opportunity to do.

What we can see there, we can have that selective hearing... We were talking about the intersectionality panel about people being tokens. The women who spoke on the panel talked about only being seen according to certain characteristics.

That's a violence. It's about only wanting either for this. But can your knowledge and political understanding, and your understanding of democracy be part of this process. We should be starting with that kind of knowledge. That could be a failure, in terms of our theories and concepts. But also in the politics of listening.

Only have those kind of instances, and that's not separate, they coexist with each other. That's what happened with the women I listened to. That's what happened when young black men in 2011 were only remembered when they riot.

It's not going to be about some sort of authentic clarity. We are never going to all be clearly legible or understandable to each other. We have misunderstandings. View human. Equality means naming the fact that there are some groups of people who systematically have fewer resources and who are systematically entered processes that are historically entrenched.

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Not being recognized as speaking, let alone different claims they are making be heard. We can have different concepts of tools in democracies. That has come out of the scholarship of black and indigenous people of color when we start with these concepts that are generated.

I think we should come to the most important point of all. How do we do this and how does that happen. Does that actually happen? Is that even out there?

Are there these opportunities to create new representations, and for people to tell their own story on their own terms? Or at least on terms that are not so radically unequal. There different ways in which in the book, have talked about how this comes together on the ground. Want to say too much about Canada. We are at a conference in Canada. Many people here are doing work in Canada.

I hope you're going to talk about what has been happening on the West Coast of Canada. That is something that I can only perceive at a great distance through different media platforms. I think of the promising examples I see in this context are for through solidarities, and politics of listening.

Where migrates justice activists have been really incisive and thinking about what it means to campaign for migrant justice when indigenous sovereignties are centers. And to move away from ones that are demanding open borders in which those claims that can perpetuate and undermine the struggles of indigenous allies that Harsha Walia discusses in her work. That does not mean that migrant justice allies are adopting it. She's careful to point that out.

This is a project of hearing people on their own terms. But practicing what you hear. Reconfiguring migrant justice.

I'm not speaking from an academic perspective but more that I've been doing is a volunteer. I am a volunteer with the campaigning group called Haringey Welcome that has sprung up in the refugee crisis.

We campaign in the borough of London welcoming everyone. Particularly for migrants. As part of the work I have recently served as a juror. I don't know how familiar people on is this policy. This is not me going off and getting worked up in front of the crowd that is the government lexicon. It was changed to compliant. This is been undertaken through integration asked to require everyone to be a border guard. For instance, landlords are required to check immigration status, schools provide data about people of nationality to the Department of Immigration.

The same applies in medical spaces, doctors offices, and hospitals. This does not just apply to people who are migrants, but also to anyone who looks like the might be a migrant; anyone who is not white.

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... People who came with their parents as 1948, particularly from the Caribbean. They could not show documentation that they were citizens because when they came from the Caribbean they were British subjects. They were either detained or deported.

The point of the tribunal was to have a public opinion tribunal to put the hostile environment policy on a trial stop particulate, indicting the (unknown term) states and the UK government.

These tribunals have a very interesting history, which I can only say a little bit about. Experience with Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s, the crimes.

People who experience the absence or impotence of international law. The question attributing to the tribunal criminal responsibility, and displays where it is possible to produce truth, and memory as a form of moral referendum.

What that meant concretely for me, I served as a juror on the Peoples Tribunal representing Haringey Welcome. They did work in their nonexisting kind, really harrowing, in terms of the testimony we heard.

Whether it was about the violence of detection, people talking about their encounters of abuse. I was talking about the data sharing the tween the Department of Education in the home office. There was a very important campaign that asked parents to boycott and provide student information.

Campaigns around the murder of a disabled silence thinker, which trade questions about disabled people and migrant movements. Also campaigns with doctors who refused the policy to check people's status before providing medical treatment.

At the end, we had a terrible task where we were exhausted from the raw emotion of this. We had to sum it up, and they said to go in a room and give concluding remarks. I was really flooded by the emotion of those testimonies.

The frame I used to speak about it was listening. What is significant is the power of that frame. The two days we spent together, numbers of the public, the jurors, the people who took the time encouraged to give testimony.

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It showed us what we have been doing, it showed us we could do, and what was at stake. It was not the case that people affected by the hostile policy, or that they were voices, or that they were completely powerless, but it was that we are not listening to.

Particularly the parties of the indictment, or those who did not respond to the indictment. We encourage the roles very explicitly to listen to the tribunal and the people were giving their testimony.

Naming this at the end of the tribunal was a moment of affirmation, it was a path toward us working together, the women of color who spoke very powerfully at these, it was not about adopting the perspectives of the people who gave testimony, or taking it, using it and departmental lysing, it was a possibility for us to see the world.

That was this vital moment in a project of listening. That was our privilege, as members of the audience. It was our privilege as jurors. It was and still is our responsibility. We had to take the testimony, and emotion and contribute to section of the verdict.

I agonized what to write their because that is a tremendous responsibility as listener who has to write and speak on the page. A very valuable democratic task. The member states and the UK government...

It was also, and aimed at the rest of us, as well as the parents were told to boycott the school census. Leaders were urged by doctors giving testimony, that they were asked to follow a law that went against their ethics, and hippocratic oath about providing medical treatments.

Us, as University lectures, these would be opportunities of living. This is a moment of a politics of listening. That also gave us the chance to center these kind of excluded knowledges, or to put this leadership at the center of what we could do in the name of migrant injustice.

Migrant women of color were the driving force, and they enabled us to see the system through their testimony. The intersecting system of racism, class domination, oppression's of people, and to give us that hope or diagnosis based on that experience.

To see how the mobilization by women who spoke outside of detention center's, then gets reproduced. That is a form of leadership in them. We are able to hear, and then act upon through this process.

This leads to a new type of unity. It is not about plucking the aspects of the test was, and the experiences of the migrant women. It is about putting those experiences, and these leaders at the center of what we

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understand as migrant justice.

It is hearing, and acting on that change. To see what counts as work, and two counts as workers, to see the different regimes of mobility, and freedom to move, and freedom of people who have been detained.

To see the systems that are converging and interlocking with each other. There was a lot of emotion and recognition. New ways of acting together, a sustained effort.

Some people could not come because they were detained or could not get visas. Those moments reconfigure to what we are talking about, do the 'Politics of Listening', and to give us hope.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MC:

With that kind of speech, I think it is important we get some voices from the room. You can choose to respond, or not. We will take some questions. In one way we are trying to aspire to the ideas. Leah is asking for us to have sessions that are different in style and format.

Will have a workshop starting at 3:30 and concurrent with other workshops. Will take some questions and comments right now.

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:

Thank you so much for that. I am a citizen, and proud to be one. I take it very seriously. What I heard in your delivery, and throughout the day is the respect for others.

People who are trying to advance the cause of democracy are giving to others. For me, that respect starts from his self respect, and self-love. If we want to get love, or public love as we heard earlier, we have to begin with self-love, and self respect.

Anything we can do to advance that, in any child, is a precursor to having then been able to give respect,

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and love to others. I just wanted to make that point. In respect to the women who told you what it was like to live in their shoes.

I take that, and think about you in my decision, and how I am going to write that. So when all the constituencies hear these decisions, they will know that they are respected.

SPEAKER:

Another question?

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:

Bonjour. I am from Montréal. I will do my best. English is my third language. I am a fellow for a foundation that supported our project. I am a cofounder of (unknown term). At the moment, if you are following the news, the government is trying to pass a Bill that will reject women wearing the hijab.

Specifically the social (unknown term) living in Québec. Basically, what is not happening in Québec when it comes to disrespecting women's bodies. My main question, working on sexism, antiblack, racism, all of that at once makes it really hard to find a space where people will listen to one another.

Black women, white women, government are listening to people. Listening is key. As a person doing research, why do you think that this thing... I know why, but I want to hear what you think, why do you think that listening is part of an active solution?

LEAH BASSEL:

Maybe, in response to the first point. One of the interesting point was about children.

Certainly, that is something that we have been talking about generational differences. We have had an interesting presentation in the last panel about high school student movements. I think for my own particular space, I'm not going to talk to people about spaces. They know better. An interest in trying to campaign against the hostile environment, and trying to use some techniques that may foster different engagement, and a different way to listen, and to perceive others, it been really shocking in which young people have been affected by the policy.

The ways in which can be very stigmatizing for young people. Especially for migrants, black, or Asian and it different in the UK context.

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They have been internalizing these ideas, and it is a really big campaigning challenge to say what the politicians are saying is not right. We should not be making people feel unwelcome. We should not be pushing people out of our communities in these ways.

It shouldn't be the case that your school is show sharing data with the home office. There are different ways we can think about doing this. This comes back to the question about spaces. I'm not an expert about Québec. But I think it the question about how we are curating and putting these spaces together. These kinds of events. How are we bringing people together. This is very conventionally and understanding up here.

I'm dropping this information and a couple of people are speaking to me. For example, in the campaigning work we have been working through a poetry competition to get young people in grade 6 to think about welcome. What would you do if young person showed up in your community? how would you welcome them? A young man I spoke to in a disadvantaged part of our borough who has a very broad family.

His answer was to think it would be a good idea to tell the homeless migrants on the street to go home. My initial reaction was a very strong one. I realized that he is grappling with all of those public discourses, and all of those kinds of messages that the law sends among other things. He is being stigmatized by his multiple rich heritages. What was interesting to me was through that kind of activity of writing the poem, and engaging through this fiction and different Chandra genre and language, the students were much more creative than we were.

It was possible for him to work through his ideas and for us to work through our different ideas and perspectives in a new way. By the end of the session he thinks he might like to invite the younger girl to his house.

I guess I wonder then, in the context you are talking about, you are the expert of it not me. This has been the case in France, how these different kinds of ways of coming together can take place. So we can get to the point of listening. For me, that is one of those points is that argue around political quality that I was talking about. People never being able to be heard clearly or authentically. We are human and make mistakes. We must read and understand each other.

People are misheard and mis-stigmatized. They have to make choices between religious identity or nonparticipation at these types of dramatic choices. Not be heard when they speak differently about these kinds of issues. For me, it's about that argument for political equality. It's not something that you just give people, it's that process about challenging those relations and allowing open ended relations to emerge. If I go back to the 2011 riots I would do something very different so that we can have a different kind of exchange.

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EMCEE:

To that note, you guys get to exercise this. We urge you all, we created that space so that we can have a different form of engaging with each other. That room is next door. If Leah is a question of merging there, we would love you to become and be part of that force. Thank you very much. This is just the beginning.

SPEAKER:

I would like to take one moment before we move on. We are very thankful for Elections Canada supporting this. They are outside with the boots. They have a pamphlet in your participant back. For organizations, or want to receive some of the materials in their expired democracy kit they are more than welcome to send you a digital copy. This is like registered voting or working for it. They want to hear if you thought your organization has resources that you want to share on the inspired democracy platform.

There is going to be people waiting outside the door to take this pamphlet.

EMCEE:

If you are here it's because you want to hear all about local power. If you want to talk about media that is room B. If you want to talk about art as a catalyst that is room C.

If Eleanor Finley is in the house please come down!

We will just start.

OLIVIA CHOW:

Good afternoon everyone! Our next session is about to start. The next session is called Local Power. How Municipal Organizations and Citizen Collectives are Designing Our Futures. Some of you have really intense conversations going on. You may want to do it over a cup of coffee outside. I would encourage it but because we have these panelists they are ready to start the session. My name is Olivia Chow. I am a sitting professor here at Ryerson University.

I also found an institution called Institute for change leaders, and we train people on how to exchanged democratically. If they want to bring an idea stage to actually implementing they come to us.

Today's panel is about how do we engage. Because we know that if we are engaged and have a sense of

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belonging, we are connected with our neighbors we feel that we can contribute. And we are going to vote, we are going to be happier.

That sense of belonging means that this society and city, and country is a much better place to be for everyone.

We do know that a lot of people are not engaged. If you look around, even just today. Who are the people that are missing? What are the solutions? What are the reasons that we are not connected? How do we use public parks and libraries to get connected how do we use technology to connect with people.

We may have time to explore how we collectively come together and pay taxes but how can we use that money in a more democratic way. How can we make that happen?

I'm sure we don't have time to talk about that. Fourthly, what kind of government structure would allow for more engagement.

Today's format is that we are going to hear from three panelists, 10 minutes each. Then I will ask them questions. Then it is your turn to ask questions. This whole panel will finish just before 3:30.

They are going to introduce themselves. We have Vickery. She is the chief librarian of the library of Toronto. That is the best library in the world second to Hong Kong.

VICKERY BOWLES:

Good afternoon. I am the city librarian at public Toronto library. I have been there since 2015 but I worked in libraries for over 30 years. I feel passionate about the difference public libraries making the lives of individuals and in cities. I'm excited to talk about democratic values, and civic engagement. Some of you may wonder why the public library is talking. It supports literacy, illiterate population, free and open access to information and ideas, intellectual access, protection and privacy, and lifelong learning.

There are challenges that can take many forms. Fundamentally, there is a growing intolerance for differences of opinion in the mainstream, and a growing sense of isolation.

The library's job is to provide access to a broad range of information, a diversity of ideas in a welcoming and supporting environment to everyone in the community. Access to information and a healthy exchange of ideas are fundamental to our democracy.

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That is why the library is expanding ways they support the community. One way we provide this action is through our programming. It is important to provide forms where people can discuss issues, and as global citizen.

We lodged a new series last year and it is the largest systemwide city we offered. It includes authors fits, workshops, podcasts and much more running over an 18 year..

I am really struck the central roles libraries play in a community, a city, and a nation. As almost all can see on a daily basis, our society has become highly polarized, and we forget how to disagree with each other.

People argue and disagree, but we do less and less of listening. Library is a public space where disagreement is accepted and encouraged. That is what our Civil Society Series is all about. Respectful discussion on controversial topics, and listening to different points of view.

The series has become mutually popular and the line is, "Get out of your bubble."

Another engagement we have been working on is through education, and promotion, with a focus on electoral politics. To make sure people understand how to vote and to participate in the voting process.

Last year we offered for workshops to explain the political election campaign, deliver lessons, tools, and connections to get started so people could make a meaningful contribution to an election campaign.

Then I'm very proud that we launched a website to support voters. We launched a website where voters could learn about City Council candidates running for election, and learn about what the candidates think about various important issues around Toronto.

It not only gave people information about the candidates, and provided people about information about where the candidates stood on issues of public transformation, and housing, and more.

This was reflected in the data we collected. 72% participated and gave feedback into the section of the website. We also had a focus on youth, so we have Vote Pop-ups.

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These are simulated voting stations and library branches across the city. Library staff and youth volunteers simulate a vote about important issues and give opportunities to vote in a voting environment.

The program has been particularly effective in reaching young people, and to help them understand to not be intimidated by the process.

A branch in the middle of Scarborough had two voter pop-ups and over 150 teens participated. It is also about citizenship. A newcomer settlement has been a long-standing, and an important area of work the library has been engaged in in many years.

Newcomers find employment, housing, and skills in learning English. That is a really important step in the immigration journey. We have a homepage... On our homepage we have a section called New to Canada that people can access.

The most popular feature is the... We also promote engagement by having meetings in the community. It involved active listening and community collaboration. Those are two important key features and how we work with communities.

We work with neighborhood improvement groups, we make efforts to respond for support Ford ever needs might be. The local relationships are programs that provide people with experts, technologies, opportunities to come together in the library, based on their interests.

... And the Parkdale Community. That was part of our Civil Society series. Another initiative was a Canadian Film Media Lab to create the first-ever augmented reality walk. It involved 100 walkers using iPads to see images of how developers, and community organizational is reimagined the neighborhood and how it affects each community, at-large.

Then everyone got together to discuss what they saw. In terms of where we go from here, and looking ahead for the next year, we always talk about that the public library.... And we have 100 branches in Toronto. Where institutions in many neighborhoods serving people where they live.

This year we will explore how to build on the community presence, and the work we did on civic engagement, and to become known as a civic Commons in the city of Toronto. We will provide community groups and individuals, with space within their communities, a place to discuss issues, in terms of their local democracy, and also in terms of their everyday life.

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Thank you so much.

MC:

Thank you.

BIANCA WYLIE:

Thank you everyone. I am Bianca Wylie and am the cofounder of Tech Reset. I have been struggling with both the terms public good and innovation economy, for multiple reasons.

Part of my job here is to share some things with you. I don't think it is because I am not trying, but because I am trying to work in a space that is very new. Which is, how do we as a society, and local community respond to the impacts of technology when they are beginning to intersect with our government, society and culture?

They have been for a long time. If you get a chance to talk to Tracy, a colleague and friend said, "We don't really have a democratic approach to technology."

We don't think about how our job is created and used in institutions. The one thing I want to talk about today, is there are two tracks I see today in our political, local landscape. They are challenging the existing power structure.

I have been working around a smart city project, and alphabet company is working on Toronto's waterfront to develop a city of the future, smart city, city of the future, whatever you want to call it.

Some elected officials are working on the project. I have heard some things that disturb me. City government is not working, so it is time to disrupt how we do neighborhood planning, and trying something new.

If it is not working, rather than create a technological center to work from, how about we fix it?

(Applause)

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The scariest part of the story I am telling you is I have had people who work in government, elected officials, tell me they would rather go for the workaround. When I hear the government having lost faith in the government, I am a lot concerning.

I also know that there is a reason for that. I know these are people who care about cities, and institutions, so something's do not need to change. If we are not careful, will start doing things where we broker valence, or the government buys systems of power.

Systems of power be constructed by technology companies who have motives. Does anyone here have an app called Safe TTC? Anyone have that one?

If you live in Toronto that TTC spend \$500,000 for a two year license on this product. You can take a picture of something, and reported to the TTC.

This is what we are buying? I thought it was ridiculous. It is also like citizen pleasing, you're doing policing of your fellow residents. The solution of this does not encourage... when you see a woman being harassed on the TTC it is free to say, "I have not seen you in so long, how are you? Are you doing good?"

You can get in there, disable and disarm a situation, with other people. Those are the solutions I would like to see we have, as a culture, particularly in times of posterity. That is what I would like to see, remembering what we can do.

(Applause)

If we fall too far down this path right now... is George in the room? I was asking if within the urban community, if there was someone doing a really good job of kindly, lovingly challenging the urban elite, the progressive, the ones who think they know what is good for us, know how to do accessibility, and affordability... They had a shot at this for decades.

They are so sure that what they know and about to do is so good, and they just need a few more tools to do it. Then they could do what needs to be resolved. When I look at the state and city we live in today, the core is rotten and people need funding. There are whole bunch of other issues in there. They are not technical logical problems. They are funding and political problems.

(Applause)

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These are things that if we go too far down the edges of narratives that technology likes to take us, it will continue to wait for people to ask for justice. I think it's really important right now, that we take a minute to consider the latent power that exists in our local governments, and to make sure that is much as we listen to people who have a very good reason, I argue another side, to destroy and finish the state. It also happens to be the institution that when we have to move fast, we can take its power and applied for good we can do things right now and we have to do them urgently.

Those things have to be done with a value that is not grounded in profit.

(Applause)

I think that's all I have. Thank you.

(Applause)

OLIVIA CHOW:

Thank you. Eleanor. Do you want me to keep time?

ELEANOR FINLEY:

Hello everyone. Thank you all for being here. My name is Eleanor Finley. It's really an honor to be invited to come speak at this event. To be participating in this conversation you all.

I am an anthropologist at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I study democracy, of course, as well as new forms of participatory decision-making that social movements are coming up with today as a solution to the crisis that we all experience in decision-making and power.

For a long time I have been a member of the Institute for Social Psychology, which has looked at how democracy and the ecological crisis intersect. I remember symbiosis that is an organization in the United States that is working to work a network of grassroots institutions together to talk about systemic change on a broader level.

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I also work around solidarity activism. I will be sharing some details about the liberation movement here if I have time. That movement has brought about an inspiring model of alternative democracy called democratic federalism.

In her opening remarks that Taylor mentioned, it mentioned those anarchic friends.

I am here to talk about an emerging paradigm of democracy called humanism or democratic...

A family of social movements that is really rethinking the frontal institutions through which we make decisions in our society. Which crucially are confronting capitalism as a part of that project.

When I speak about municipalism it is a family of social movement that is a social movement of a democratic crisis that we are in today. It did not just come out of nowhere. Populism did not come out of nowhere.

The system of capitalism has been systemically eroding popular power in the service of profit. As the same time as my previous speaker just mentioned, the nation state has never really been democratic.

It's time to think about new institutions. Municipalism is a family and social political movement that are reviving popular assemblies at the local, and municipal level as a means to create social movements that are networked holistically. That are confronting issues of ecological crisis. Of patriarchy, racism, colonization, and political disempowerment at the same time.

Some key features of municipalism is that they are holistic and community move. That changes through popular assemblies, civic collectives, citizens platforms, citizens initiatives as well as federal collectives between groups. The objective of this project is not just to bring power to the municipal level and government but to change how municipal government is actually run.

A couple of examples today that we see as municipalist movements... The two that I am most familiar with... The first is Barcelona and...

They emerged out of the 2001 movement. Some of you may remember as a worldwide exposure. The people going into the street and having these very big urban popular assemblies. Barcelona and Kamu brought it down to the neighborhood level. People would come together and talk about the issues which really impacted them, and how to build solutions together as citizens.

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One of the key issues was the skyrocketing rents in the city, and the influx of tourism that was really shredding the fabric of everyday civic life. Barcelona and Camus have been operating for a number of years now. They had some success in the government. The mayor of Barcelona is a part of it.

They have been able to put the cap on the number of new hotel licenses in the city. They have been tackling airbnb, and working to confront the banks who conduct evictions in the city. At the same time they are doing this in the mayor's office, they are still having networks of assemblies at the neighborhood level. They're coming together once a week, once a month to discuss issues that affect them.

How they want to see policy changing at the broader municipal level, but also how people can affect change together. Directly as neighbors.

Another example of municipalism or democratic confederalism is with the (unknown term) movement that has been seeking direct grass roots and the direct democracy in the Middle East.

You may have heard of the conflict in northern Syria with the Democratic forces. Starting in 2014, the Kurdish majority pushed out the regime and created networks of civil councils, popular assemblies, and confederations.

That's a very different context than what we find in ourselves today. Is an inspiring example that even under the worst conditions, and ones that seem hopeless we can affect true institutional and fundamental change. There are many other examples around the world of this kind of paradigm emerging.

Once again, it is holistic. It is seeking ecological change. Seeking women in leadership positions. Really tackling the bread and butter issues that impact our everyday lives.

Some other examples include Bologna Italy, there is a group called (unknown term) that is working to combat the rising tide of fascism there, as well as development in the Democratic...

We don't just need to bring power to the municipal level, but we need to change how cities are actually run. Thank you.

(Applause)

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OLIVIA CHOW:

Let's have a discussion. In England there is something called participatorycity.org and they create space for per people to participate. It does not take any time. It doesn't cost any money. What are some that you can be out of storefront, free, where people can come together to start a group, learn something together, can it be done in the library? In your study?

Have you seen that kind of thing? Have you seen how technology comes together with individual solutions? Can we deal with these solutions? What are some of the creative things that you would all love to see happen? Is it in library or community center, homes, or storefronts. What are the concepts that you believe in?

ELEANOR FINLEY:

I'm looking at Melissa here, she was telling me stories about wonderful firework parties were happening. She was thinking it was pretty unregulated. It was a free-for-all. Everyone doing fireworks and kids running around. Liability was not on anyone's mind.

I have seen that in the city and in many places where even though you want to open up a space. I think storefronts are great. You do not have a tenant in the front, but it's that liability where it is the insurance regimes that make it really difficult.

We have this cultural construct there. It's fair but it seems to be very blocking. How do we develop some type of capacity to know that there are rest and figure out how to do it amongst ourselves. A lot of the spaces seem to be grappling with these things. Who is dealing with the liability, and then it shuts down.

We are better at protecting capital than creating spaces that you're talking about.

VICKERY BOWLES:

I touched on it at the end of what I was talking about was the idea of libraries as comments. I met with talk about the whole concept of libraries as specific comments. I think the library already is that, but what we have to do is expand that understanding so people will think of the library as a specific comment, a place to come together for public forms, public democracy, a place to discuss issues with their fellow people.

We have to build on it and expand the understanding of what the library is about. So I could have a seat exchange. We have a sewing fabrication lab at the library, and teach people how to so.

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There are pop up learning labs, digital innovation labs where people pop up the new technology about coding, and all the things they need to know about today's world and how to make that technology successful.

It is democratizing access, and I think that is what the library is about.

ELEANOR FINLEY:

I want to emphasize that libraries are precious. Coming from the US, where we have a lot of erosion of public space, and public institutions. Libraries are one of the last places where people can go and just be, and not have to spend money.

My dream would be to change transportation in the sixties. To really change how space is used. Instead of being used by real people in real places, Barcelona has an idea of a program, or a proposal for Super Blocks.

You block off traffic to a couple of streets, often at night the streets can reopen. There have been a couple of experiments in different parts of Spain for this, and the experiments showed a renaissance of life.

Streets are safe for children to play in, you see the seed of the public life beginning to grow again. That would be my dream, if I could snap my fingers and make things happen, it would be to transform cities and in the way we use cars.

OLIVIA CHOW:

Cities encourage people to form clubs. They are not just learning, they have a learning club. They could start a business, or start selling what they build to other people. Can they learn how to sell things online?

I am trying to bring technology into this. Have you seen that kind of encouragement? We buy a lot of things online now, so you don't even interact with each other.

ELEANOR FINLEY:

It's true. The thing, and it ties back to libraries, I think the thing is making spaces so we can use technology to support civic aims, which can sometimes be not-for-profit, but it does not have to be.

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Start to build this separate track of you want to work in the government, or make solutions that neighborhoods can use. To use it, and use it as a tool for power. For communities, it is not capitalist, maybe institutional and state service provision.

For a lot of places where you get into technology, it is not just learning to become labor for someone else. You don't learn stem because you're going to get a job, only. We need to learn literacy as a power technology.

That is a way to build a better future, rather than buying values. A quick story reminded me of literacy and libraries. I'm not someone who thinks everybody needs to learn to code.

A lot of people now get the internet on the phone. It is great, and everybody has the internet. It is very passive because you are consuming the internet. You don't see software developers tapping on their keyboard on their cell phone to be writing software programs.

Literacy often thought of as reading, I think. It is equally important to learn how to write. All these spaces we are talking about are all very important.

VICKERY BOWLES:

To build on what Bianca was saying, we launched a new program on algorithmic literacy. Algorithms fuel artificial intelligence, and we have seen what algorithms have done with Facebook.

We all search for something on retails for, and all of a sudden it pops up wherever you were on the internet. We will have speakers come and talk to us, there is a recent book on algorithms and depression, and how they influence others in society.

It will be to help people understand how algorithms work so they understand when they do a search on the internet, how algorithms feed the information back to them.

It is part of an initiative because people need to understand that technology they are using, and how it influences them. That is an important project we are launching in 2019.

ELEANOR FINLEY:

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Briefly, I want to add an example called Cooperation Jackson, in Jackson, Mississippi. It is one of the poorest cities in the country, or 85% of the population is African American.

Excuse me, I think I have that wrong.

OLIVIA CHOW:

What did they do?

ELEANOR FINLEY:

A vast majority of the population is African American, and a vast majority of wealth is held by the whites. They created a digital fabrication lab in the city, where they can work with all kinds of technology.

Is not people producing technology for sale.

OLIVIA CHOW:

And is free?

ELEANOR FINLEY:

Yes, it is free. They worked with the city on the platform to make this fabrication happen. They just opened it up.

OLIVIA CHOW:

We have less than 10 minutes to explore a few questions. I know insurance is huge. It makes it hard to open a street, a store. How are we going to be able to cut some of those red tapes?

People can facilitate, people have gathered ideas. Insurance is a big thing. How do we cross that divide?

SPEAKER:

Can I answer that? No.

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OLIVIA CHOW:

Speak up. I want to view of that very thing.

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:

You can use capital reserves as a basis for insurance, and charge the taxpayers a slightly, elevated amount of taxes to compensate for future claims on that. When interns things happen, the municipality can ensure those things.

OLIVIA CHOW:

That's a great idea. You have a question.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I have a question for Bianca. In terms of where we are now with technology. I was thinking about the hearing they had in the states with Google. How on educated, and very, very shallow the questions were.

How far are we, or where do we have two go to become more of a society that uses government to our benefit, rather than profit a company, or how can we use it to help the greater good?

OLIVIA CHOW:

There are two more questions.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

How do we influence that within our own municipalities?

Just the programming, in terms of bringing this into the libraries. Secondly, is there a piece in terms of community centers? Not actually owning them. Really changing our minds about what the role of the public institutions are in our communities.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

Question for all. In terms of an owner. I am a member of a couple labs. I would like to speak about land, a

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sense of land, in the sense of identity you can get through, specifically park space.

I take my kids to parks almost every day. I don't see very many people using the parks in my area. Parents say sometimes they struggle to pay to do activities. The park is here.

You can do adventurous or free play. I don't see a lot of people going to the park.

OLIVIA CHOW:

We need to finish at 3:30. I'm sorry to do that because I want to give enough time for them to answer. Check out "Park People" because they are very successful people in opening the park. He wants to start?

VICKERY BOWLES:

I will answer the question that was focused on library. I will say that what we are doing here in Toronto, libraries throughout North America are really working on this whole idea that civic engagement is really important to what public libraries are doing. We are doing this all the time.

The other thing that I would say is in terms of Toronto, we have the resources to get it going more quickly but we share a lot with other municipalities. With community centers we are working more with the community centers to have cosponsored work and coordinate our work with other things.

We need to do more of that. It's a great resource in the city.

BIANCA WYLIE:

On the political tech thing., I think one of the things right now is really problematic is that politicians are mixing up technologies with the innovation technology. It's seen as an economic development rather than something that is impacting our society.

There is a cultural shift that is necessary to understand that you can have brilliant technology that is not civilians capitalist in nature. There is an opportunity for the economy to thrive with different kinds of technology. It does not have to be consumer focused.

I hope we are able to shift that. The second part is investment. If it's critical that we begin to invest in people who can bring that capacity back to the state. You have to have the confidence that we would trust

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the state with that confidence. When you see an elected official not understanding things, it's about who's around them. I don't expect them to know everything. That's not how representative democracy is supposed to work. Making fun of them is not helpful.

It's who is around you. It's making sure that he was around you is not calling Google for advice. That's what's happening. It's principle-based thinking. It's helpful when the judge hears a case and they have no idea how technology works, but they can tell from the outcome that it is a bad idea. I think we need to rethink how that is perceived and understood.

You don't need it to be a politician to being the tech person.

ELEANOR FINLEY:

Very briefly on the topic of parks and community land trusts. To have a community land trust you have to have a community. The first step is to begin organizing with your neighbors. Start civic initiatives that will be there to make that demand to have a community land trust.

Community land trusts come from collective forms of organization and action.

OLIVIA CHOW:

Excellent! Start with ourselves. Get a few people to our dining rooms and coffee tables. And the library! The library of course! Start something. Engage someone that you do not know. Thank you for answering that. Start with all of us. Thank you so much, and let's give the panelists a big round of applause.

EMCEE:

I suggest highly that you go to the Civil Society series. Follow Bianca on twitter. She basically unpacks everything that is going on in sidewalk labs.

There is a conference happening in September about Ceballos. Symbiosis Summit. Check that out. Thank you very much for you guys. Olivia, thank you. We have a bunch of participatory and workshop sessions. How many of you actually know what you are going to go to? Alright! Find your way there. If you do not know, you can either come talk to me or there is descriptions of the workshops in the HQ link on the website.

There is not an open space session. These are the participatory workshop sessions.

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(Music plays)



