Co-Creating a Proposal for a New Canadian Myth

The Toronto-based creative community Design with Dialogue[1] has held an ongoing monthly series of engagements, seminars and dialogues since 2008 at OCAD University, through the hosting of the Strategic Foresight and Innovation graduate program. Led by associate professor Peter Jones with leading facilitators from the region, DwD has provided an academically-open space for collaborative learning and inquiries into driving issues of our time and affecting our futures.

Because of the uncertain and disconcerting relationship of Canada's support for an emerging new Cold War and public policy based on irregular fact-finding and no public dialogue, DwD has held a series of engagements to discern the values and interests of citizens for a new foreign policy. We call this a design brief for a "new Canadian myth" because in the past, the power of a shared myth has held together the fragile coalitions necessary to sustain a peaceful policy stance in the face of powerful invested interests.

A series of design sessions constructed a shared ethical vision and narrative characterizing these emerging commitments and proposals for a new Canadian foreign policy. Across the perspectives of a wide variety of citizens and residents, ages and sectors, ethnicities and spiritual traditions, a growing group of DwD members have started to define a foundation for agreement on principles and proposals that might guide a new Canadian values orientation to policies affecting our relationships with other nations and cultures in this single shared planet.

The consensus of the group meeting across successive sessions was the topic was urgent and necessary to develop with further inquiry. Dialogue was instigates around a series of motivating questions including:

- What do we (as Canadian citizens) believe to be a socially and culturally responsible foreign policy?
- How should Canada conduct herself realistically in the complex future of international relations? What are our proposed decision criteria for state responses?
- What ought to be the most critical objectives for Canada's social license to advise and act in global affairs?

The workshops were held to construct a policy briefing based on a narrative that we called a New Myth. The New Myth is to be a shared metaphor which we understand as "a future truth which we believe in today." The form of the design model policy platform was that of a "challenge map" expressing a wide variety of perspectives that were ordered by interactive (abductive) influence poisoning in relation to each other. The resulting set of ideas and positions incorporated every participant's contribution, in relation to others, as a map from values to outcomes to policy impacts.

[1] Design with Dialogue (DwD) is a Toronto-based community of practice for learning and developing co-creation practices for community and organizational transformation through participatory design, strategic dialogue, creative arts and emerging facilitation methods.. DwD holds dialogues for critical current inquiries as a creative context for new forms of civic engagement. DwD welcomes all viewpoints from across an open, diverse community of over 800 regular participants since 2008

Problematics of Canadian Foreign Policy

After nearly a decade of hitching foreign policy to global trade agreements and US/NATO military support missions, Canada has lost its leadership and (many believe) its reputation as a moderating and peace-oriented balance to militarism and ethnic violence in troubled nations.

Canada's foreign policy was set on autopilot following the Harper government, even though significant changes occurred in most other policy domains under the Trudeau administration. Canada has maintained an aggressive and even hostile stance toward nations where assumed prior conflicts have been maintained by policymakers. Positions toward Russia, Venezuela, Syria, Iran, China, and other countries are not based on available facts but on political or legacy historical positions continually reinforced by compliant media, that should be reconsidered our obsoleted in the 21st century. Canada has participated in expensive, fruitless Middle Eastern and Eastern European interventions that have harmed the citizens of those countries. While the era of intervention was a popular neoconservative position in the United States and with PM Harper, it should be discontinued as inconsistent with enduring Canadian values.

Canada has continued to press ahead with neoliberal free trade agreements, even after the United States had abandoned the TTP and TTIP regimes with the incoming Trump administration. There is no outreach to the public to elicit the Canadian perception of the value of these agreements as well. Whereas in the US there has been a general trend, even among left and right politically-leaning members of a weakly-informed populace, that the trade regimes are harmful to domestic productivity and job creation. We see no such active dialogues in Canada to this effect, and the federal policy proponents – especially the Minister of Trade - appears to be acting on their individual recognizance and not asking for feedback from a complacent public.

We believe a citizen's response to foreign policy can illustrate a superior, deliberative model for participatory policy advising. The experts have cost us reputation and lives, and it's time for a change toward basic Canadian values.

Almost 15 years ago, Dr. Liss Jeffrey with her organization *By Design eLab* led a pan-Canadian civil society dialogue under the auspices of Global Affairs to engage citizens from all walks of life in contributing to a citizen's response to a new Canadian foreign policy stance. This was a unique undertaking in that it was based on both collocated citizen engagements, synchronous connection across the country, and digital contributions from participants in an integrated consultation process. We call for a new engagement across Canadian publics to hear the concerns from the under-represented and vulnerable members of society.

Since 2003 Canada has not reconnected with the citizens to understand our positions, concerns, or proposals for a Canadian foreign policy that reflected citizen concerns, or at least to some extent, a more democratic (and less elite-driven) model of foreign relations. There have been formal debates, but no citizen engagement.

Canada's original governing values were once defined as "peace, order, and good government." To restore a positive vision and view of Canadian engagement that connects across all peoples, we ask:

- What do Canadian citizens believe to be a *socially and culturally responsible* foreign policy?
- How should Canada conduct herself *realistically* in the complex future of international relations?
- What ought to be the most critical objectives for Canada's social license to act in global affairs?

Challenge Mapping the Policy Brief

Forty unique propositions were generated by nominal group technique, clarified and further developed in dialogue. Relational mapping was done by hand, with participants iterating in several passes to construct a challenge map on a large blackboard. Proposals read from left to right, from deep values to proposals and projects, further to the right expressing outcomes of policy and future impacts.

Proposals placed at the top were more global and strategic, and at the bottom, more granular and tactical.

A Proposal for a *New Canadian Myth* for our Foreign Policy

The corporate-concentrated Canadian media presents few alternative positions among its editorials and reporting on allies, adversarial relationships, terrorism, or human rights. There are authoritative voices proclaiming the dominant narrative, and the alternative narratives and values are brushed aside. We hold firmly the value and vision that indigenous people ought to be given a prominent positon in foreign policy decision making – the relations between nations should not just be between political actors the come and go between elections, but among representatives of the nation state. This might entail appointments of an indigenous foreign relations council, appointments of diverse citizen's council by the Governor General on behalf of the Queen, and the appointment of prominent academics with no political ambitions.

We propose several fundamental outcomes of the policy brief over period of time, such as a 5 year citizen's mandate for action to accomplish shared objectives among the following:

- A nation's foreign policy belongs to all citizens, not to a political party. Provide for an inclusive model of state representation that fully includes Indigenous people, as rights holders to treaty lands of Canada, in diplomatic and foreign affairs decision making.
- Propose a mandate for an honourable and transparent diplomacy model. (Supported by a new form of *Track II diplomacy between cultures*, not just official channels).
- Construct and publish set of clear guidelines for citizen response and public inquiry regarding any proposals for peacekeeping or intervention.
- Articulate a mandate for decolonization of Canadian government interests, ensuring corporate and special (e.g. foreign) interests are not determining the marginalization of rights and freedoms of humans and other life in the shared natural world.
- Positive relationships based on Canada's support of indigenous people and cultures everywhere,

The following design proposals were drawn from the constructive ideas, policy directions, and citizen

Deep Values Proposals (Far Left)

1. **Adapting a broad "local and global perspective" as a guiding principle.** Recognition that what works for one "local" culture may not work for other "local" cultures.
2. ***Advance relational ethics*** woven into foreign affairs and economic agreements
3. **A narrative policy of "I-thou" not "I - It"** (Martin Buber). Encourage growth and maintenance of empathic imagination with others, particularly respectful of differences.
4. Be transparent and honest, promote global governance. Subordinate external affairs (International laws, Neutral observation of conflicts and war crimes, conflict resolution) to a representative global body such as exists with the ICC.
5. Inclusive and diverse representation in foreign affairs, established through value of collaboration.
6. Develop / uphold norms / values. Develop our common goals and meet the as a nation.
7. Be a strategic mediator for innovative, agile, ethical, bottom-up development.

Frameworks and Structures (Left center)

8. A place to speak freely + be listened to by government, building on a heritage of communication
9. Recognize "policy of choice" embracing diversity of thought in legislation [myth=we value thought diversity] [action]
10. Implement "policy of truth" publish choice architecture / data semantic that advises policy. (open source) [myth=we value transparent gov] [action]
11. Create a design language for harmonizing peoples in conflict
12. Establish "directives" (failsafe rules) for actions / decision making
13. Create a platform for residents of Canada – citizens, into students, PR, foreign workers, refugees – to voice their concerns / issues with foreign affairs
14. Create structures for listening and adapting how we transform systems at and across different levels
15. Reducing reliance on economic penalties or incentives in favour of common imperatives (demonetizing desired behaviour)
16. Reflective policy is embedded in the development of future foreign policy
17. Revised/refined with growth mindset, emergent evidence - reflective and agile
18. Finding new methods and opportunities for collaboration beyond economic purposes
19. Reconciliation of "peace with/or past" < > present < > future integrating learnings across all orders / domains
20. Foreign policy decision process based on multi perspectives and mutual decolonizing

Actions, Projects, and Development Proposals (Center)

21. Consistently safe and secure in a more dangerous world. Remembrance Day is only one day of what we enjoy everyday
22. Create a mechanism / fail safe to uncouple economic interests from humanitarian assistance and aboriginal land claims (unless mutually beneficial)
23. Need to integrate digital tech data "commoditization" in building process (es) / policies that are not threatening to the security of cultures, in the name of commerce and power (guiding principle)
24. Policy of fairness. Create and promote policies, actions and systems that promote fairness amount peoples, sexes, generations, nations and species
25. The citizen driven democracy. Implement a mechanism of feedback system among the local and/or other relevant stakeholders and policy makers for reflectivity and flexibility of the process
26. Inclusive and invitational engagement on trade with empathy and respect for powers of the day
27. Build consultative process (es) that are collaborative inclusive and integrate best of the best including: aboriginal wisdom/ Jewish principles on preserving the voice of the minority / biomimicry principles (for conservation / integrating -ve feedback loops (value and actions)
28. Decolonizing policies from corporate, media, and religious interest and values
29. Establish a Canadian model of peace building (guideline) consistent with human values
30. Define a new security regime for Canada's relationships based on trust and shared value

Strategic Outcomes and Global Impacts (Center to Right End)

31. **Propose the "Anti-Hypocrisy Act."** Consistency of thought and action based on fairness to all parties involved originating from empathy, respect and equality for all.
32. **Reconcile plural and competing interests**. Make Canada's voice unique in the global landscape (inclusive of indigenous people).
33. **Define the international and cultural relationships to water**, air and right to climate.
34. **Create and execute a new model for decolonizing** domestically and internationally.
35. Maintaining our alliances and integral arrangements to keep Canada safe and justly governed.
36. Reducing or re-aligning roles and responsibilities in light of changing demographics.
37. Integrate foreign affairs, global history and indigenous history in education (K-college).
38. Move toward world government. Fight global overpopulation.
39. Go with the flow (e.g. NATO) in the short term, but find ways to relinquish aggressive security postures and move toward shared preferred outcomes between nations, based on comprehensive interest, not hidden economic imperatives.
40. Survival of Canada as an intact prosperous and a secure entity

Several proposals for creating "new Canadian myths" were proposed in the last workshop. Working in small teams in Open Space fashion (based on mutual interests in expressed core ideas) we formulated the start to several themes, which are presented int his early stage of engagement as a incremental process for continuing discussion with other stakeholders reading this brief. The models included:

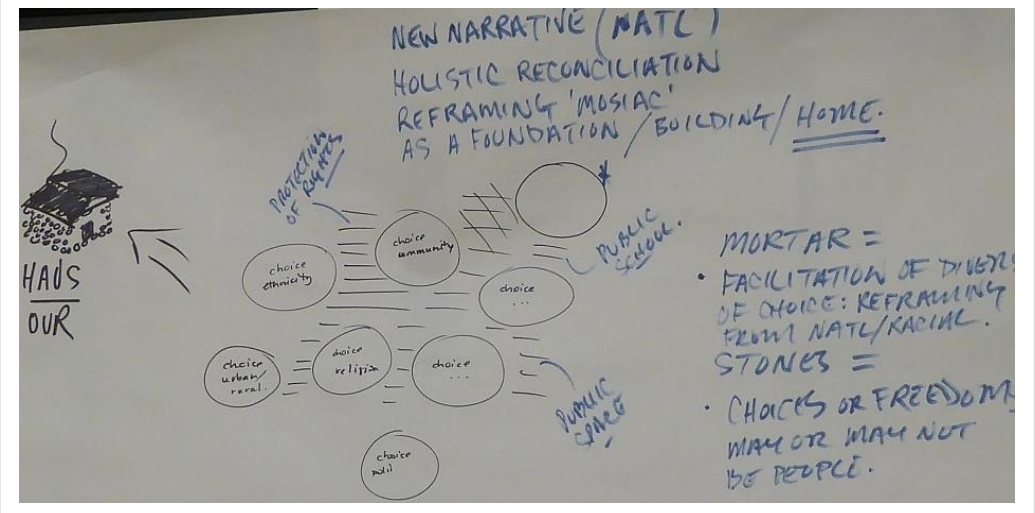
- Canada should reflect and pause its aggressive models of policy execution. The "ally and adversary" game theory model of policy that Canada supports with its adherence to NATO Cold War culture needs to end. The first rule of game theory is that when one partner is gaming for advantage, all have to assume a zero sum advantage. Cooperation is actually impossible. Creating a world without war (or breaking away from the global war economy) requires new skills and ways of collaborating with "allies and adversaries."

- The new skills demanded of the new century include what we call Peacefinding, as well as Peacemaking and Peacebuilding. Peacefinding is the social design skill of facilitating resolution and problem solving among members of a committed community, whether with a single culture or mixed stakeholders.

- Canada can lead by caring for the world and others in its country and circle. Canada's new myth can be that we are a caring nation, in that "our people care about your people." Care goes beyond empathy to act on the fundamental value that all human beings have value, that all cultures (whether nations, regions, towns or tribes) have a history that we cannot understand directly without being a member of the culture. We are only ethical when we appreciate this uncertainty with precaution and care, as opposed to certainty and unwitting marginalization of cultures that are vulnerable to those politicians have decided to support.

- Canada can lead by example by reconciling its foreign policy errors internally. A new Canadian myth of Caring can heal the internal divisions, starting with action on Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous people.

- The new model of domestic leadership might envision the Canadian society as a mosaic, with our policy frameworks serving as the mortar in the mosaic, flexible and firm space between groups and identifies in the same whole mosaic.



A rough sketch of these ideas from the Mosaic team.

Policy and Collective Action Design Proposals

The following design proposals were drawn from the constructive ideas, policy directions, and citizen concerns developed in the Design with Dialogue workshop series. These are listed in order of relative time to develop-test-deploy. Relative impacts of each proposal have not been assessed. The digital proposals can be considered the most feasible to build rapidly and integrate into current public discourses and resources. Some of the proposals will require more extensive inclusive dialogue from among different citizen constituencies.

Each proposal is supported by a policy principal from the collective analysis.

1. **International relations are human relations.** Create a platform for Canadian residents – citizens, permanent residents, students, foreign workers, refugees – to voice their concerns / issues with foreign affairs.

2. **Foreign policy must respect the diversity of Canadian people.** *Create a design language for harmonizing peoples in conflict.* Canada has grown from a large federation of indigenous peoples to a Commonwealth nation supporting a wide diversity of citizens. Foreign must not become entrenched in political disagreements based on legacy viewpoints inherited by the past, ethnonational feuds persisting among segments of society, or the financial calculations of think tank policy proposals.

3. The concrete proposal of a "design language" refers to the creation of facilitation and decision making tools designed for diplomacy and engagement. Design with Dialogue participants proposed the **Policy of Care Framework** which asserts a human-centred perspective that, while acknowledging strategic interests, leads international relations based on a presumption of care and well-being between national and cultural entities and identities.

4. **Foreign policy decision process based on multiple perspectives and mutual decolonizing.** *Advance a collective, indigenous-led model of international relations*. Canada has become so diverse that its foreign policy reflects a hodge-podge of global and trade interests. Its representation, particularly at the United Nations, ought to reflect Canada's indigeneity and the ephemeral politics of contemporary business ought to be secondary. Relations between national and cultural representatives ought to reflect the cultures and concerns of not just the political decision makers, but the people of the country itself.

5. **Advocate and establish (fund) new United Nations peacemaking roles** that support a planetary approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Along with peacekeeping roles, recruit paid Peace Corps-style leaders and volunteers for peacefinding and peacebuilding at local and diplomatic levels with nations and cultures of concern in international relations.

6. **Fund and staff a UN-based independent, non-aligned news and intelligence analysis service.** The primary role for a "Planetary Press" would be to resolve the critical differences between corporate media biases that promote conflict to fund business models that profit from military conflict or sanctions. Independent journalists are already followed by millions of people worldwide seeking unbiased sources of truth to resolve to astonishing differences in media narrative between US/UK press, European, Russian and Middle Eastern reports.

Conclusion

The undersigned are committed to pursuing an ethical, humane, and civil (as opposed to militaristic) model for Canadian foreign policy and international affairs. We have an ongoing discourse community and are actively seeking opportunities to share, listen, respond, and design these new opportunities.

We encourage readers and leaders to participate with us in a Design with Dialogue context or in sponsored workshops, debates, or conferences interested in these ideas for promoting a flourishing Canadian future.

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