



25 November 2010

Respectful Dialogue at UBC

As a university community we are privileged to observe, participate in and discuss issues of global importance on a daily basis.

Recently, student groups on campus have disagreed about the use of AMS fees, and we are challenged once again to think about how a community like ours responds to conflicts between individuals and ideologies. While this particular situation relates to the situation in the Middle East, it raises important questions about the nature of dialogue and discussion at our university.

Always, a university is a place of dialogue. As a community of engaged scholars, we value and protect freedom of expression and freedom of inquiry. I have reflected on this often during my tenure as President and would invite you to read [my letter to the community](#) on respectful dialogue. It was written at a time when similar issues arose on campus.

In January 2011, together with [Peace it Together](#), UBC will host a Pacific Dialogues series event with two speakers from the Middle East, [Dr. Gershon Baskin](#) of the [Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information](#) and [Dr. Sami Adwan](#) of the [Peace Research Institute in the Middle East](#). Both are actively engaged in scholarly and community work to advance peace.

I encourage you to attend what promises to be an inspiring evening at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts on Saturday, January 8, 2011. There will be more information about this event in early December.

I believe the speakers' use of respectful inquiry and debate can be a model for us as we use dialogue to build a peaceful, civil, and sustainable society.

Stephen J. Toope
President and Vice Chancellor
The University of British Columbia