

**PLURALISM AND PRAGMATISM:  
THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN DEVELOPING HUMAN POTENTIAL**  
**Inaugural Keynote Address in the Ismai'li Lecture Series**  
**Ismai'li Centre Burnaby, Tuesday, January 31, 2012**

## **I Introduction**

Thank you, President Manji,<sup>1</sup> for your warm welcome, and Ms. Chandani,<sup>2</sup> for your thoughtful introduction. I would like to acknowledge President Mohamed Manji of the Ismai'li Council for Canada and President Samira Alibhai of the Ismai'li Council for British Columbia for this wonderful opportunity; the Honourable Naomi Yamamoto, Minister of Advanced Education; and the Honourable Harry Bloy, Minister of State for your presence today; Community leaders, colleagues and friends.

I am both privileged and deeply honoured to deliver the inaugural address in the Ismai'li Lecture Series. UBC's relationship with the Ismai'li community dates back many years, and our connections speak to our shared values, shared concerns, and complementary strengths. Khalil Shariff, CEO of the Aga Khan Foundation of Canada, is a graduate of UBC. Firoz Rasul, a former member of UBC's Board of Governors, is

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<sup>1</sup> President Mohamad Manji has flown in from Toronto to attend the inaugural lecture.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Shala Chandani is the MC for this event.

President of Aga Khan University, and his wife Saida is working with UBC professors to establish a global health program in Kenya. Shamez Mohamed, who is responsible for building the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto and the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa, sits on UBC's Museum of Anthropology External Advisory Board. The Aga Khan Development Network works closely with UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership, and UBC's former head of paediatrics, Dr. Robert Armstrong, recently became the founding Dean of AKU's Medical College in East Africa. On behalf of UBC, I'm so grateful for the strength of our friendship, and for today's honour.

I have been asked to address the question of the role of universities in developing human potential. The topic is of almost limitless scope. Yet I realized that if I did nothing more today than describe to you the reciprocal sharing of knowledge, research, and personnel between our two communities; joint development work and program delivery; immeasurable generosity—with money, expertise, and ideas—across cultures, across borders, side by side, day after day over years, I would in large measure have answered the question.

But ... I am a professor, used to 50-minute lecture slots, so I will say a bit more!

*Pluralism* and *pragmatism* are the twin lenses I've chosen to focus on the question of the role of universities in developing human potential. His Highness the Aga Khan has been tireless in recent years in promoting the cause of pluralism, in speeches and in his most recent book.<sup>3</sup> He has inspired audiences of all ages, races, and cultures to discuss and debate it, and to develop their capacity for it. He is just as passionately articulate about the need for action. He is a pragmatist for whom faith is not simply a set of beliefs but a way of living one's life, and the community he leads lives out this idea not just among themselves but within the wider societies of which they are citizens, all around the world. The spiritual tradition in which I was raised agrees that faith without works is dead.<sup>4</sup> And the secular institution I serve avows that the teaching, learning, and research that occurs under our auspices is done in service to the people of British Columbia, Canada, and the world.<sup>5</sup>

## **II The Convert**

So I will speak today about pluralism and pragmatism within the context of the role of the university. But first: what *is* that role? Instead of an answer, I give you a story. In it, a UBC alumna looks back on her first year at UBC. Here is her story:

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<sup>3</sup> *Where Hope Takes Root: Democracy and Pluralism in an Interdependent World*

<sup>4</sup> James 2:14-26

<sup>5</sup> *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan*, <http://strategicplan.ubc.ca/the-plan/vision-statement/>

*I was a white, middle-class Catholic girl—first communion at six, confirmed at 12, and convinced I was to become a missionary by the time I was 18. I'd heard about millions of people who worshipped false gods and who would never get to heaven unless they converted, and I couldn't see the point of four more years of school when my powers of persuasion were clearly needed elsewhere! My mom listened to my plans without comment, but then secretly called and talked to my history teacher, a man I greatly respected, and he took me aside one day after class and convinced me that a little more education might make me that much more capable of saving the world.*

*I discovered UBC had a religious studies department, which intrigued me, so I registered there and signed up for their 100-level survey course of world religions. I figured maybe it would give me more insight into the people I'd be meeting so that it would be easier to convert them.*

*That first September day, in a packed lecture hall, a Dr. Charles Anderson took the podium. He was tall and thin, with a kind, intelligent face, and a slight southern-American accent, and he began to speak about Hinduism. What struck me was that he didn't speak about it from within the context of Christianity, nor did he compare it to Christianity. He didn't compare it to anything, for that matter. He spoke about its origins and history, literature, central tenets and practitioners as*

*belonging to a complex and ancient tradition, sufficient unto itself. In that hour, although I didn't yet realize it, something I had thought was solid in me, something I'd built my sense of reality and identity on, started to give way.*

*I didn't sleep that night. After Hinduism, Dr. Anderson spoke about Buddhism, and more of my formerly solid self gave way. Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam. I listened, and what I heard I recognized as true. I read, and what I read gave evidence of being sacred.*

*In that year, much of what had been assembled in me in the previous 18 broke apart. I came close to quitting university because of how difficult that process was. But in the end, I chose to major in Religious Studies. I have spent all of the years since then reassembling myself, choosing deliberately the pieces I'm willing to call 'me,' and always leaving room for ideas and experiences still to come.*

*I traveled after I graduated, and attended a Catholic mass at the Vatican. The service and singing and prayers were in Italian, but I understood it all, and I understood that in some sense, this would always be a part of me. Two weeks later, in Izmir, Turkey, I awoke to the Muslim call to prayer. As I listened, I realized that I understood that, too, and that it, too, was now a part of me:*

*“...Come to prayer,  
Come to success,  
The time for the best of deeds has come ...”*

“The point of non-vocational higher education is ... to help students realize that they can reshape themselves—that they can rework the [socialization of] their past ... into a new self-image, one that they themselves have helped to create.”<sup>6</sup> These are the words of Richard Rorty, one of the leading pragmatist philosophers of our time. His mentor, John Dewey, who is considered the founder of pragmatist philosophy, described the “educational process [as] one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming.”<sup>7</sup> I tell parents of new students to UBC, “Your children will change. A university education is—or should be—a transformative experience, not only for what they will learn in the classroom but also for what they discover about themselves, what they encounter in others whose views and backgrounds differ from their own, and for what they come to contribute of themselves to the greater community.” I have had to remind myself of my own words more than once since our elder daughter went overseas to study almost three years ago.

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<sup>6</sup> Rorty, “Education as Socialization and Individualization,” at 118.

<sup>7</sup> Dewey, at 50.

John Dewey was telling us a hundred years ago that we must stop “thinking of [education] as ... pouring knowledge into a mental and moral hole,”<sup>8</sup> and yet there are still educators and institutions—and parents—who operate from this view of the young person as an empty vessel. The real measure of the value of education, Dewey said, “is the extent in which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies means for making [that] desire effective in fact.”<sup>9</sup>

Dewey declared that a human being’s capacity for learning, and therefore for growth, was dependent on retaining a quality of “childlikeness.” He used the word immaturity in its positive sense, to denote plasticity and the power of potential: sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, openness of mind, instinctive mobility, eagerness for variety, and a love of new stimuli and new developments. “The human being acquires a habit of learning,” he said. “[S]he learns to learn.” Habits give a person “the power to retain from one experience something [that may be used] in coping with the [challenges] of a later situation.” The application of intelligence to habit “fixes the relation of the habit to varied and elastic use, and hence to continued growth.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dewey, at 51.

<sup>9</sup> Dewey, at 53.

<sup>10</sup> Dewey, at 41-53.

We learn to learn, and learning can become a habit—our instinctual response to the new, the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable. If we remain in the habit of learning, then we grow; our self-concept literally expands in order to accept and integrate what before was separate, foreign, even frightening. If we are not in that habit, then we stay small, and what seems foreign and frightening stays so, remains separate and incomprehensible.

So: we encourage in our students the application of intelligence to the habit of learning to learn. *But how?* And what about those individuals who are not our students? Are they not in some measure our responsibility as well? At the heart of UBC's mission are our commitments—equal in import—to learning, to research, and to engagement with the wider community. So when we talk about our role in developing human potential, we must mean not only the individuals who enter our gates, but also all those who live and move beyond them. How do we fulfill our obligations to them?

The answer in both cases is the same: pluralism.

### III The Icebreaker

Another story:

A man sits in the dark on the top deck of a very large ship, all of the northern constellations visible above him in an almost black sky. It's "bar night" on board, and around him, people are laughing and singing, but the man is in a meditative mood and so he sits at a distance, alone. He hears a small, almost imperceptible sound, and glances down at the drink in his hand just in time to see the ice cube in it crack. The ice cube was chipped off an iceberg earlier in the day, and now, it releases molecules that had been locked inside a glacier since before modern man appeared on Earth.

The man in the story is Michael Byers, Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law. He is also the author of *Who Owns the Arctic?* and a professor at UBC. At the time of this story, he is situated on Pond Inlet at the northern end of Baffin Island, in the Arctic, and he's traveling aboard the CCGS *Amundsen*. The *Amundsen* is an icebreaker—a ship built specially for breaking a passage through ice-bound waters—and Professor Byers and his fellow passengers are the members of ArcticNet, a federally funded consortium of researchers from 29 different universities. They are there to measure the environment and to search for multi-year ice: ice that survives from

year to year; that provides the best habitat for seals, narwhales, belugas and polar bears; ice that is melting at a rate three times faster than what scientists predicted. He hears another small sound, and when he glances down again at his drink, the ice cube is gone.<sup>11</sup>

As I followed Professor Byers's progress through the Arctic last summer, I thought about how the icebreaker is a metaphor for, or a microcosm of, the university: a place unto itself but connected to the wider world; a place of study and research that will benefit those outside its confines; a place of collaboration and cohabitation; a safe place for significant conversations about sensitive issues, among people of profound cultural diversity.

An icebreaker is a vessel for creating a way forward where before there was none. We use the same word to describe a joke or game used to help people who don't know each other relax and open up. A third definition of "icebreaker" is a beginning, a start.

A university should be the place where students, staff, faculty, and alumni begin to discover both the common humanity and the deep difference between them, and where it's safe enough to explore the discomfort and the vulnerability inherent in such encounters. It should

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<sup>11</sup> Byers, at 28-29.

be the place where open, authentic engagement with people whose appearance or customs or worldviews are different from ours becomes a habitual practice, part of our daily lives.

A university campus should offer as many avenues as possible along which the human spirit might fly—music, medicine, languages, life sciences, architecture, athletics, business, law, land and food, technology, and art—and its library must offer at least as many more. As a student walks the paths from building to building, class to class, she should begin to notice three things: **First**: that although she may enter only three or four or five buildings each day, there is teaching and learning going on in *all* of the buildings. What she is learning, what she will have learned at the end of four years, is just a tiny fraction of what is available to be learned in this place. **Second**: that although each building she enters is a separate edifice containing a distinct subject matter within its walls, there is a common denominator ... and it is she, herself. All of these different realms of ideas are in fact not separate at all, but interconnected with all of the others, and where they connect is *within her*. And **third**: that every person she encounters is similarly a connecting point for an astonishing diversity of ideas and understandings and experiences, and that if she wants to expand exponentially beyond what is available to her in the classroom, what she has to do is ... say hello.

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century Polish journalist and poet, Ryszard Kapuściński, said, “Stop. There beside you is another person. Meet him. [Meet her.] This sort of encounter is the greatest event, the most vital experience of all.”

If the icebreaker is a microcosm of the university, then the university is—or should be—a microcosm of the world. University is meant to be a liminal experience, a threshold between youth and adulthood, between careers, or between life stages. Time and space outside of ordinary time and space—away from our usual habits and practices, in a place outside our familiar four corners—to investigate who we are in relation to the diversity of experiences, customs, cultures, and values we’re now encountering. And, to imagine who we might yet become.

What university leaders must ask ourselves at this juncture in history is whether we are providing that as fully as we possibly can. Universities are one of the only social institutions to have survived, both intact and wildly changed, since the medieval era. We have proven ourselves crucial to social, economic, and cultural evolution, and capable of staying relevant and competitive even during times of highly accelerated change such as we’ve seen this past century. However, the great crises of our time—from climate change to pandemic disease to

pervasive poverty, from the challenges of cultural diversity to the failure of fledgling democracies and the lack of civil society infrastructure in so many areas of the world—these crises persist, and it is my contention that universities around the globe are no longer optimally organized to do what the world needs us to do.

I never thought I'd hear myself say, "We need more meetings!" In fact, comedian Dave Barry once said, "If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race ... has not achieved its full potential, that word would be 'meetings.'" But of course I mean the kinds of meetings Ryszard Kapuściński spoke of. And so every year I find myself strengthening the case for increasing out-of-province and international student enrolment. The flow of university students across borders sparks such meetings and builds nations. It creates lifelong links between individuals and organizations in every sphere of life.

A study of the 10 highest-ranked universities in the world shows that international students comprise an average of 21 percent of their student body, which is higher than UBC's current 18 percent. What's the connection between international students and a university's place on the world stage? Those students' perspectives. Their life experiences. Their cultural heritage. Their unique ways of seeing and being in the world. Every classroom and dormitory becomes a United

Nations of sorts, and these informal interactions—in group projects, over a shared meal, or in a social setting—give both the local and the international students otherwise unattainable insights into global society.

International students carry with them their individual gifts and also their extended networks: the family, business, academic, cultural, and social ties that, when shared reciprocally, can help all of us navigate in a complex world.

They also contribute to the global increase of knowledge. International graduate students in particular bring with them the seeds of current and future research collaboration, by tending links among their professors across the global research enterprise. The results are the social policy, health care, and cultural advances we need to tackle the global challenges that are simply too vast for any single institution to move. In other words, the diversity engendered by welcoming international students to local universities—wherever “local” happens to be for you—is crucial to the future well-being of all of us.

We need more “meetings.” Currently, UBC enjoys agreements with over 150 other institutions around the world. Student mobility and travel learning opportunities are at an all-time high. However, we have

an urgent need for greater faculty mobility, but our national systems are not cooperating. There are still many barriers to international recruitment, such as impaired transferability of credentials, especially among the professions, and narrow-minded visa rules. As well, many of our most important funding mechanisms remain inwardly focused and so fail to foster global collaboration. North American universities are also confronted with sub-national constraints. We are partially funded by state or provincial governments, so even recruiting students from a few hundred kilometers away can be controversial.

But brilliant hiring and recruitment will not of itself create the critical mass of talent that's needed to solve fundamental global problems. We need partners. We must collaborate, not only with other universities but also with community groups, civil society organizations, industry, and government. And we must do so more successfully than we have done thus far. Those of you who run businesses may find it hard to understand that just because presidents and vice-chancellors say they would like something to happen doesn't make it so. Academic freedom is no empty phrase. Truly successful networks and collaborations typically arise in an organic fashion, from the bottom up. We can't direct this kind of growth hierarchically. But we can, I believe, foster the conditions in which it will happen naturally: by lending our support to fledgling successes instead of reinventing the wheel; by encouraging

our governments to change rules to allow research funding that crosses borders; by focusing on our strengths instead of trying to be all things to all people; by turning our institutions into communities of practice; and by nurturing global citizens.

I will speak more about the ideas of communities of practice and global citizenship in a few minutes. But I cannot leave the subject of pluralism without first addressing what I perceive to be Canada's—and Canadians'—greatest challenge in that regard.

I mentioned earlier His Highness the Aga Khan's efforts worldwide to nurture a greater understanding and practice of pluralism. His vision will take physical form as the new Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa, in partnership with the Government of Canada. The Centre will serve the global community as an international think tank on the study, teaching, and practice of pluralism. As well as research, education, and professional development, it will provide resources to developing nations on governance reform and building civil society. Canada was chosen as the location for the Centre primarily because of our reputation as one of the world's most successful pluralistic societies, and also because of the Ismaili immigrant experience in Canada from the early 1970s onward. "What the Canadian experience suggests to me," says His Highness, "is that honouring one's own identity need not

mean rejecting others.”<sup>12</sup> His Highness is right, and Canadians may rightfully be proud of the successes that led him to choose this country as the home for this visionary enterprise.

But ... I am a professor. And as Richard Rorty puts it, “The socially most important provocations ... will be offered by teachers who make vivid and concrete the failure of the country of which we remain loyal citizens to live up to its own ideals.”<sup>13</sup>

I can think of no more vivid, concrete, and *current* provocation than Attawapiskat. Attawapiskat is the First Nations reserve in northern Ontario that declared a state of emergency this past October. Where people are living in shacks with mould on the walls and using plastic buckets for toilets. Where in 1979, thirty thousand gallons of diesel fuel leaked under the local elementary school and the school remained in session. Finally closed in 2001 because of ongoing health problems suffered by students and teachers, the school still has not been rebuilt and students sit in temporary portables. And the story continues, with floods, sewage overruns, and evacuations into short-sighted solutions that become long-term living conditions. Perhaps worst of all, a

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<sup>12</sup> Khan, Aga, LaFontaine-Baldwin Lecture, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Rorty, “Education as Socialization and as Individualization,” at 123.

hundred other Attawapiskats exist, right here in our home and Native land.<sup>14</sup>

This situation is partly a legacy of colonization, and partly of Canada's Residential School System. Aboriginal people in Canada did not have complete rights until 1982, and those living on reserves were not covered by the Canadian Human Rights Act until 2011—last year. Church and state's attempts to “civilize” and “assimilate” Aboriginal peoples was in fact a systematic eradication of their identity—their languages, cultures, and communities—through separation of families, forcible repression, and routine abuse. The last of the Indian Residential Schools closed in 1996, but the effects on individuals, their families, and their communities are intergenerational, and continue to this day, and the loss to our society as a whole is incalculable.

This is a chapter in our history of which a majority of Canadians remain entirely unaware. Universities have come to understand that we play a role in that ignorance, and must play a role in its remediation. It is also our responsibility to help bring about reconciliation between Canadian society and its institutions, and Aboriginal communities.

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<sup>14</sup> Foulds, Jim, “After Attawapiskat, what?” on [www.thestar.com](http://www.thestar.com) December 29, 2011, online: <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/1108609--after-attawapiskat-what> accessed January 15, 2012.

In November, UBC hosted a dialogue on the history of Indian Residential Schools in Canada. The two-day-long event was held in the First Nations House of Learning, a traditional longhouse situated on our Vancouver campus. University administrators, students, and residential school survivors gathered in a circle to speak, and to listen. In the centre of the circle sat a child's empty desk, with a blanket laid over the back of the chair. The desk was there to represent the children's lives that were lost, and those that were so profoundly damaged. As I looked at it, I suddenly understood that this simple school desk, which to *me* symbolizes education and all its opportunities, represented something utterly different to residential school survivors, and to their children and their children's children. Many cultures place a high value on formal and particularly western education, and we see those cultures well represented on our campuses. But what about those cultures for whom 'education' actually meant eradication? For whom 'pluralism' meant assimilation or annihilation?

His Highness the Aga Khan cautions us that pluralism is difficult, and that the choices it requires do not come naturally. In fact, for some, it represents unimaginable risk with no reasonable expectation of reward. These times we live in demand that we do it anyway, all of us, discomfort, distance, distrust, confusion, conflict, misunderstandings, mistakes and all. The question is, of course, *how?*

## IV The Violinist

To answer, a short story:

A young violinist from Grande Prairie, Alberta, is the local prodigy and the pride of her hometown. She has mastered her Royal Conservatory training, taken first place in festivals across the country, and has just been invited to play as a guest with the philharmonic orchestra in one of the greatest concert halls on the continent. Thrilled, she flies to New York, checks into her hotel, and then instead of trying to hail a cab and because it's such a lovely evening, she decides to walk to the hall. Well, it's her first time in New York City, and after a few wrong turns, she's lost. What's worse, she's broken the heel of her shoe, it's starting to rain and she hasn't worn a coat, and there's no time to turn back or she'll miss the orchestra warm-up. Embarrassed, she approaches a stranger on the street and says, "Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?"

The stranger looks at the limping young girl with the wet hair and clothes and the violin case tucked under one arm, and says, "Practice." I know it's a chestnut, but consider further...

I would guess that everyone here has heard someone play the violin, whether at a live concert or on a recording. But have you ever heard someone *learning* to play the violin?

To get good at something, you must practice. And there are two prerequisites for practice: the desire to be good, and the willingness to be bad. As in, learning-to-play-the-violin-bad. To learn to do a thing to any degree of mastery requires first of all that you *not* be able to do that thing. *Not knowing. I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't understand.* How we hate that! But to learn to play the violin, or to learn to create harmony in a pluralistic world, we need to exercise muscles we have never used; to listen more deeply; to be willing to be uncomfortable, sometimes deeply so; to be willing to be vulnerable in front of our teachers, our fellow practitioners, our friends, and our opponents. Earlier, I described a university as a safe place for significant conversations about sensitive issues among people of profound cultural difference. We must be a place where it's safe to be a beginner at this, where it's safe to practice, even for those who've earned the title of Master or Doctor.

“Practice” and “pragmatism” share similar etymological roots. Simply put, pragmatism is a philosophical approach that gauges the truth of a theory or belief in terms of how successful it is in practical application.

In my role as an international human rights lawyer, my colleagues and I have been investigating the use of a pragmatic approach in the creation of international law. The greatest challenge facing international law today is how to “construct normative institutions while admitting and upholding the diversity of people in international society.”<sup>15</sup> From a pragmatist perspective, law that is imposed, that depends on a hierarchy between law-givers and subjects,<sup>16</sup> is not true law and will not engender the sense of legal obligation among stakeholders that will make it function. The kind of lawmaking we’re proposing, called transactional law, is the result of “reciprocity between all participants in the enterprise,”<sup>17</sup> a collaboration to build ... shared understanding[s] and a commitment to uphold a practice of legality.<sup>18</sup> It does “not assume or even aspire to the creation of a shared global identity” or a deep coalescence of values.<sup>19</sup> What is key is that “shared understandings are only likely to arise from repeated social practice.”<sup>20</sup>

At this, I have to mention an arena where this is happening all day, every day, all over the world, not only in matters of law but also in politics, the environment, community development, crisis relief, and of

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<sup>15</sup> Brunnée and Toope, at 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, at 7.

<sup>17</sup> Brunnée and Toope, at 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, at 7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, at 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, at 24.

course celebrity gossip, and that's online social media. Facebook, just as one example, currently has over 800 million active members—that's almost 27 times the population of Canada. Three hundred and fifty million of them are accessing their accounts via mobile devices. More than 70 languages are used on the site, and the average member is connected to 130 other individuals and 80 groups. Communities are built on common interest, shared histories, need for information, the desire for connection *and* for a safe place to disagree. For young people especially, this kind of daily interaction with friends and strangers is a matter of course.

What we have the opportunity to do at a university is to help translate that *habit* into situations where the community of practice is even more diverse and far deeper, to apply knowledge and new research, and from there take it into settings where the stakes are much higher.

**Informally:** at UBC Vancouver, the Simon K.Y. Lee Global Lounge is home base for globally focused student clubs. Over a thousand students gather there for dialogue and action, sponsor programs to foster international engagement and intercultural understanding, and build community with staff and faculty interested in global issues. At UBC Okanagan, we've built day residences for commuter students,

giving them the same opportunity as resident students for the kinds of informal encounters that build friendships.

**In the classroom**, UBC's Department of Asian Studies is creating a Persian language program that will anchor a broader program in Persian and Iranian studies. The program will include courses in Persian culture and Iranian cinema, and will be headed by a research Chair in Persian Language and Literary Culture. The Ch'nook Aboriginal Business Education initiative, established in 2002, offers a full range of business education opportunities for Aboriginal participants from high school age through working business people and entrepreneurs. Their network includes community leaders, 24 post-secondary institutions, Aboriginal scholars, First Nations bands, and members of Canada's business community.

Emanuel Adler, a professor of International Relations at the University of Toronto, calls these gatherings, from the informal to the formal, communities of practice. These communities “[create] the social fabric of learning.”<sup>21</sup> They are “made up of real people who—working via network channels, across national borders, across organizational divides, and in the halls of government—affect political, economic, and

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<sup>21</sup> Adler and Pouliot, at 17.

social events.”<sup>22</sup> He suggests that we “think about the world neither as an assemblage of states nor as divided by borders and lines of national identification, but as transnational communities of practice, based on what people actually *do* rather than on where they happen to *live*.”<sup>23</sup> According to Adler, and I agree, “the ordinary unfolding of practice [generates] transformation ... transformation is the ordinary accomplishment of social life.”<sup>24</sup>

## **V Hope and the Global Citizen**

As I say that out loud, it sounds naïve. Perhaps all of it does—the idea that a first-year university class, a ‘hello’ between strangers, that social media, the beginner mind, language, literature, a global lounge—might be in any way the substrate for the solutions we seek to desperate poverty, economic crisis, climate change, health epidemics, war and terror. But if I look for a common denominator between those things, what I find is hope: the hope of an individual that she’ll grow; the hope of finding friendship; the hope of helping, or of being helped; the hope inherent in starting at the very beginning of something, like the violin or like a Canada that truly includes its First Nations, where everything that lies ahead is unknown and anything is possible.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, at 17.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, at 24.

<sup>24</sup> Adler and Pouliot, at 18.

The alternatives are fear and despair, and I believe that the course you follow is a matter of choice. From my efforts as part of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, from my inquiry into Maher Arar's kidnapping and torture, and from having experienced tragedy in my own life, I know that we can always use what we see in front of us to justify despair. But the ability to envision something better can be learned, too, can become a habit, too.

Through casual conversation and formal dialogue; in the classroom and in community service; through hosting international scholars at home and creating opportunities for study and research abroad, universities invite their students, staff, faculty, alumni, and members of the broader community to become global citizens. This is a designation that cannot be conferred by any country or institution but only through participation and practice. We transform *ourselves* into citizens, and that transformation is sustained by a recognition that, as moral beings, we are here to help one another. That we cannot set someone outside our circle, we cannot turn our back on someone less fortunate than ourselves without in some way compromising ourselves and our own humanity.

I close today with the words of a young girl who was perhaps the quintessential global citizen. She did *not* attend university; she was never allowed the chance. Yet what she was able to accomplish in her lifetime, and what has been accomplished since through her legacy, can instruct all of us who may feel at times that we are lacking in choice, or opportunity, or freedom. Anne Frank wrote in her diary, “Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don’t know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!”

It is the task of our lives to find out, and to help others to do the same. And it is the task of our universities along with our partners to create, *together*, a global community of practice in which that may happen—for our students, staff, and scholars, and for all of the people we serve. *The time for the best of deeds has come.*

Thank you.

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