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THE WALRUS

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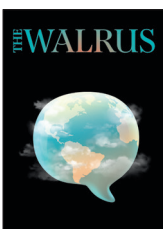
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Subscriber Services

The Walrus (ISSN 1708-4032) is published ten times a year and sells for \$7.95. A one-year print subscription within Canada costs \$29.75. A digital edition is also available.

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, provided through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

We also acknowledge the support of the Ontario Creates Magazine Fund.

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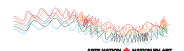
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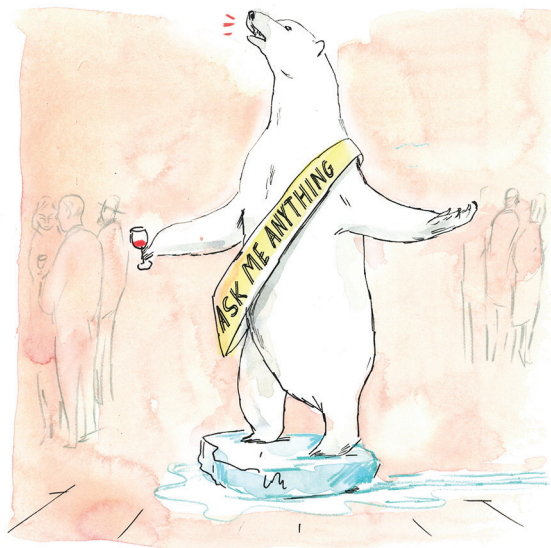
Canada 

Editor's Letter

FOR MANY YEARS, the accepted wisdom for publishing stories about climate change has been: don't say they're about climate change. Guided by experts in newsstand sales and social media, my colleagues and I have filed "business" articles on the increasing difficulty of obtaining home insurance in flood-prone parts of Canada and "society" stories on the rise of "go bags"—a form of apocalypse provisioning. It seems that resistance to confronting environmental problems head-on is rooted in feelings of helplessness—what some people now call "climate fatigue"—possibly dating back to *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson's 1962 warning shot about the ecological crisis.

Things are quickly changing. The 2018 report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change put climate top of mind by revealing that most countries, Canada included, fall far short of meeting recommendations aimed at limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees by 2030. The report rendered immediate an issue that, for many, had remained in the background, like remembering to floss. Some have responded with activism: Swedish teen Greta Thunberg's school strike, for example, has inspired others to stage strikes, walkouts, and demonstrations of their own. More of us are incorporating climate into our daily conversations, especially after extreme weather events, like wildfires in Alberta and British Columbia and Hurricane Dorian, lead to speculation about climate change's intensifying effects. In the past year, at The Walrus, online page views for stories labelled "climate change" have risen 28 percent.

Still, for many of us, an overriding question remains: Now that we've figured out how to talk about climate change, what do we do about it?



For the past few years, The Walrus has published the O'Hagan Essay on Public Affairs—an opportunity for a writer to explore a complex issue of interest to Canadians. This year, we invited Chris Turner, author of *The Patch: The People, Pipelines, and Politics of the Oil Sands* (winner of the 2018 National Business Book Award), to look at the question of climate change nationally and internationally. In "We're Doomed. Now What?" Turner examines the challenges of tackling the crisis within Canada: a federation of provinces, each with its own levels of preparedness and policies (some of which are leading the world).

Other stories in this issue compare short- and long-term thinking about the environment. In her last issue as head of research at The Walrus, associate editor Viviane Fairbank profiles Chris Magwood, a designer who is challenging people in his industry to rethink the environmental impacts of their materials—and the idea of "green building." The story, "Greener and Cleaner," elucidates our tendency to look for solutions in the form of commodities instead of simply reducing our

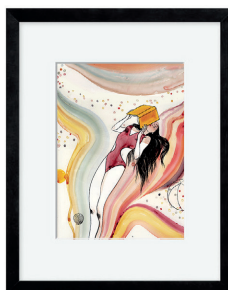
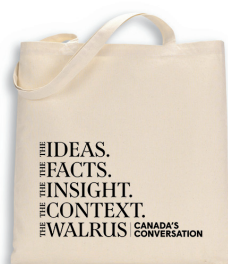
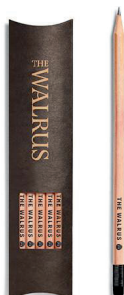
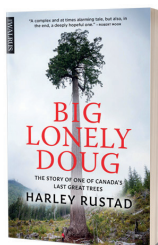
consumption (maybe that's why so many of us own a preponderance of reusable tote bags). "The Great Law of Peace," Julian Brave NoiseCat's story about the Haudenosaunee confederacy's commitment to its 500-year-old constitution, is not specifically about climate, but it makes a related point: in retracing a history of conflict and collaboration, Haudenosaunee stories advise future generations on how to survive cataclysmic events.

I recently asked Catherine McKenna, minister of environment and climate change, what it feels like to work on her file. "It's frustrating," she said, referring to the ongoing politicization of climate change. "But it's just really important [work]." McKenna has faced challenges to the bare facts (People's Party of Canada founder Maxime Bernier denies the urgency of climate change), pushback on policies her government enacted (Ontario premier Doug Ford directed the province's gas stations to display stickers decrying the federal carbon tax), and threats to her own personal safety. Shortly after our interview, it was announced that the minister would be bolstering her security detail.

Climate "shouldn't be a partisan issue," McKenna had told me. Like many complex, multifaceted issues—health care, housing, immigration—the climate crisis challenges us to think collectively. "Climate change is no longer just an environmental issue," the minister said. "It's a health issue, it's an economic issue, it's a national-security issue, it's a social-justice issue." If it has become easier to talk about climate, maybe that is because we no longer see it as an isolated issue. The story of climate has become the story of everything. ■

—Jessica Johnson

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 **CANADA'S
CONVERSATION**

Contributors' Notes

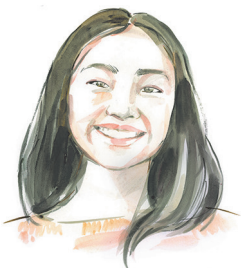


JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT
 “*The Great Law of Peace*,” p. 24

“The story of Indigenous laws and constitutions as powerful governance structures has been overlooked for many years. But the emergence of

storytellers like the CBC’s Connie Walker and Duncan McCue and author Richard Wagamese has helped create a media market for this kind of inquiry. That’s the context that makes reporting a story like this possible.”

Julian Brave NoiseCat is a correspondent for Real America with Jorge Ramos, a contributing editor at Canadian Geographic, and a freelance writer whose work has appeared in the Guardian, The Nation, and The Paris Review.



KATE YOON
 “*Distant Relatives*,” p. 21

“If someone asks me, ‘Where’s home for you?’ the answer gets complicated because I have half my family in Toronto and the other half in Korea.

Part of the reason I wanted to write this essay on how Canada’s immigration policies separate families is that I find it hard to explain where home is. Physically, my home has been an apartment in Toronto. But, emotionally, my home is in Korea. I live in this middle space.”

Kate Yoon is a graduate student at the University of Oxford.



CHRIS TURNER
 “*We’re Doomed. Now What?*” p. 36

“The solutions to climate change don’t just look like stopping something. They look like starting new things. And, speaking from a mental-health point of view, it could be good that,

when the next piece of news about melting ice sheets in Greenland comes along, you can say, ‘That’s terrible, but we are not motionless. There is work being done to tackle climate change.’ We need to be doing more of that work; we need to be doing it faster; and we need to be doing it in more places—but at least there is a place to funnel that energy rather than just expending it in grief for the planet.”

Chris Turner is the author of The Patch: The People, Pipelines, and Politics of the Oil Sands. He is based in Calgary.



ANNE THÉRIAULT
 “*Flight of Imagination*,” p. 66

“I watch a lot of documentaries about plane crashes. I was flying to Paris once, and there was a problem with the in-flight video, which freaked me out. The flight attendant said, ‘It’s okay,

that system has nothing to do with the operation of the plane.’ And I said, ‘Actually, I’ve heard it was because the entertainment system sparked a fire that Swiss Air Flight 111 went down.’ Another time, I had to stop myself from sharing with my seat-mate horrible things I’d read, like, ‘Did you know that gender is the second greatest predictor, after seating arrangement, of who will survive a plane crash?’”

Anne Thériault is a Toronto-based writer whose work has appeared in the Washington Post, Vice, and The Toast.



IAN TEH
 “*China’s New Deserts*,” p. 52

“I find it strange to view landscapes as static. The timeline of how land changes is different from how we humans perceive those changes. The transformation of the Yellow River is not just a product of recent economic

reform. For centuries, the Chinese have tried to engineer the river with dams, dikes, and levees to prevent devastating floods from destroying the towns and cities along its banks. There’s hardly a single part of the surrounding landscape that can be called free from human influence.”

Ian Teh is a photographer based in Kuala Lumpur.

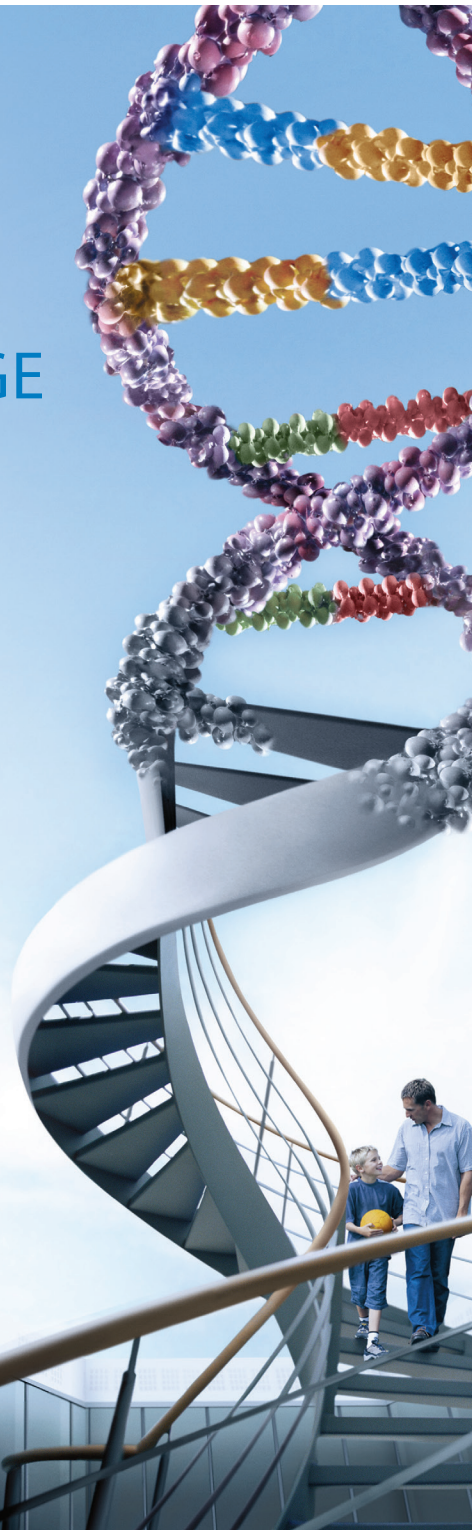


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Letters



REACHING THE STAR

Suzannah Showler's article about Céline Dion and the artists who impersonate her ("Will the Real Céline Dion Please Stand Up?" September) is a heartwarming read. It offers a glimpse into the one-sided relationship between an impersonator and their icon. I work as a drag queen in Montreal, and Dion is revered as a goddess here—virtually every drag queen in the city has at least one Dion act. Though my work as a performer is to create caricatures, I have come to see her as an ordinary person. To create an honest portrait of your favourite celebrity, you have to see the human behind the curtain.

Crystal Slippers/Guy Hermon
Montreal, QC

I've noticed that letting people know something touched you deeply, even if it isn't new or cool, runs the risk of making you seem weird or ridiculous. Liking something with ironic detachment seems safer, even if it removes all joy. But Showler's article reminds us that Céline Dion lives her life with fearless sincerity, which is reflected by the fans who love her. May we all live with the same full-throated passion.

Brigitte Jambresic
Toronto, ON

PERSONAL BUSINESS

In his article about the use of deferred prosecution agreements (DPAs) for companies accused of crimes ("What Do We Do About SNC-Lavalin?" September), Max Fawcett asks whether corporations can be rehabilitated in the same way individuals can be. But corporations are not people, despite having the same rights as people under the law. Humanizing them in this way might make it easier for people to trust in companies while overlooking examples of inhumane corporate behaviour—such as dumping toxins, deadly working conditions, and creating carcinogenic products. DPAs, in this sense,

can be attractive loopholes to big corporations. Our government should prioritize awarding contracts to smaller businesses that are committed to following the law and respecting the people with whom they work. Instead of looking for "human qualities" in corporations, let's protect humans by holding corporations accountable.

Felina Arsenault
Fernie, BC

HISTORICAL CONTEST

In his essay about a controversial new history textbook in Quebec ("Quebec Rewrites Its History," September), Martin Patriquin shows how education can shape children's views of their nation's history. This happens elsewhere too. When I was fourteen years old, in Denmark, I was taught that Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson's 1801 destruction of the Danish fleet in Copenhagen was an unprovoked attack on a neutral country. Later, at a school in the UK, I was taught that it was one of Nelson's most heroic and justified battles. Patriquin is right: the teaching of history is political, and it deserves careful, critical attention.

John Molgaard
St. John's, NL

WELL PLAYED

Thank you for Dimitri Nasrallah's profile of Wajdi Mouawad, the Montreal playwright and director ("Scene Change," September). I work as a translator and began collaborating with Mouawad some fourteen years ago. I regularly read articles about his work, and Nasrallah's essay is the finest I have encountered in English. It captures so much of

Mouawad's complexity and deftly outlines how relentlessly he probes the ways war afflicts people around the world.

Linda Gaboriau
Montreal, QC

TUSK, TUSK

In the September issue, the article "Wrongfully Accused" stated that the University of Victoria gave Roderick MacIsaac his PhD posthumously at the urging of William Warburton. In fact, it was Rebecca Warburton, William's wife, who helped initiate the process. In the October issue, the article "Independent Streak" stated that Stouffville is located northwest of Toronto. In fact, it is northeast of Toronto. The Walrus regrets these errors.

.....
"The time has come," The Walrus said, "to talk of many things." Send us a letter, email (letters@thewalrus.ca), or tweet, or post on our Facebook page. Comments may be published in any medium and edited for length, clarity, and accuracy.

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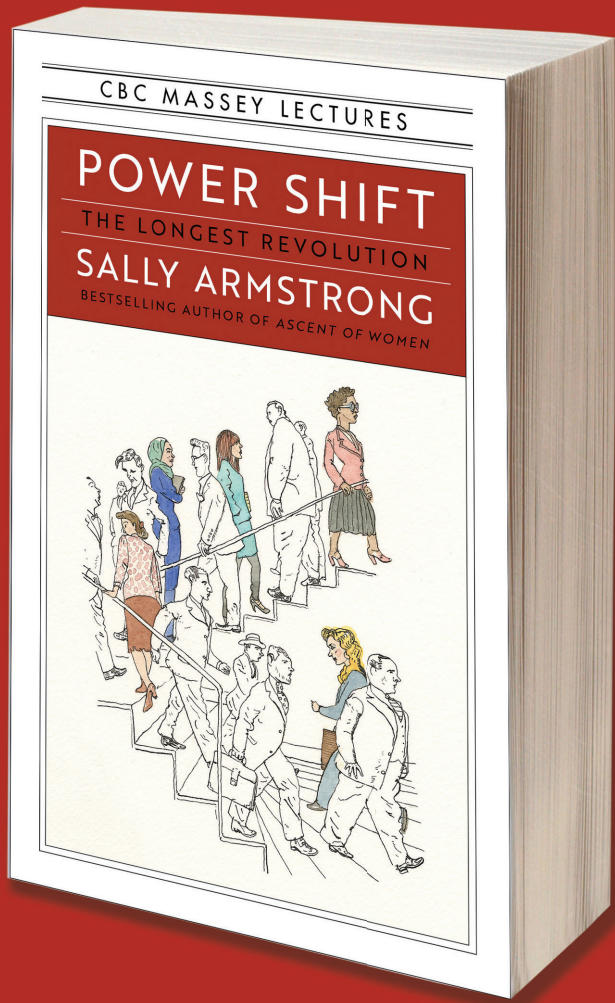
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Ekow Nimako, Building Black: Civilizations. Photo by: Samuel Engelking. LEGO® and the Brick configuration are property of the LEGO Group of Companies which does not sponsor, endorse, or own this exhibition. Caravans of Gold is organized by the Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University. Caravans of Gold has been made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor, as well as by Northwestern University's Buffett Institute for Global Studies. Two anonymous donors made possible the exhibition's travel to the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution. Additional support is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Myers Foundations, the Alumnae of Northwestern University, the Robert Lehman Foundation, the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation, and the Illinois Arts Council Agency.



The 2019 CBC Massey Lectures

Award-winning author, journalist, and human rights activist Sally Armstrong illustrates how the status of the female half of humanity is crucial to our collective surviving and thriving.



Sally Armstrong



Four-time winner of the Amnesty International Canada media award and an Officer of the Order of Canada.

“Armstrong explores the darkest reaches of women’s experience and brings back astonishing news of hope, challenge, and change.”

— Michele Landsberg, author of *Writing the Revolution*

Power Shift will be broadcast on CBC Radio’s *IDEAS* in November



SPORTS

Raptors Revolution

*What the 2019 NBA championship says
about race and belonging*

BY TROY SEBASTIAN / NUPQU ?A-K#AM

IN JUNE, a nation bore down on Nathan Phillips Square under a hanging sun, hundreds of thousands clad in patterns of red, black, and gold. It arrived with babies in mothers' arms, fans cheering beneath concrete arches, steel-drum processions winding through the memory of morning. All the while, police held their positions, thirsty and waiting, their barricades broken and surmounted. The locust of a helicopter rattled overhead; the thunderous flyby of Snowbirds spread awe as necks craned skyward. And, after hours of waiting, the energy of expectation crested, and before us appeared the 2019 NBA Champion Toronto Raptors. We the North had arrived, championship in hand, the stage set for the one person everyone wanted to see: Kawhi Leonard, the king of the north.

The faces of those who celebrated reflected journeys beyond hopes and dreams, beyond polite ex-

pectations. This victory was bigger than one NBA championship: it was the sum of countless journeys from margin to centre, from there to here, and all the sacrifices made in between. Sacrifices of language and land, sacrifices of children and families, sacrifices between generations, trauma handed down like dominion, understanding ceded to security and the promise of a better future. This country was built on the forgetting of the first accord of friendship and the persistent erosion of both sacred knowledge and space—the very disappearance of those who hold such knowledge. The victory of one basketball team cannot fix this. But it can demonstrate what may come next.



I was there when the new nation arrived. It was apparent then as it is now, at the cusp of a new basketball season, what the Raptors' victory meant for this country. We live in a country that does not recognize Indigenous peoples, that routinely others people of colour, and that is marred by anti-immigrant billboards. The nation will not stand for that. It is not bound by the country's old solitudes. It marks a departure from what was there before to what is here today. The outsiders have become insiders. And when the new NBA season begins, on October 22, a championship banner will hang from the rafters of Scotiabank Arena in Toronto. A banner that is a symbol of the nation's rising power.

This nation is not bound to the white-supremacist roots of former prime ministers John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier. It is not simply a new face for the country. This new nation has the power to change the very direction of the country. A little over a year ago, most of the country didn't know much about Kawhi Leonard. Today, he's the one who helped give the country its first Big Four sports championship since Kim Campbell was prime minister. The celebration parade this past summer in Toronto was likely the largest civic celebration in the country's history. Millions were there. There wasn't the typical maple-leaf hoopla, or the laissez-faire furor of July 1, or even the corporate nosedive that accompanies the Olympics. This was authentic. It was a surprise. It had been earned. And this nation poses fundamental challenges to consent and choice: the choice of where this country is going and what it will become.

THE DREAMS of millions in this country have rarely, if ever, hung on the desires of one American, one athlete, one hero. Kawhi Leonard's journey from the periphery to the centre of the national interest is without comparison. Despite his decision, as a free agent this summer, to leave the Raptors after the team's NBA victory, there are children across the nation who worship him. He showed them that the power of a dream, a ball, and a court can achieve the unprecedented. That old orders can be overcome.

Heroes often operate within binaries of opposition: good versus evil, the familiar versus the othered. Sometimes this opposition is oblique; other times it

is violently clear. Authority determines who and what a hero is through means stronger than simple morality and taste. Power gives affection to that which is allowed to be heroic and casts judgment on that which challenges that power. This has been true in this country since Macdonald and Louis Riel. But times are changing—along with buildings, bridges, and memorial statues that honour cruelty. Through the clarity of justice and the erosion of hegemony, heroes of previous generations are giving way to new heroes.

It is a reconciliation of sorts. But one that is slow and winding—a journey weighed down by the heroic binaries composing the country's virtue. Leonard upends the weight of those binaries. For those who still believe in old solitudes, yes, he is still one of *them*: an American, a basketball player, a Black man, an outsider playing an outsider's game—if not in origin, then in perceived culture and verve. But, for a great many more, he is part of a greater *us*: heroes who belong to this new nation, one whose name has yet to be spoken.

That is why Leonard's decision to leave the Raptors, and the intense speculation and hand wringing that preceded this decision, says a lot about the country. It says a lot about those who have choice in the country and those who do not. Many in the country expressed understanding about Leonard's decision to leave Toronto for his home team, the Los Angeles Clippers, to sign a three-year contract reportedly worth \$103 million (US). They contended he had every right to leave. That attitude is reflective of the settler yearning for a homeland—the proverbial “old country” many are desperate to hold on to. The violence of these dreams of home is apparent in the ranks of who is not included. When people talk about the old country, they mean places in Europe, often the British-French axis. When they utter the xenophobic mantra, “Go back to where you came from,” they never mean go back to the old country. They mean another country, another other. The old country does not refer to any home in Asia, Africa, Central or South America. And it certainly does not include Indigenous peoples.

Leonard's decision to leave for America follows a path similar to that of other sports superstars, such as Wayne Gretzky, Vince Carter, and Roberto Alomar: taking all of that talent and heading south. But, as much as the country may lament it, that metric, from here to there, is the foundational direction of the country's economy: logging, mining, the mass extraction of water—this is still largely a staple economy. The question of whether that is good, desirable, or even sustainable is at the heart of many political challenges facing the country. Indeed, the fight over pipelines is really a rehash of the debate over Macdonald's 1878 National Policy—the essence of which continues to hang over our country. All of that is why Leonard's choice to leave the country was so symbolic for many in the nation. It is a choice that my nation has yet to make.

FOR THE past 150 years, my nation, the Ktunaxa Nation, has met a long line of Crown representatives who each display a continually fickle attention toward our apparent best interest. From the first desperate, hungry, and lost representatives of the Crown who crossed the Rockies to our lands to the most recent “sunny ways” delegates, Ktunaxa have had little choice in the relationship. The country wants all and will settle for nothing less. If that means our demise, well, so be it.

At first, the very idea of a country seemed inane. But, as the slow tide of settlers turned from camps to towns, a new and inevitable reality emerged: an inescapable country that would trump our nation at every turn. Our nation was no longer able to live anywhere within Ktunaxa *?amak?is* save for on small reserves established for our polite extirpation. The only choice for our nation was this: whether we would live through the genocide, our minds and bodies warped by those intent on converting, controlling, or condemning us—survival in some regards but not without a continuum of brutal consequences. And now, against a mantle of child rapes, cultural genocide, and old-fashioned racism, we have done the impossible. Our nation survives, in spite of the country.

So when I consider the old country, I think expressly of Ktunaxa *?amak?is*—our territory. This land *is* our home, and we are not going anywhere. We do not have an old country to return to. We have a nation without a country. A nation that is threatened, as we are, denied and despised.

I do not believe in the country. When its anthem played at the end of the Raptors celebration parade in June, I didn't stand. Hu *ñini* Ktunaxa. *I am* Ktunaxa. As Ktunaxa, I do not have the power to choose the country. It has chosen me, chosen Ktunaxa lands, claimed Ktunaxa history, memory, and time as necessary resources to exploit; it is genocide in action. My understanding of the country is forged through long, violent intergenerational conflict. There is no ambiguity. For more than a century, the country has taken everything from Ktunaxa: land, language, children, hope, prosperity. Everything is still being taken from us—by and for a country that barely knows our name.

The emergence of a new nation after the Raptors' win does not represent justice as an inevitable destination. It is simply another path forward—one that may not be mired in the struggle of surviving an ongoing genocide. The nation offers questions about what may come rather than conclusions about what has been. Somewhere in that space, we may find a place to exist.

It is remarkable when a person of colour has the power to command the attention of the country, to have an offer of unprecedented riches, privilege, renown, and record levels of adulation from Danforth to Eskasoni, from Ottawa to Atawapiskat, from Victoria to *?aqam*. But what is even more incredible is to see that offer for all that it is, to see the country for what it represents and for what it is—and be able to reject it altogether. That is what Kawhi Leonard's choice means for the nation: the power to reject the country for something else. In the aftermath of that choice, a new nation awaits. ☉

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TROY SEBASTIAN / NUPQU ?A·KĪAM
 is a Ktunaxa writer whose work has appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *The New Quarterly*, and *Quill & Quire*.



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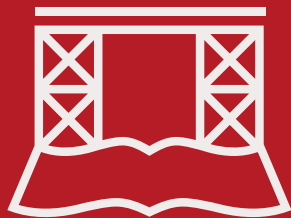
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SOCIETY

Distant Relatives

Canada's immigration policies pull families like mine apart

BY KATE YOON

ILLUSTRATION BY CORNELIA LI



IN MY FAMILY, when I'm at home, dinnertime is a daily ritual. On a Friday in December, the smells of a full Korean dinner fill our cramped apartment in north Toronto. Many storeys below, darkness falls over the last of the rush hour cars. My sister and I move several Tupperware containers of side dishes—kimchi, seaweed salad, pickled cucumbers—onto the table. As we set out the cutlery, my mother's phone rings. It is my father. Her hands filled by a bowl of hot soup, my mother instructs my sister to answer it.

"What did you do today?" my father asks.

"I went to school," says my sister. She recently started university. She tells him that her classes end next week and exams start after that. Her description of university life is matter of fact, contrasting with the detailed accounts of her day she excitedly relates to me every evening. When my sister is done giving her briefing, it is my turn to take the phone.

My parents live in two different countries, but they are not divorced or separated. As we set the dinner table each night in Toronto, my father drives to work in Seoul, South Korea, and calls us on his Bluetooth device. Despite happening daily, these phone conversations don't usually go into great depth or last more than a couple of minutes. They serve more as reminders of our family-ness: the act of checking in is more important than the content of the check-in itself.

In South Korea, long-distance families like ours are called "wild geese families" because one person, usually the father, makes trans-Pacific voyages that echo the seasonal migrations of geese. In the context of the Chinese diaspora, these families are commonly called "astronaut households"; geographer Lan-Hung Nora Chiang describes them as (usually nuclear) families where "one family member returns to East Asia to maximize their earnings while the rest of

the family remain in Canada," usually to improve the children's educational opportunities. In a lot of ways, prolonged separation is easier now than it has ever been, as apps enable free international calling for anyone with an internet connection.

Still, prolonged separation is far from ideal; the best option would be for families to stay together. The Canadian government states that family reunification is a policy priority, but in practice, immigrants still face many obstacles to building new lives in Canada—obstacles that can pull families apart.

IN THE EARLY 2000S, my father, a young, ambitious earth scientist with a master's degree, quit his prestigious job in South Korea to bring his family to Canada. To even qualify for jobs that suited his skill level, he needed Canadian credentials, so he applied to Canadian graduate programs. My parents were disadvantaged in Canada not only because their skills and experience were not recognized but also because of linguistic and cultural barriers and their lack of professional networks. In the end, despite his efforts, my father could not find an adequate job. Having received an attractive offer in South Korea, he returned. Now he advises the government and other clients on environmental policy, renewable energy, and carbon taxes.

As was the case in most Western nations, Canada's immigration policy maintained racial and ethnic restrictions into the 1960s, partly because individual immigration officers could exercise a large degree of discretion about whom to admit. Responding to criticisms of this system, as well as to labour-market demands, the government introduced the points system currently in use. This system assigns values to certain criteria to decide whether prospective immigrants qualify for permanent residence. Immigration is still restrictive but on the grounds of seemingly neutral qualities like education, age, language skills, and employability. After the introduction of the points system, immigrants increasingly came from a wider range of places outside of the previously favoured Western European countries. But, as was

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the case with my family, immigration policies prioritized skills that turned out to be less valuable than Canadian experience.

Experts have spent decades pointing out that employers' preferences for Canadian experience—explicitly stated or not—effectively exclude many people with foreign credentials and work experience. Some immigrants have years of work experience and advanced degrees from their home countries, which count in their favour when they apply to come to Canada. Once they get here, though, it becomes clear that what matters when it comes to getting a job is having worked in Canada already. A report from the Ontario Fairness Commissioner found that, in 2011, internationally educated immigrants were half as likely to be employed in their professions (licensed professions include engineering, nursing, and accounting) as their Canadian-born and -educated peers. While these large discrepancies might be attributable to various factors, it is clear that immigrant professionals struggle to find employment at their skill levels. This mismatch between the points system and employment prospects can be the reason families like mine end up separated. In recent years, the Canadian government has introduced immigration policies to explicitly favour people who already have work experience or job offers in Canada. This meant the government policies took greater consideration of employers' preferences, but these policies continue to put the onus on the immigrant and reinforce the exclusion of diverse backgrounds from the Canadian workforce.

Another cause of family separation is our immigration policy's focus on short-term labour needs. Between 2005 and 2012, the number of temporary foreign workers more than doubled, even as the number of permanent-resident immigrants remained relatively stable. Many of these temporary workers occupy low-wage jobs in sectors such as construction and agriculture and are not formally guaranteed the right to stay in Canada or to reunite with their families. Recent pilot programs allow caregivers to come to Canada with their families, but they still have to meet strict education

and language requirements. Financial burdens pose an even stronger constraint on family life: under conditions of precarious, low-wage work, it is even harder for these workers to fly back home to see their families or even to talk to them regularly.

Regardless of cause, these arrangements inevitably change family dynamics. Jeong-Eun Jeong, a “goose mother” of four in Toronto, has been living apart from her partner for about four years. They had immigrated together, intending to settle in Canada permanently, but her partner could not find a suitable job. In the end, they made the difficult decision to live as a goose family.

Her youngest child was not yet two years old. “There aren't many benefits,” she says about the goose family lifestyle. Aside from the practical difficulties of raising her children alone, Jeong says that she misses spending quality time with her family. “I really envy my neighbours who can go on short camping trips on the weekends,” she says.

DURING ONE of my father's visits, I woke up to the sound of him talking on the phone. He was telling someone how to get into his house in Gunpo, a small city near Seoul: explaining the passcode to the building and where to find his key. Concerned, I rushed out of bed to ask if everything was okay. It turned out that, before leaving, he had asked a coworker to feed his goldfish for him. I forgot about this incident until later that year, when the rest of my family visited him. He gave us a two-minute tour of his small studio, ending in his proud display of the goldfish. “This one's gotten pretty fat,” he said as he reached inside the tank to prod it. It occurred to me only then that, every evening, this is the company he comes home to.

OUR IMMIGRATION system does not have to be this way. Canada can implement policies that enable the recognition of immigrants' skills and qualifications and can encourage professional associations to create similar guidelines. Recognizing that those with families to feed and take care of are less able to go back to

Blessing for Twitter

BY ADAM SOL

Before I am fully a person
 I want to know what great
 horror happened in the night.
 The icon's head
 is too thick for its hopeful wings
 but responds to my thumb
 like a faithful servant of the Eternal.
 Give me insult and dogs,
 give me West Coast results
 and a drunk self-own from B at 3 am.
 Give me the stream of those I admire
 who have been fighting all night
 for truth, and the maniacs who hate
 everything they can't touch.
 Concentrate, NIMBY. Today, do
 some work that is not
 fuelled by rage. But first,
 do some work with rage.
 Just outside, a robin cackles
 its first bad joke of the day.
 Grey unruly dawn begins
 to interfere with the clear
 loud light in my palm.

school or take unpaid internships, we should help immigrants gain experience in Canada. Our policies should also make it easier for immigrants and temporary workers to bring their families with them. Migrant-worker advocacy groups have long been fighting for “status on arrival,” granting permanent residence to migrant workers as soon as they arrive in Canada. More generally, we need an approach to immigration that sees immigrants as humans and neighbours rather than as sources of labour that can move flexibly across borders, untethered to family and community. Families come here for new starts, new opportunities, and new challenges. But without changes to our system, we risk alienating the very people we are encouraging to move here. If one family member ends up returning to their home country, the rest of the family is caught in limbo, unable to be fully present in one place or the other.

A few months ago, my mother travelled to South Korea to visit family. She sent me selfies of her and my father out to dinner. I tried to imagine their conversations but couldn't—for the simple reason that it had been so long since I had heard them talking together. Waiting at the airport in Seoul to fly back to Toronto, my mother called me. “Your grandparents want me to come back to Korea permanently,” she said. Now that my sister is in university, they see my mother’s job as done. My mother carries much of the burden of our uncertainty, as familial and cultural expectations on both sides of the Pacific pull her in different directions. “I want to be with my children, but I’ve got a husband and parents too.” →

KATE YOON is a graduate student at the University of Oxford. She writes about the intersection of politics and philosophy.

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POLITICS

The Great Law of Peace

What we can learn from a 500-year-old Haudenosaunee constitution

BY JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAIA'TANÓ:RON DUMOULIN BUSH

IN EARLY AUGUST 2019, a 500-year-old government convened to discuss its constitution. The gathering was not held in a glittering, white, neo-classical Capitol propped up by columns crowned with Corinthian ornaments. The proceedings did not take place on a hill, or in a city, or within the boundaries of a capital district. The ceremony did not begin with a thunderous, patriotic anthem. The constitution was not read from archival parchment or legislative text. In fact, the constitution was not read at all. The speakers did not stand before a podium in the chambers of Parliament or halls of Congress. They did not prepare soundbites. If you had searched Twitter, you would not have found a single hot take about it. No chanting agitators came to protest. Minutes were not taken. Few beyond the attendees even knew it happened. But what transpired was historic, foreshadowing the return of a good government: an Indigenous government.

On this morning, the Haudenosaunee gathered to recite *Kayanerenkó:wa*, or the Great Law of Peace, an oral constitution that recounts the end of an era of conflict and the founding of their confederacy by the Peacemaker, Deganawida, and his brother, Hiawatha. This was the seventh consecutive year they had gathered for such a recital. They invoked the law in a brown longhouse oriented east to west along Route 207 in Kahnawà:ke—a Mohawk community, home to more than 8,000 people, across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal. On the left side of the longhouse entrance, roughly at the midpoint of the structure, sat three men. One, Robert Brown of the Oneida, spoke *Onayota'á:ka*, the Oneida language. Kanentokon Hemlock was his translator. A third speaker, Karhowane, helped open and close the longhouse with ovations of hospitality, notes about housekeeping, and appeals to ceremonial protocol.

On tables before the men and the listeners lay belts made from wampum, purple and white tubular beads. They conveyed Haudenosaunee stories, teachings, and treaties. Among the belts rested one that I recognized: the Hiawatha belt, a white pine tree at its centre connected, with rows of white, to two white squares on either side. The central tree represents the Tree of Peace and the council fire of the Onondaga nation at

the heart of the confederacy. The four squares symbolize, from right to left and east to west, the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, and Seneca. (In 1722, the Haudenosaunee adopted a sixth nation, the Tuscarora, who were retreating from violent conflict in the south.) At the ends of the tables sat Haudenosaunee feather headdresses known as *gustoweh*.

Pinned on the wall next to the speakers was a flag emblazoned with the head of a warrior encircled by a yellow sun atop a red background—the standard of the Mohawk Warrior Society. After the 1990 Oka Crisis, a confrontation between the Mohawk and the city of Oka that eventually involved the Canadian military, this flag became a symbol of resistance for Indigenous peoples.

Though it was the first day of the ceremony, and many more Haudenosaunee had yet to arrive, the crowd overflowed the wooden benches inside the longhouse. Men and boys, many with long braids or neatly combed hair hanging down their backs, sat attentively, like worshippers at a service. Women and girls, their hair hanging loose or fixed with barrettes beaded with flowers and animals, outnumbered the men in the crowd. The majority there, a local told me, were from Kahnawà:ke, though many had come from across the confederacy. Their licence plates revealed the places

from which they had travelled: Quebec, Ontario, New York, Wisconsin. In keeping with longhouse policy for certain ceremonies, all in attendance were Indigenous. Several burly Mohawk men wearing black shirts with “Security” lettered in yellow on the back watched over the Haudenosaunee, the longhouse, and the parking lot.

In Kahnawà:ke, I hoped to gain insight into what it might take for my own people, the Secwepemc and St'át'imc, to reclaim our nationhood. Against my habit as a journalist, I decided to take no notes and make no recordings. Instead I listened and observed, journaling only at night to respect the Mohawk on whose lands and under whose authority I stayed. Over decades, outside anthropologists have come into the community to extract ceremonies and stories, taking the intellectual property of a people who have lost almost all their physical rights to land—stirring distrust atop pain. Thomas Deer, a volunteer technician in the Mohawk Nation at Kahnawà:ke Longhouse, told me a story about a researcher who attended a community funeral, disrupting the service to interview mourners. Against this history and in accordance with the hosts' wishes, I kept my notebook and recorder tucked in my bag.

By breaking my journalistic routine, I was also engaging in what Kahnawà:ke scholar Audra Simpson, my former professor at Columbia University, has called an “ethnographic refusal.” The governments of outsiders have long used knowledge of Indigenous peoples to fortify their dominance. To control a population, you must know it, often intimately—its government, economy, culture, demographics, political divisions, and so on. If a person wants to practise refusal, fly the Mohawk Warrior flag, and strengthen the Haudenosaunee against intruders, they must break some habits, including the need to google whenever curiosity strikes.

For hundreds of years, the Mohawk have defied the governments superimposed over their own. Since the 1600s, they resisted successive French, Dutch, British, American, and Canadian invasions, often successfully. And when

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the wars ended, they kept fighting. In the early 1900s, a Mohawk ironworker crossed the US–Canada border with his family to live and work in Philadelphia. When the Americans prosecuted him as an “illegal alien,” he insisted that free passage was his birthright as a Haudenosaunee party to the Jay Treaty of 1794. He won the case. Under the authority of that same treaty, my father emigrated to New York, where he met my mother. Without the Haudenosaunee, I probably would not exist. Today, the confederacy issues its own passports. And, most importantly, it insists that it has never ceded sovereignty to Canada, the United States, or any other nation or empire. It remains a distinct and prior government—and an alternative.

Amid intersecting ecological, economic, political, and cultural catastrophes, Indigenous alternatives look increasingly appealing. Against the ecological crisis, the Indigenous suggest we understand land, water, and all living things not as resources, but as relatives. As the gap between rich and poor widens, Indigenous economies foster subsistence, generosity, and redistribution against greed and exploitation. While the hollow promise of party politics turns away millions, far older participatory and consensus-driven systems developed by Indigenous nations feel more personal and fair. And as society splits along racial, religious, gender, class, and cultural lines, many Indigenous communities look comparatively tolerant and inviting. This is especially true for a diverse emergent majority who understand that so-called “democracy” was not built for them in the first place.

Where invaders once burned the longhouse to make way for the marble edifice of white hegemony, it is now possible to imagine the opposite: the return of the Indigenous. Three years ago, more than one million people used Facebook to check in to Standing Rock in solidarity with the campaign against the Dakota Access Pipeline—lending digital support to the rekindled council fires of the Oceti Sakowin. Thousands of British Columbians have turned to First Nations like the Tsleil-Waututh to stop the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion,

which became a flashpoint issue for Justin Trudeau’s Liberal Party ahead of the October election. Through a sustained campaign, Native Hawaiians have recast Mauna Kea as not just a mountain but an ancestor—rebuffing plans to build a massive telescope on this sacred site.

As I sat with the People of the Longhouse, I realized that, for their government to flourish—and for Indigenous governments across the continent to return to their former strength—I would need to do more than practise ethnographic refusal. I would also need to trust. Canada and the United States

“Go back to your people,” said the Peacemaker. “Tell them good news of peace, power, and righteousness has come to your nation.”

are constituted from the death of the Indigenous. To rebuild on a continent where the vast majority come from elsewhere, First Peoples will need the faith of our own and others. Gaining trust from those who can’t imagine the longhouse standing alongside Parliament or Congress, or even from those who understand that their own wealth is derived from generations of plunder, is no small task. Yet the Great Law of Peace holds many lessons about how that trust might be secured: through persuasion, diplomacy, compassion, the occasional bit of cunning, and, maybe, a little magic.

When the invocation to welcome and give thanks was finished, Brown stepped up to the microphone and, in the staccato of Onayota’á:ka—a language of melodic, short, percussive syllables punctuated by sharp consonants and glottal stops—he began to recite.

LONG AGO, in an era of war and bloodshed, a boy was born to a young virgin in Kanienkeh, a Huron-Wendat village near the Bay of Quinte, on the shores of Lake Ontario. Or, at least, that’s how the story begins in *Kayanerenkó:wa*, a legal analysis of the Great Law of Peace written by Six Nations lawyer Kayanesenh Paul Williams and published last year by the University of Manitoba Press. Others, it’s important to note, recall the story a bit differently. Some say, for example, that the boy was Mohawk, born in the Tyendinaga territory, and that later narrators changed the telling to protect his actual birthplace.

Since 2013, the Haudenosaunee have gathered every year to honour these differences and revive the law. In Kahnawà:ke, the People of the Longhouse took nine days this August to recite a version of this elegant constitution in vivid detail—a Haudenosaunee speaker narrating in five- to ten-minute chunks, followed by an English translator. Every morning, attendees gathered for breakfast. We broke for lunch at midday. In the evening, we came back together for supper. Each meal included healthy helpings of corn, squash, beans, berries, pork, bison, tea, juice, coffee, and conversation. We brought and washed our own plates, bowls, mugs, and utensils, to minimize waste. Then we returned to our seats to listen.

As the Haudenosaunee spoke, I followed along with Williams’s book. Later on, I read *Traditional Teachings*, a book published by the North American Indian Travelling College, which also tells the Peacemaker’s story. In Indian country, the People of the Longhouse are revered for their traditional government and steadfast sovereigntist movement, which has fortified their confederacy against hundreds of years of intrusion—and even inspired the US Constitution. I assumed lessons would arrive through an elder’s explication of a clever system or through my own epiphany—like a sort of decolonial algebra problem. But, as I read and listened, I came to understand that, for those who know the language and the law, the beauty—and even the fun—of *Kayanerenkó:wa* is in the telling.

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As I read and as Brown explained, the Creator foretold the boy's birth and name—Deganawida, the Peacemaker—to his mother, Kahetehsuk (She Walks Ahead), in a dream. But the boy's arrival made Kahetehsuk's mother, Kaheto'ktha' (End of the Field), suspicious. The mother and grandmother had chosen to live apart from their people—a safe distance from the scalping and killing. But in this war-torn world, the young mother's pregnancy, absent an obvious father, made Kaheto'ktha' wonder. Had a warrior taken advantage of her daughter in the woods? Had the family been cursed?

When the boy was born, the grandmother took him out on a frozen lake, chopped a hole in the ice, and chucked him in. But when she returned home, she found him nursing in his mother's arms. What power could do that? The next day, she carried the child into the woods, built a roaring fire, and cast him in. But again, when she returned, the babe was at his mother's bosom. This must be the work of a sorcerer, she thought. And so, on the third day, convinced the child was cursed and determined to protect her daughter, she conspired to take a hatchet to the infant. But that night, a spirit came to her and explained the boy's significance. Ashamed, Kaheto'ktha' helped her daughter raise Deganawida.

When the boy became a man, he began to build a canoe from white stone to travel the lakes and rivers of this land, spreading his philosophy of peace, power, and righteousness. When this canoe was complete, he bid his family farewell and paddled in the direction of the sunrise. At the Bay of Quinte, Williams writes, near the place on the shore where the Peacemaker is said to have launched his craft, there is a strip of white rock like the tail of a canoe, which creates eddies in the water.

Across Lake Ontario, the Peacemaker sighted the land of the nations that would become the Haudenosaunee but saw no sign of their villages. These were wicked days of mindless and endless war. The

People of the Longhouse had retreated into fortifications built into wooded hills. As he approached, his white-stone canoe glistened in the sun, reflecting off the water. The spectacle caught the eyes of a group of hunters ashore, who were fleeing an attack. Out of curiosity, they approached the magnificent vessel as it neared land. "Go back to your people," the Peacemaker told the men. "Tell them that good news of peace, power, and righteousness has come to your nation."

Continuing his journey east, toward the sunrise, the Peacemaker came upon



the house of Tsikonsaseh, a witch who lured travellers into her home with the promise of a meal. Over food, she would poison them. But the Peacemaker knew this woman's scheme. Invited inside, he confronted her with the message he had shared with the fearful hunters. "Your words are true," she said, telling him she would accept his message and enforce it. "I vow never to return to my evil practices of bringing harm to humans who come to my lodge." As the first to accept the Peacemaker's law, the woman and the clan mothers were given the power to select chiefs. The Peacemaker continued on his journey.

As Brown spoke, I saw one Mohawk woman, undoubtedly familiar with the story, turn to her friend. "Has he made it to our nation yet?" she asked. "Not yet," the friend whispered back.

Brown continued. In the land of the Mohawk, the Peacemaker came upon the house of Tekarihoken, who boiled human prey in a large kettle. The Peacemaker climbed onto the roof of the cannibal's home and waited. When Tekarihoken arrived, a corpse slung over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, Deganawida peered through the smoke hole of the lodge. Inside, as Tekarihoken bent over his kettle to prepare his meal, he saw the reflection of the Peacemaker. Believing the face was his own, Tekarihoken had a moment of clarity. How could a man so

obviously good continue to inflict such wrong? The cannibal carried the gruesome contents of his kettle out of the lodge, dug a hole, and buried it. When he returned, the Peacemaker approached. "I am the Peacemaker," he said. "I am the one who has caused this change to take place in your mind. I will bring to you what the Creator wishes you to eat." The Peacemaker left and, in short order, returned with a freshly killed deer. That night, the two ate venison. Tekarihoken accepted the Peacemaker's law, becoming the first chief of the Mohawk.

Continuing on, the Peacemaker built a fire outside a Mohawk village to signal that he came in peace. The Mohawk, weary from years of conflict, approached with caution. They were surprised to find that the man greeting them had no weapons. They received his word. But how could they know it was true? If this was a great man—a messenger of Creator, no less—surely he could do great things. They instructed the Peacemaker to climb to the top of a tree overlooking a waterfall. With him on top, they said they would cut it down and that, if he lived, they would accept his law. When they sent Deganawida cascading into the rapids below, he did not emerge from the water. Disappointed, the Mohawk returned to work.

But the next day, at sunrise, children saw a thin trail of smoke rising across

the cornfields. Racing toward it, they came upon the Peacemaker sitting beside his fire. The Mohawk brought the man into council. “Let us take hold of the good news of Peace and Power,” the Peacemaker is remembered to have said. The Mohawk became the first nation to accept Kayanerenkó:wa.

The story of the Great Law continues to the south, among the Onondaga, where, at the same time, another man, Hiawatha, was delivering a similar message of unity. But, unlike Degana-wida’s, his wisdom fell on deaf ears, for his people lived in fear. The Onondaga suffered under the cruelty of a cunning sorcerer named Thadodaho—a man so evil that he had seven crooks in his body and snakes for hair. Like Tekarihoken, Thadodaho had an appetite for human flesh. He terrorized the Onondaga, who followed his every word, afraid that he might use his powers against them if they disobeyed. Today, we would call Thadodaho a tyrant or, perhaps, a fascist.

Hiawatha resolved to change Thadodaho’s mind. With his Onondaga brethren, Hiawatha twice tried and twice failed to

reach Thadodaho, who used his powers to trick and kill Hiawatha’s party. Demoralized, the Onondaga returned home. Soon more misfortune befell Hiawatha. One by one, his seven daughters fell ill and died. Stricken with grief, Hiawatha wandered, looking for someone or something to console him. On the fifth day of his lament, Hiawatha came upon a pond where a flock of ducks rested together in the water.

“If I am to be a leader among men, I would like to discover my powers,” Hiawatha said. “All you ducks floating in the water, lift up the water and allow me to cross!” Amazingly, the ducks took off, lifting the water as they flew. Hiawatha walked across the dry bottom of the pond. The empty purple-and-white shells of freshwater clams underfoot caught his eye. These he collected and fashioned into beads: wampum.

On the seventh day of his lament, in the land of the Oneida, Hiawatha found an empty hut in which to rest. Eventually a runner arrived with instructions for Hiawatha to come to the land of the Mohawk and meet the messenger of peace

from the north, Degana-wida. The Oneida sent five men to escort Hiawatha on his journey east. On the fifth night, they arrived outside the village where the Peacemaker resided. The Mohawk greeted their visitors from afar and escorted Hiawatha to the Peacemaker’s lodge. From their first meeting, many say the Peacemaker addressed Hiawatha as “my younger brother.” Recognizing the pain of the Onondaga man’s loss, Degana-wida asked his brother for the shells he had collected. He performed the first ceremony of condolence. When the Peacemaker had wiped the Onondaga man’s tears and set his mind at ease, he called a council to unite a league of nations.

First, the Peacemaker and his council sent a message to the Oneida to consider confederation. A year later, the Oneida sent word that they would join. Then the Peacemaker sent runners to the Onondaga and the Cayuga. They, too, took a year to mull the decision before both deciding to commit. Then the Peacemaker sent word to the Seneca, a fierce people who were greatly divided on the matter, arriving in a deadlock each

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time they gathered in council. Recognizing the ferociousness of their warriors, the Peacemaker bestowed upon the Seneca the responsibility of protection. A threat was transformed into a strength. A number of years after the Peacemaker wiped Hiawatha's tears, the four nations of the confederacy became five.

But there was one last order of business to which the young league needed to attend before they could have peace: Thadodaho. Before they set out on their last campaign to pacify the tyrant, the Peacemaker taught the Haudenosaunee the hymn of peace. As they came to Thadodaho's lodge, they sang this song. The Peacemaker first directed two men to approach the sorcerer's home singing the hymn, but each lost the tune and turned back. The Peacemaker then took the lead, walking right up to the door of Thadodaho's house, where the tyrant was waiting. When the Peacemaker finished, he laid his hands on the man to let him feel the power he possessed. Thadodaho's seven crooked parts straightened and the snakes in his hair retreated. In an act of diplomacy and political savvy,

Deganawida made Thadodaho the highest-ranking chief of the Haudenosaunee. With the powerful man appeased and restored to reason—like Hiawatha, Tekarihoken, and Tsikonsaseh before him—the Great Peace could begin.

With the five original nations of the Haudenosaunee—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca—of one mind, the Peacemaker called a constitutional convention over which he and Hiawatha would preside. With the nations assembled, the Peacemaker addressed the People of the Longhouse. "Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great Peace: one to the north, one to the east, one to the south, and one to the west," he told them. "The name of these roots is the Great White Roots, and their nature is Peace and Strength."

The clan mothers would steward the fertile lands and select the leaders, the Peacemaker instructed. The chiefs, whom the women elected, would wear the antlers of the deer on their head-dresses, because it was the deer that fed the people and gave them strength, like it had with Tekarihoken. Each chief

had his own role. They were told to consider the impact of all their decisions for seven future generations. And these decisions were to be made by consensus. The titles of chiefs would be held by clans in perpetuity—and could be taken away by the clan mother. Orators illustrated each of these laws with the help of the many belts and sacred items laid before the People of the Longhouse in Kahnawà:ke.

In line with the Peacemaker's values, the chiefs were to be selected from reasonable men who preferred words to war clubs. Citizens and nations were free to leave the league—and would, throughout its history—but were always welcome back. And, no matter where the Haudenosaunee went, as they travelled the continent over the centuries, they were always part of this confederation. The final teaching spoken at Kahnawà:ke was that of respect: for people, home, and property—a check on the power of the leaders and the longhouse. This, and more, would be the law of the land. Hiawatha and all in attendance agreed. Through the act of recitation, their descendants gave their consent.

AN EXTRAORDINARY AND INSPIRING MEMOIR

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At night, in the white tent outside the longhouse, we danced. Teenage boys and girls took the lead, coiling around the floor counter-clockwise: shuffling, twirling, and jumping to the rhythm of songs that referenced themes from Haudenosaunee creation. Some of the harmonies were call and response. Others were led by a group of young men at the centre of the floor, playing a small drum, shaking rattles, or beating sticks against the bench. Little kids in diapers, with messy hair and dirt caked onto their arms and legs, watched big kids singing at the tops of their lungs and bouncing to the rhythm. Moms, aunties, and grandmas kept their eyes on the little kids. Young men kept their eyes on young women, and vice versa. Boys played catch with their lacrosse sticks until it was too dark to see the ball. Then they came in and danced too—outnumbered by the girls. We all swatted away at squadrons of mosquitoes.

On the sixth and final night of social dancing, I got pulled onto the floor and did my best to stomp and slide like the Haudenosaunee, following the young feet ahead of mine.

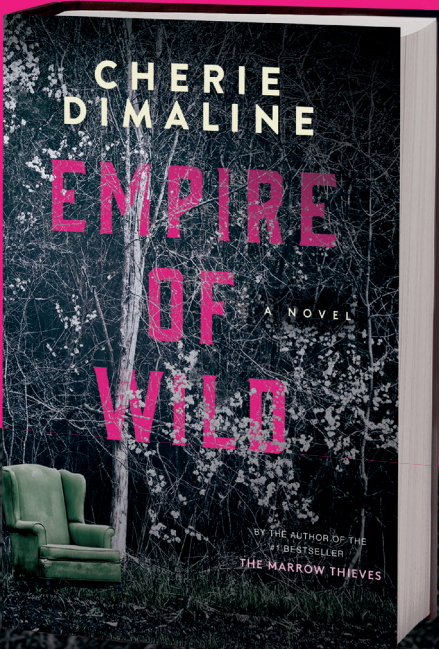
THE SAME WEEK Six Nations gathered in Kahnawà:ke, the United Nations released a report foretelling a hotter future, when the risk of conflicts over lands and resources will increase. Apocalypse, which Indigenous peoples know intimately, now appears potentially universal. Surviving impending end times has become the most pressing concern of our era. As a consequence, Indigenous peoples—long marginalized and forgotten—are emerging as some of the most interesting characters of a global drama. These days, the Mohawk Warrior Society flag is a common sight at protests, marches, and encampments across the continent. With the climate brewing a civilizational reckoning, the resilience and resurgence of First Peoples is a reassuring parable. Our comeback shows that it is possible to survive, and even thrive, in the wake of Armageddon.

Unlike the US Constitution, the British North America Act, or any other artifact of colonial modernity, the Great Law, and the belts resting in the Kahnawà:ke Longhouse that memorialize it, has already

survived an earth-shattering reckoning—one that continues today. Not long after the arrival of Europeans, the Haudenosaunee were struck by smallpox. It began with a burning fever that became a rash that swelled with pus. The pox burst under the agonized itching of the afflicted, scabbing over and leaving hideous scars on those it did not kill. Limbs made for affection—hands, mouths, arms—became conduits of invisible contagion. As the epidemics spread, matrilineal lines died out—infants, elders, and pregnant women. The People of the Longhouse dispersed into smaller villages, often abandoning multifamily longhouses for log cabins and bark homes. They were “melting away rapidly,” remarked the Dutchman Jasper Danckaerts in 1680. “I have heard tell...that there is now not one-tenth part of the Indians there once were.”

Conflict with neighbours, Indigenous and foreign, soon followed as the Haudenosaunee wrestled for control over the beaver and over the guns and military power the critter’s fur purchased. The American Revolution helped to divide the

FROM THE AUTHOR OF
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longhouse, with the Oneida and Tuscarora fighting alongside the rebels, while the Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca allied with the Crown. Eventually, the Haudenosaunee fled north, taking their council fire with them. After the war, the confederacy’s leaders signed the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784 and then the Treaty of Canandaigua in 1794, relinquishing land to the United States. Speculators swindled away much of the rest of the confederacy’s territory. The War of 1812 once again divided the Haudenosaunee. But as in the days of Degana-wida and Hiawatha, the Great Law and the rite of condolence enabled enemies on the battlefield to become brothers at peace in the longhouse.

In 1831, the Mohawk Institute, the first residential school in Canada, opened in Brantford, Ontario. Children from the Six Nations of the Grand River were taken there. In the decades that followed, similar schools plucked Haudenosaunee kids out of communities in both Canada and the United States. Policies designed to further assimilate Haudenosaunee people and then terminate

Haudenosaunee sovereignty soon followed. The Canadian Indian Act of 1876 and its subsequent revisions stipulated that Native women who married white men and Native men who could read, vote, or pay taxes were, legally speaking, no longer Indians. In the 1950s, the Canadian government dug the St. Lawrence Seaway straight through the Kahnawà:ke community. The Mohawk still remember how they could once cast fishing lines out of their backyards and into the river. Battered by disease, war, theft, abuse, and racism—genocide across generations—the Haudenosaunee and their Great Law, however, endure. With each recitation, the roots of their tree spread and deepen.

In an era of tumultuous change and conflict, we may need more visionaries like Degana-wida and Hiawatha. We will probably have to organize communities and arrange unlikely alliances, as the Peacemaker did, through words brimming with ideals and decisions executed with tact. But to survive the next apocalypse, as the Haudenosaunee survived the last, we will need a common

narrative—perhaps even a constitution and government—like the Great Law. This, more than anything else, can steel people against the abyss.

To close the longhouse, two Kahnawà:ke women spoke on behalf of their nation, presenting baskets full of gifts to the cooks and speakers, which were exchanged over hugs between attendees lined up out the door to show their appreciation—as the people must have done when they first established this confederacy so many generations ago. Then Karhowane stood a final time and offered closing words, turning to address all the people and nations assembled in the longhouse. After one last hearty lunch, the Haudenosaunee hugged friends and relatives from across their confederacy. Bellies full and minds mulling the teachings of the Peacemaker, they got in their cars and began the long drive home. 🚗

JULIAN BRAVE NOISECAT is a correspondent for *Real America with Jorge Ramos* and a contributing editor at *Canadian Geographic*.

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Creating an Inclusive Workplace: How TD Is Advancing Careers

Norie Campbell has quite the role. As Group Head of Customer and Colleague Experience at TD Bank, she is also Chair of its Inclusion and Diversity Leadership Council. For an organization that's been leading the way on diversity and inclusion for over fifteen years, it's an extensive portfolio.

Through "The Ready Commitment," TD's global corporate citizenship platform, the bank recently supported the creation of a TD Chair on Disability and Inclusion at The Walrus. Sarah Trick, the inaugural appointee, is assisting

The Walrus in exploring multiple issues related to disability and inclusion.

Campbell and Trick recently met to discuss TD's work in the area of People with Disabilities (PWD). Given that they are based in Toronto and Ottawa respectively, the pair spoke via video chat, with Norie dialing in from TD's Assistive Technologies (AT) Lab in Toronto.

Sarah: Diversity and inclusion appear to be intrinsic elements of the culture at TD. Can you give us some background on that?

Norie: While TD is well known for its long-standing commitment to the LGBTQ2+ community—we were the first major bank in Canada to be the presenting sponsor for a Pride festival, the first Canadian financial institution to profile same-sex couples in mainstream advertising, and the first bank in Canada to introduce same-sex spousal benefits in 1994—the bank's inclusion and diversity efforts span many other areas.

People with Disabilities (PWD) has been a strategic focus for us for over a decade, with considerable progress being made to reduce stigma, build targeted recruitment programs, and put in place policies and processes to support and advance the careers of colleagues with disabilities. We employ over 5,000 colleagues who have self-disclosed a disability.

Sarah: How does your commitment come to life for employees who identify as having a disability?

Trailblazers in banking

TD Bank continues to push new boundaries



Since its creation in 2006, the AT Team has deployed almost 10,000 pieces of technology to enable colleagues to do their jobs more effectively.

7.9%

The percentage of TD colleagues who self-identify as having a disability was 7.9 in Q3 of 2019.

PHOTOS: Margaret Mulligan (Norie Campbell), Rémi Thériault (Sarah Trick)

Norie: We have a dedicated team in place to source and attract talent from our diverse communities—including PWD.

This team is aligned with an enterprise-wide talent acquisition strategy focused on mitigating bias in both talent review and new hiring practices.

Attracting and developing individuals with unique and varied abilities, experiences, and perspectives; focusing on their contributions and engagement; and harnessing their innovative thinking will be fundamental to our continued success.

It really matters that the experience of our employees in the workplace matches the promises made during the recruitment phase.

We have a Workplace Accommodation Program in place to meet the employment needs of people with disabilities.

We work hard on helping colleagues feel comfortable and confident coming forward to highlight the need to have something changed to make the workplace work better for them. Due to these efforts, our Workplace Accommodation Program continues to manage an increased number of requests year over year—with over 2,700 requests in 2018 alone.

Sarah: Are there any TD accomplishments in the PWD space that you're particularly proud of?

Norie: We have a lot to be proud of at TD.

But if I had to identify one accomplishment, it would be the Assistive Technologies (AT) Lab that I'm speaking to you from today.

The AT Lab is the only one of its kind that I know of at any financial institution in Canada. It's a jewel for the bank, and the work that the team does here makes

us all very proud. The team researches, develops, and tests the latest in assistive technologies to provide employees access to innovative and useful tools.

Anyone can come in, and it's fast and easy to get what you need. It's approachable and simple, making sure people are getting the help they need to be as engaged and productive in the workplace as possible.

Sarah: Given that you're a people business, can you describe some of the ways that your efforts in the PWD space impact your customers and the communities that you serve?

Norie: The employee inclusion strategy impacts the customer experience as well. The two are inextricably linked. We've made a lot of progress, but there's a lot of progress still to make.

In addition to building accessibility into new projects and premises, some of the ways TD is providing accessibility for customers include having American Sign Language (ASL) available on all in-branch tablets in Canada, offering the deaf and hard of hearing community greater flexibility for banking, as well as the opportunity to express themselves more fully and easily. All our ATMs across Canada are accessible, with design features such as lower screens, buttons, and partial shelves for wheelchair accessibility and an audio capability that offers customers the option to be guided through their transaction in English or French. An accessibility icon at the bottom of the ATM screen reduces reach challenges, giving customers the choice of using the touchscreen or the keypad to complete their transaction.

We're dedicated to continuing to innovate while maintaining what is core to the banking relationship—customers' trust and privacy. Accessibility benefits go beyond an individual customer or colleague experience—they reinforce an inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Sarah: You've spoken a lot about inclusion. In your opinion, what's the key difference between diversity and inclusion?

Norie: In recent years, we expanded our strategy from diversity to add inclusion—a substantial change.

Inclusion opens up the dialogue from a focus on what the diverse person needs to do to become successful at TD to a focus on what we can *all* do—as leaders and colleagues—to create a workplace where people are able to reach their full potential.

We are removing barriers and enabling colleagues to develop meaningful careers at the bank. Our goal is to be an inclusive employer, one that reflects our society, including being an employer of choice for people with disabilities.

Norie Campbell is Group Head, Customer and Colleague Experience, TD Bank Group, and leads the teams responsible for Human Resources, Marketing, Corporate and Public Affairs, and Enterprise Projects.

Previously a freelance journalist, **Sarah Trick** is the TD Chair on Disability and Inclusion at The Walrus, where she covers disability, politics, and other issues.

87%

87 percent of TD colleagues who identify as having a disability have an invisible disability.



TD is currently the only financial institution with a dedicated Sign Language Interpreter (SLI) on staff to support colleagues.

2,763

TD's Workplace Accommodation Program continues to manage an increased number of employee requests; 2,763 cases in 2018, 16% more than 2017



THE O'HAGAN ESSAY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

We're Doomed. Now What?

An optimist's guide to the climate crisis

BY CHRIS TURNER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL KIM



FATIH BIROL'S diagnosis was grim. On April 9, the executive director of the International Energy Agency took the stage at a packed conference hall in Berlin. The occasion for the speech was the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue (BETD), an annual event hosted by the German government to assess the ongoing transformation of the global energy sector. Birol conceded that renewable energy was getting cheaper by the day, and his research showed that its use was expanding as never before. But, he warned, renewables weren't being built fast enough to keep pace with CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels, which had reached a historic high in 2018. "There is a growing disconnect," Birol said, "between political statements, targets, and what is happening in real life."

That disconnect ran like an electric current through the conference, buzzing in the subtext of every pronouncement and lighting up every networking lunch. The BETD attracts a wide range of energy- and climate-policy wonks—including fifty ministers and state secretaries from around the world—and no one involved in such work in 2019 could be unaware of the mounting climate chaos. Only months earlier, in late 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the committee charged with providing governments with scientific information about climate change, issued a special report on the environmental and socioeconomic consequences of global warming proceeding past 1.5 degrees. Breaking with the restraint that often characterizes scientific writing, the report baldly asserted that, without "rapid and far-reaching transitions" in, among other things, energy and industrial systems, a cascading array of disasters awaited that would make the current state of affairs—record-breaking heat across Europe, water-scarce Indian cities, the apocalyptic cataclysm of wildfires in California and western Canada—seem like a tepid prelude. Humanity was running out of time to act.

The bluntness worked. "Final Call to Save the World from 'Climate Catastrophe,'" read a representative news headline. Activists and pundits the world over invoked variations on the phrase "only

twelve years to save the planet"—in the worst-case scenario, the IPCC report explained, we will hit 1.5 degrees as soon as 2030—and the *Guardian* issued a directive urging reporters to use terms like "climate emergency" instead of "climate change." A wave of protests against climate inaction spread worldwide, led by Britain's Extinction Rebellion movement and by Swedish teen Greta Thunberg and the student strikers she inspired. The general public was coming awake as never before, urging governments to do more, faster, *now*.

No one in attendance at the BETD conference questioned the science driving this call to action, but many of us were also intimately familiar with the limits on the pace of change. Those limits are often cast by climate activists as failures of leadership and political will. The crisis, however, is well beyond the reach of any single conference hall full of diligent technocrats. It is a crisis of such scope and complexity that it can't be fully addressed by elected policy makers beholden to the whims of voters. Yet this continues to be our preferred collective response: we call on politicians to assemble institutional tools as near as they can muster to the planetary scale of the calamity. Since the mid-1990s, the face of this approach has been a series of summits convened by the UN, which have led to two landmark climate agreements—the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2016 Paris

agreement. The late German politician Hermann Scheer, who guided his country's policy as it became the first major industrial economy to commit to renewable energy as the primary power source of its future, characterized this morass of protocols, bans, targets, and limits as the "burden-sharing bazaar"—a place where the world's ruling elites and industrial titans meet to decide who should be allowed to do the least to reduce emissions.

None of the most important climate-protecting achievements of the last twenty years have come about in response to pledges that have emerged from this bazaar. China isn't even a signatory to Kyoto, and it is the world leader in clean-energy and electric-vehicle investment. Similarly, the achievements that define the next twenty years likely won't be charted by bureaucrats counting emissions against UN targets. That's because climate change is not an "environmental issue" in the sense that term has come to mean. It is not a discrete ecological phenomenon that can be contained by symbolic declarations, nonbinding agreements, top-down regulations, and hair-shirted personal sacrifice—which, taken together, deliver maximum pain for far too little gain. Climate change is rather, at its core, about life's most basic necessity: energy.

Changing how we make and use energy—everywhere, all at once, on the fly—represents a shift in daily life more dramatic than anything humanity has ever attempted. No two nations (indeed, no two provinces in Canada) govern energy exactly the same way. The global energy transition now underway will require more than setting emissions targets and developing plans to put those targets within reach. It will require technological innovations and marketplace incentives at a scale and pace capable of reinventing the industrial basis of our civilization. Instead of allowing our hopes to rise and fall with each new round of climate talks and policy proposals, we would do better to pay more attention to the ongoing progress toward building the industrial base of a new, low-carbon economy.

That progress has been spectacular. For example, there are now cheap solar panels ready for installation the world over because the German government heaped generous subsidies on the solar industry to make it happen. This breakthrough joined an expansive kit of climate-fixing tools: wind turbines from Denmark and Spain, electric vehicles financed by Chinese bureaucrats and a Silicon Valley billionaire alike, and green-building designs drawing on expertise from around the world.

Canada has also played a role—one that could come to be seen as pivotal. For the last three years, the federal government has led a push to implement a price on carbon nationwide, imposing a federal carbon tax on provinces unwilling to bring in their own. This serves as the centrepiece of a broader package of incentives and regulations, many of which have been gathered under the banner of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. The framework, launched in 2016, coordinates the climate action of every province and territory except Saskatchewan (which never signed). It includes a nationwide phase-out of coal-fired power plants and more than \$80 billion in new federal investments in green infrastructure and clean technology. The political will behind this shift remains precarious, and Canada is, at present, on course to fall short of its Paris emissions-reduction targets. Still, Canada has begun to put in place a model of how an oil-producing, resource-driven economy can pivot away from the carbon-intensive status quo—difficult as this might be to discern amid our constant political brawls over pipelines.

Listening to Birol speak in April, I was not demoralized by our collective failure on the emissions front. There was no escaping the fact that the climate crisis was already an everyday reality that would get worse before it got better, but I felt a unique strain of inspiration I've come to associate with such discussions—a quiet, resolute, miles-to-go-before-we-sleep optimism. If the global transition to a low-carbon economy was not yet moving fast enough, it was already moving faster than virtually anyone had

predicted. In the long run, I expect it to win the race against catastrophe. I'd like to tell you why.

FOR NEARLY as long as we've been grappling with the climate crisis on an international scale—roughly the past quarter century—there has been a parallel hunt for the right metaphor to describe the scope of the challenge. Solving climate change has been likened to the US civil rights movement, the global crusade to end slavery, and the mission to the moon.

Maybe the most common and compelling framing is the call for a return to a war footing. The climate crisis, the argument goes, is as great and at least as urgent a threat to civilization as the Second World War. So then: What if the world's great powers were to switch their entire industrial might to solving it as fast as possible—retooling factories for green power and clean technology; deploying a global allied army of citizens to install solar panels and erect wind turbines; freeing up vast pools of capital to build energy storage facilities, electric-vehicle charging stations, commuter trains, bicycle lanes, and hyperefficient everything? If we have only eleven years left, and if we have the tools (and the best evidence suggests we mostly do), then why pursue anything less than total war on the climate crisis?

Stating a goal, however, is not at all the same as tabling a plan to achieve it. What levers of power would enable such a massive, coordinated, sustained effort? The BETD is as near a gathering of the war economy's would-be planners as exists anywhere, and I tried to imagine a war footing emerging from such a meeting. What would the precipitating event look like? What climatic invasion of Poland or ecological Pearl Harbor—greater than the wildfires, floods, droughts, and hurricanes already ravaging swaths of the planet—would compel everyone in Berlin and beyond to abandon all vested interests and fossil-fuelled prosperity to join the allied cause? Fourteen years after Hurricane Katrina turned nearly half of America's Gulf Coast into a livestreaming dystopian movie about climate refugees,

I find myself deeply skeptical that some incontrovertible inflection point is about to arrive.

The war-footing metaphor stumbles on its understanding of the kind of problem climate change really is. A war, after all, implies an enemy. Whom are we trying to defeat? There have been valiant and sometimes useful attempts to identify adversaries. From the earliest days, fossil-fuel companies have been singled out for propping up junk science, lobbying politicians, and burying good climate science in a fog of misinformation—all to sow doubt in the minds of the public. In some climate-activist circles of late, a meme has emerged: "Just 100 companies are responsible for more than 70 percent of the world's emissions." The idea's origin, near as I can tell, is a 2017 report by a British environmental group called the Carbon Disclosure Project. Their data seems to support this claim—since 1988, the majority of the world's industrial greenhouse-gas emissions have begun their atmospheric journey in the activities of the 100 companies and state entities on the list, which is mostly a roll call of the world's largest fossil-fuel producers, from oil majors like ExxonMobil and Saudi Aramco to coal-industry stalwarts such as Rio Tinto and Peabody Energy. This would seem to be the face of the enemy—and a force small enough to be rounded up, disarmed, and defeated.

The 100-companies meme, however, elides the most important piece of information about the problem: the customers and users of the fuels produced by those 100 companies constitute virtually all of humanity. More than 80 percent of all the world's energy, at last count, was still derived from fossil fuels. At the very top of the Carbon Disclosure Project's list, for example, is "China (coal)"—as in the world's most populous country and its primary source of electricity. Even if China could be persuaded to sign an immediate ban on coal use, there's no readily available substitute in the same way other chemicals were available in the wake of the 1987 Montreal Protocol banning chlorofluorocarbons (the class of chemicals responsible for damaging

the Earth's ozone layer). China is industrializing rapidly while also positioning itself to lead the next wave of tech and manufacturing; coal remains the cheap way to power that shift.

The 100-companies meme, in other words, points to the crux of the climate-change dilemma—its maddening complexity and resistance to fast, decisive solutions across a single negotiating table. As George Marshall, a British climate-communications expert, once put it, climate change “suffers from the fact that there is no clear enemy with the intention to cause us harm. In fact, if anyone is responsible, it is ourselves. And that generates another level of anxiety and moral challenge for us that makes us want to push this issue even farther away, into the far distance, and not to deal with it.”

Another common theme in climate activism is a sort of anguished disbelief. Knowing what we do about the crisis, how can so many of us simply carry on as before? One way to begin to answer that is to consider what University of Toronto political philosopher Joseph Heath calls “Hobbes’s difficult idea” (a reference to seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes). Heath teaches at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and has spent years studying the philosophy and ethics of public policy—particularly climate policy. How is it, Heath asked in a response to Naomi Klein’s 2014 book about climate change and capitalism, *This Changes Everything*, that we can find ourselves acting in a way that has foreseeably disastrous consequences yet fail to change our behaviour? “Hobbes’s answer,” Heath wrote, “was that, when we do so, it is because we, collectively, have an interest in changing our behaviour, and yet no single one of us, taken individually, has an incentive to change his or her own behaviour.”

Put another way, all of humanity might have an existential interest in shrinking

emissions to zero tomorrow, but you and I have errands to run today, and the tank’s already full of gas. All of us, Heath argues, care just a little more about ourselves than about other people. There is a name for this kind of dilemma: a collective-action problem.

Collective-action problems are not defeated by barrages of climate data or harrowing catalogues of ecological horror or even by protests against a particular pipeline project. No tally of voluntary individual decisions to forgo air travel or quit eating meat or bike to work will



change the emissions math sufficiently. There are even reasons to question the utility of the claim that only twelve years (eleven, now) remain—the most widely cited takeaway from the IPCC’s alarm-ringing 2018 report. “Please stop saying something globally bad is going to happen in 2030,” wrote climate scientist Myles Allen of Oxford University, one of the lead authors of the report, in an article addressing climate campaigners. “Bad stuff is already happening and every half a degree of warming matters, but the IPCC does not draw a ‘planetary boundary’ at 1.5°C beyond which lie climate dragons.”

The larger problem with the twelve-years-left rhetoric is that it takes our present moment as its starting point, equating our inability to reduce overall

global emissions with a failure to take any meaningful action at all. This assessment negates the substantial work undertaken over the past two decades to build the industrial infrastructure required to replace the fossil-fuelled system—a Herculean effort triggered less by conservation campaigns and regulatory measures than by government-spurred market forces and near-term incentives. The Germans saw opportunities to reboot the manufacturing sector in former East Germany and reduce their dependence on Russian fossil fuels. The Danes had been improving wind-turbine technology since the oil crises of the 1970s. China, striving to become the global industrial powerhouse of the twenty-first century, saw more opportunity in churning out solar panels and electric buses than in making gas furnaces and internal-combustion engines. This side of the climate equation is less about stopping harmful activities and more about technological innovation and inducements to invest in beneficial work.

If we focus on doing the right thing, how might we change those incentives? In fact, we’ve already begun to do so. If you want to change collective behaviour in a hurry, few incentives are as effective as putting a price on offending activities. Canada’s array of carbon-pricing regimes is intended to do just that—rewarding energy sources that emit fewer greenhouse gases by making carbon-intensive products and services more expensive.

Until recently, this was not a particularly controversial idea. Liberal leader Stéphane Dion may have been pilloried by political opponents for backing a straight-up carbon tax in his 2008 Green Shift plan, but even the Conservative climate package of the day reflected the wisdom of putting a price on carbon pollution—Stephen Harper’s Turning the Corner plan committed his government to “establishing a market price for

carbon.” It was shelved, however, and the idea of carbon pricing has become a political cudgel for many conservative politicians.

Today, when we talk about Canada’s contentious carbon price, we argue about the cost and who is paying or about the impact it will have on pipeline approvals or job creation. We say far too little about how effective it is as a tool for creating new economic opportunities in the name of solving the greatest collective-action problem humanity has ever encountered.

AGREEMENT among economists and academics on the merit of carbon pricing exists to an extent rarely seen in the discipline. One recent proposal for a carbon tax in the United States was endorsed by over 3,300 economists, led by former Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen. In another study, 75 percent of environmental economists and others with climate-policy expertise supported putting a price on carbon. A flat, economy-wide tax on every tonne of carbon dioxide emitted is simple and transparent. Setting up a carbon tax is fast, cheap, and requires almost no additional bureaucracy to administer. And, because fossil-fuel flows are large in scale, readily counted, and governed by bottlenecks such as refineries and power plants, tracking greenhouse-gas emissions is far easier than it is for most pollutants.

This isn’t just praise for an elegant theory—where carbon taxes have been applied, they’ve delivered on their promise. One of the most widely praised models is right here in Canada: British Columbia’s carbon tax, introduced in 2008. In the six years after it was enacted, BC’s fuel use declined by roughly one sixth; overall, the tax is credited with reducing emissions in BC by 5 to 15 percent while having an impact on the provincial economy that a 2015 study deemed “negligible.” Perhaps even more surprising, given the current state of garment rending over Canada’s national carbon-pricing plan, is that many British Columbians all but forgot about the provincial carbon tax. In a 2018 poll, only 45 percent of them were even sure it was there.

A 5 to 15 percent cut in emissions might not sound revolutionary—it might well seem barely evolutionary—but the carbon price is not meant to be a stand-alone solution. That’s why the federal government rolled it out as part of a larger package of investments and incentives. It’s better understood as the necessary recalibration of an economy, a way to place it firmly on the low-carbon track before beginning the more complicated work of wholesale decarbonization—a first step and a strikingly simple one. Perhaps most importantly, it is a push on a true lever of power. By changing the way prices are set for virtually everything bought and sold, the carbon tax rewrites the baseline operating code of an economy.

What’s more, carbon pricing scales up and out in ways that few climate policies have to date. California, Quebec, and Ontario (prior to Doug Ford’s election as premier) have already worked across the border in cap-and-trade carbon-pricing regimes, as have the member nations of the European Union. China, wary of most economic interventions from beyond its borders, is also experimenting with carbon pricing. In a 2015 paper, Yale University economist William Nordhaus (who has since won the Nobel Prize for his work on climate economics) argued that carbon pricing could serve as a more effective basis for coordinated international action on climate change than the cumbersome UN treaty process that repeatedly leads to agreements that lack the teeth of sanctions to make them stick.

Opponents of carbon pricing in Canada have spent a decade pushing back—from placing its repeal front and centre in election campaigns to suing the federal government in an attempt to reverse it at the provincial level. In Ontario, Premier Doug Ford has even forced gas stations to put stickers on their pumps to show the carbon tax’s impact on fuel prices; Jason Kenney, meanwhile, scrapped Alberta’s carbon tax as his first order of business as premier.

But the larger shift underway is significant enough, and the overall progress being made inexorable enough, to overcome any short-term political change or single act of recalcitrance. Should

Canada’s various carbon-tax regimes survive the coming election cycles to the point where all Canadians, like British Columbians before them, adjust to the point of mostly forgetting they are there, we might well look back on them as an achievement as significant—and as irreversible—as universal health care.

LET’S GET DOWN to where Canada fits into all of this today. The country’s bestselling vehicle is the Ford F-150, one of three top-selling light-duty trucks—outsize vehicles not valued highly for their achievements in fuel efficiency. The most common new building developments in Canada are outer suburban and exurban—winding residential avenues and wide driveways, office parks and big box retail and broad stretches of parking lot to access it all. The leading political debate of the day is whether to maintain a middling carbon price or eliminate it entirely, while the average Canadian’s carbon footprint remains firmly in the global top five. This hardly looks like leadership on the defining collective-action problem of the century.

There is, however, another way of looking at Canada’s position in the climate fight. It requires us to set aside our overgrown footprints and slippery emissions targets and instead consider where we began and where we’re heading now. To be sure, Canada’s climate politics often don’t look like models of anything but squabbling stasis, mired as they are in interprovincial and intergovernmental battles over jurisdiction. But this isn’t because Canada is uniquely resistant to climate action so much as it is a by-product of the sheer range of competing interests we have on the climate and energy fronts.

Canada contains entire jurisdictions (Alberta and Saskatchewan, in particular) that are deeply dependent on fossil-fuel production and others (BC, Manitoba, Quebec) that are among the world leaders in emissions-free power generation. BC is a hydro-dammed clean-energy powerhouse *and* an ambitious exporter of natural gas *and* a coal transshipment port. Canada’s most

populous province, Ontario, is a pacesetter in the global coal phase-out *and* the home of a massive automotive industry. All these viciously conflicting interests mean trade-offs, and the awkward compromises of the global climate negotiation are mirrored at a domestic scale in Canada. Small wonder, then, that hammering together a climate-and-energy plan able to mostly balance these competing factions and regions was a process that only happened nearly twenty years after the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

Nowhere else do such pitched opponents even attempt to find common ground in this way. There is, for example, no oil-and-gas industry in the EU significant enough to impede its shift toward clean energy, and in those jurisdictions where competing interests are present, the pushback has been no less troublesome than it has been in Canada. Germany's vaunted climate plans, for example, have been slowed by both the powerful domestic auto industry and the ferocious, highly organized political movement against nuclear power. The US, meanwhile, has played host to the single greatest oil-production expansion of the twenty-first century—adding, in little more than a decade, roughly three times as many barrels per day of production as the entire current output of Alberta's oil sands—with little effective domestic opposition. Only in Canada have the fossil-fuel and low-carbon economies met repeatedly, face to face, across boardroom tables and legislature floors, to openly debate carbon prices, pipelines, and the rest.

From this angle, Canada look less like a laggard and more like a pioneer charting some of the most difficult terrain in climate politics. The survival of Canada's carbon-pricing regime matters—beyond its ability to reduce near-term emissions at home—because, if the oil sands and automaking plants can find ways to live in even reluctant harmony with green power and clean tech here, there's cause for optimism everywhere. "Perhaps the government will build a new oil pipeline and will also miss its 2030 target. But these don't matter much for the global

climate challenge," wrote Mark Jaccard, an energy economist at Simon Fraser University, in the *Globe and Mail* recently. "In climate policy, experts agree that Canada is finally a global leader." Jaccard has long been a vocal and prominent critic of Canada's slow climate progress, and there was something almost like surprise in his tone.

The objects of praise extend well beyond carbon taxes. Here in Canada, our political battles sometimes leave little room to seize on anything else, but Jaccard notes that other elements of Canada's various federal and provincial climate plans are earning laurels from his international colleagues. Jaccard reported that his colleagues were impressed by the 2016 Pan-Canadian Framework's nationwide coal phase-out, the clean-fuel standard, and national efforts to reduce methane emissions, among other projects.

Beyond these, the framework contains a range of energy-efficiency efforts sufficient, all by themselves, to meet a third of Canada's Paris pledge to reduce our overall emissions to 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The framework also laid out plans for higher vehicle-emissions standards, better building codes, faster deployment of zero-emissions vehicles, and lower emissions from heavy industry. Taken together, this multifaceted, multilevel policy package covers a wide swath of the ground laid out by US representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her colleagues in their widely celebrated Green New Deal plan. One crucial difference, though, is that the Green New Deal is a proposal that has yet to win support from Congress, whereas the Pan-Canadian Framework and its adjuncts are—notwithstanding a spate of rollbacks by newly elected Conservative governments in Alberta and Ontario—the law of the land. If Canada is a climate laggard, whom exactly is it trailing?

On the question of pace, as well, Canada has begun to provide case studies attesting to the maddening difficulty of closing the gap between ambition and achievement—and to the real triumphs that can emerge from the struggle.

Consider British Columbia, which has operated under its pioneering carbon tax for more than a decade. Like any other carbon price, BC's tax was never intended to stand alone. Efforts were already underway to tackle the rest of the province's carbon footprint when it was enacted, and they accelerated in its wake. Several years after the carbon tax began to quietly encourage British Columbians to burn a little less fuel, meetings were convened, reports commissioned, and task forces struck on other topics.

Let's look at one in detail: the energy efficiency of buildings of all types across the province. In 2008, the BC government required municipalities to begin incorporating climate targets and plans into their growth strategies and community planning. This triggered a wave of rethinking and new accounting methods—the kind that led to "sustainability checklists" for all the workaday business of building management and construction. In more ambitious jurisdictions, up went "green" buildings aiming for special certifications such as the well-known LEED standards. The local rules became a messy regulatory patchwork, and the BC government stepped in again, in 2015, with a new law giving the province sole authority over technical requirements for buildings. The ever-ambitious City of Vancouver, meanwhile, aimed to bolster its self-image as Canada's greenest municipality with a new plan for the construction of net-zero buildings—the emissions-free dream—and BC set up a working group to start developing province-wide plans based on Vancouver's work. And on it went, the slow sausage-making grind of policy wonkery, through committees and working-group recommendations and ministerial orders.

I'm belabouring all of this because there's no known way around it. Yet the climate-emergency declarations, and the open letters from scientists demanding more urgent action, and the protest placards howling for a zero-carbon world in eleven years' time (if not sooner)—they never begin to account for this bureaucratic complexity. How, for example, do you mandate emissions-free standards for an entire province's construction

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and building-management industries, including all the tradespeople they rely on to frame in houses and wire up offices and pour concrete? This is how—this agonizing grind.

In the spring of 2017, the BC government could finally claim, without qualification, that its new BC Energy Step Code was the first in North America to lay out the clear, rigorous requirements and regulations that would guide the entire province's building industries to the construction of nothing but net-zero structures by 2032. Which is both amazing and not enough—nearly a decade of work, after the province first committed to climate action, toward a goal still thirteen agonizing years of mounting global emissions away. It's a triumph, yet who celebrated it? Who even noticed?

“I DON'T WANT you to be hopeful; I want you to panic.” So goes one of Greta Thunberg's most widely cited quotations. But, in a world where the only certainty is that the crisis is deepening by the day, panic is not enough. No society can function on panic indefinitely, and no one writes new building codes well in a panic. There has to be another motive, a future to move toward as well as one to flee.

Let's think of it, then, not as a war footing but as a sort of global Green Marshall Plan. Let's take our inspiration from that moment *after* the Second World War

when the United States decided not to leave Europe in ruins but instead to give it the contemporary equivalent of over \$100 billion (US) in development aid, infrastructure financing, and expertise to rebuild itself. This Green Marshall Plan would, by necessity, be crowdsourced to every level of government, wherever there would be sufficient will at any given time. The BC government has a useful building code. The Canadian government is trying, under a barrage of political shrapnel, to demonstrate what a carbon price can do in a nation built on resource extraction. There are cheap solar panels everywhere in the world now—and that, more than its own current emissions profile, is Germany's gift to the overheating Earth. It was put to me just like that once, in Berlin, ten years ago. A solar-industry specialist by the name of Tobias Homann was addressing the Germans' early investment in that technology. “The German electricity consumer pays a higher price for this energy revolution than others do,” he told me. “So people, I think, will thank Germany in the future for its role.”

So think again about those Ford F-150s parked in wide driveways and out front of big box stores and row by row in office parks all across Canada. This suburban dream was where we went after the last war footing, likely because it best approximated the war's grand ideals of freedom, security, and prosperity

to the greatest number of Canadians. The split-level homes, the two-car garages, the good jobs making cars or drilling for oil or turning petroleum into a million different plastic gadgets for sale on a thousand shelves at your nearest Walmart.

Now imagine this replaced by a denser and more vibrant urban life, a power bill that zeroes out more often than not, a commute to work by train or bike or foot that doesn't involve gridlock, a car—still, if you'd like—with a battery pack that fills up on the cheap overnight and that sells back surplus power at a profit while it's parked outside the office all day, and good jobs, with futures, in carbon capture and efficiency retrofitting and smart-grid software. This is a silhouette on a distant horizon right now—but I'd wager it's a more fixed and focused target than a blind, panicked scramble could ever hope to offer. ☺

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The O'Hagan Essay on Public Affairs is an annual research-based examination of the current economic, social, and political realities of Canada. Commissioned by the editorial team at The Walrus, the essay is funded by Peter and Sarah O'Hagan in honour of Peter's late father, Richard, and his considerable contributions to public life.



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ENVIRONMENT

Greener and Cleaner

One designer is challenging the conventional wisdom about environmentally friendly construction

BY VIVIANE FAIRBANK

ILLUSTRATION BY IRMA KNIIVILA

THE METRO Toronto Convention Centre, a towering complex of glass, steel, and concrete, is the kind of structure Chris Magwood has spent decades denouncing. Yet the specialist in sustainable construction found himself in the building last March to present at the Green Living Show, a trade fair dedicated to a healthier planet. Since Magwood's specialty is calculating the environmental costs of various construction materials, the biggest elephant in the room that weekend was the room itself.

Magwood pointed out to me that we were sitting on chairs with plastic upholstery, on a carpet that he says will likely eventually be "ripped up and go in a landfill," under a steel beam that was created by extracting ore, "heating it up, melting it, melting it again, shipping it," and surrounded by laminated wooden panels that "can't be recycled." Such wasteful

building materials, he said, are "very hard to justify." He gave an apologetic chuckle.

At Trent University, in Peterborough, Ontario, Magwood has been studying embodied carbon—a term for the greenhouse-gas emissions associated with a product's creation—as it applies to buildings. Usually, architects judge a building based only on its operational emissions—the pollution caused when tenants turn on a light, for example, or run the air conditioning. Magwood is asking architects to look instead at a structure's entire lifespan. His calculations take into account the environmental costs of manufacturing construction materials, including glass, steel, and concrete, transporting them to the job site, assembling them, then decommissioning them when the building is eventually torn down.

Magwood didn't invent the term *embodied carbon*; it has circulated in the architecture world for the last decade

or so. Until recently, most architects and engineers insisted that the environmental impact of embodied carbon was near-trivial compared to operational emissions. But Magwood's calculations show how far off those assumptions could be: in some cases, if architects accounted for embodied emissions in their buildings, they would be admitting responsibility for at least twice the carbon footprint.

A few days before the Green Living Show, Magwood and two colleagues from Vermont, Jacob Racusin and Ace McArleton, delivered the keynote lecture at Boston's BuildingEnergy conference. It was one of the first times Magwood had presented his work before a broad audience of engineers, remodellers, architects, and policy-makers. Those assembled would already have known that building construction is one of the largest sources of greenhouse-gas pollution in the world. But, that day, Magwood revealed something not everyone was





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prepared to hear: many of the buildings their firms had created — even the ones bearing the most respected environmental stamps — had caused more pollution than they realized.

Estimates vary, but it's now safe to say that between 20 and 60 percent of an average building's carbon emissions are embodied as opposed to operational. The numbers quickly add up: in Canada, a report looking at only nonresidential buildings found that their embodied carbon was responsible for releasing an annual 2.3 million tonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalents (CO₂e), a unit that standardizes the way we measure greenhouse gases. (*Carbon* and *carbon dioxide* are used interchangeably in many industries.) That value, the report's authors noted, is equivalent to about 487,000 cars driving nonstop for a year.

"It was like a light turning on," says Paul Eldrenkramp, a remodeller who attended the keynote lecture in Boston. "We've been doing everything wrong." Like many attendees that day, Eldrenkramp returned to his office, looked at the list of projects on their drawing board, and reevaluated every material they planned to use. By highlighting the environmental impact of preparing and transporting building materials, Magwood, Racusin, and McArleton have "changed the conversation," Eldrenkramp says.

Since the energy crisis of the 1970s, when industrialized countries became acutely aware of their heavy reliance on oil, the green standard for houses in North America, as set by organizations such as the Canada Green Building Council, has been energy efficiency. For years, architects have worked toward airtight, well-insulated homes that require little heating or cooling and are able to generate renewable energy. Their efforts culminated in the "passive house" movement, which promotes the construction of "zero-energy buildings." Touted as the future of green architecture, these self-sustaining homes generate their own power with solar panels, for example. And, though their construction tends to be more expensive than that of the average building, their cumulative energy

savings are meant to cut costs for homeowners in the long term.

Over the past three decades, passive houses have surged in popularity across the world, with more than 20,000 units certified by Germany's Passive House Institute (many more exist without certification). Along with other zero-energy buildings, passive houses have become badges of environmentalism for those who can afford them, and well-intentioned corporations and individuals, including celebrities Bryan Cranston and Julia Louis-Dreyfus, have invested in green homes as a way to reduce their own carbon footprints.

Low-energy buildings, as Magwood sees them, are a dramatic example of how embodied carbon can call into question a building's environmental impact. Yes, passive houses cut down on energy usage after they've been constructed, but some of the materials used to build them come with exceptionally high carbon costs. (And, because net-zero houses, by definition, have no operational emissions, embodied carbon could represent 100 percent of their pollution.)

For environmentally minded architects, the realization that supposedly green construction can be more environmentally damaging is especially painful. Depending which estimate is used, approximately 20 percent of all global greenhouse-gas emissions come from embodied carbon in construction. As architects make buildings more energy efficient, that percentage might only increase. "You think you're doing the right thing," says Magwood. "But, if you choose the wrong materials, you could be having the opposite effect."

The problem is not particular to architecture: it can be seen in nearly every environmental problem (and proposed solution) of the past few years. The practice of "life-cycle analysis," which helps industries measure products' overall impacts on the environment, has existed for decades in fields such as agriculture and engineering. But most consumers are unaware of the concept — let alone how to process the resulting data. We're often told, for example, that it's better to avoid eating meat because

raising animals releases a substantial amount of greenhouse gases. But if the choice is between purchasing locally sourced chicken and quinoa shipped from Bolivia, the plant-based option might actually generate more pollution.

Scholars, including Magwood, are realizing that, unless environmental strategies take life-cycle analyses into account, they often end up being counterproductive. It's time to refine how we think about environmentalism.

STUDIES SHOW that it's usually inaccurate to present actions as either "good" or "bad" for the environment. *Environmentally friendly* is a relative term; by mistakenly treating the designation as absolute, even the most conscious environmentalists often grasp at climate solutions that exacerbate the problem or deflect it elsewhere.

Kiel Moe, chair of architecture at McGill University, has blamed this tendency for the growth of the "contemporary sustainability apparatus": techniques that are meant to address one environmental concern but unwittingly aggravate others. We reduce plastic waste by buying cotton tote bags and reusable water bottles, or we install solar panels in our backyards to generate renewable energy. But, while tote bags can certainly reduce plastic waste, cotton derives from an especially polluting industry—organic cotton, even more so. When it comes to greenhouse-gas emissions, an organic-cotton bag needs to be used 20,000 times to be an improvement over single-use plastic bags. The production of one stainless-steel water bottle, according to the *New York Times*, emits fourteen times more greenhouse gases and causes hundreds of times more toxic risk to the environment than making a single-use plastic bottle. Solar panels can provide renewable energy, but depending where they're manufactured and where they're installed—in a solar farm, on a suburban home, in a city with frequent cloud coverage—their construction might expend more energy than they can produce in their lifetime.

It's easy to think, based on these and other findings, that many of our environmental efforts are so scattered as to be ineffective. But the 2018 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provides some clarity and focus. The world's top environmental priority, according to the report, should be to limit global warming through the reduction of carbon emissions, with the goal of making all human activity carbon neutral (emitting a net-zero amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere) by 2050. Though that's a stupefying target, it's also quantifiable. It distills

"We can't afford to have emissions today in the name of reducing emissions in fifty years from now."

every action or product to its atmospheric impact: How much greenhouse-gas pollution does it represent? To make significant progress, we need to be able to calculate our emissions correctly in the first place. That's where research like Magwood's comes in.

Magwood's calculations of embodied carbon are based on environmental product declarations—a kind of nutritional label for manufactured products that has emerged as part of the life-cycle-analysis movement. Anything, from a block of concrete to a cotton T-shirt, can be evaluated in terms of its "global-warming potential"—the environmental equivalent of a calorie count. One bottle of red wine from the La Rioja region of Spain, for example, has a GWP of just under one kilogram of CO₂e, meaning its production has the equivalent effect on our atmosphere as one kilogram of carbon dioxide emissions. A bottle of Swedish single malt

whisky, on the other hand, is worth more than two tonnes of CO₂e. That knowledge can make the environmentalist's beverage choice a little easier—depending how slowly they drink their whisky, of course.

Over the past decade, this essentialist attitude has led to a new line of thinking in the environmental movement, in line with the IPCC's recommendations: if an object or action releases a certain amount of carbon, then its climatic effect can be "neutralized" by pulling the same amount out of the atmosphere—by planting a tree, for example, or by physically capturing carbon dioxide and storing it in the earth. As long as it's done properly, this approach, known as carbon offsetting, is arguably the most practical way to achieve a net-zero existence.

In British Columbia, a firm called Carbon Engineering is selling direct-capture technology that can "remove CO₂ directly from the atmosphere at an affordable price point." Some airlines will suggest purchasing carbon offsets to make up for the pollution associated with air travel (a single passenger flying one-way from Vancouver to Quebec City represents approximately 620 kilograms of CO₂e). Lyft, a ride-sharing company, has announced that it is becoming a "carbon-neutral company" because of the carbon offsets it has purchased to counteract its cars' emissions.

But, for some architects and engineers, it can be tricky to maximize a building's efficiency while also reducing carbon output. In their presentation at Building-Energy, Magwood and his colleagues showed the potential downsides of spray polyurethane foam (SPF), a substance that is often used in passive houses because of its high efficiency and sealant capabilities. Because SPF is made by combining a cocktail of chemicals, many of which are petroleum-based, under high pressure, its creation releases a large volume of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere—its embodied carbon is especially high. Magwood's calculations have shown that, when taking into account SPF's embodied carbon, a low-energy building made with foam could in fact be more harmful to the planet than a standard residential building of the same size.



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The long-term benefits of energy-efficient houses also rely on the whims of human behaviour—behaviour that can be counterproductive. The so-called rebound effect has shown that, when people feel warm at home, they would rather wear less clothing than lower the heat, losing the opportunity to save energy. One study in Britain, as reported by the *Economist*, found that homes meant to reduce energy use by 20 percent ended up saving only 1.7 percent because of their occupants' habits.

Even if residents do manage to keep operating emissions low, so that their building saves energy compared to a regular building over a period of, say, fifty years, those efforts might be rendered useless by the embodied carbon already released during the building's construction. "We can't afford to have emissions today in the name of reducing emissions fifty years from now," says Melinda Zytaruk, the general manager of Fourth Pig Worker Co-op, a relatively new sustainable-construction company in Ontario. Between 2015 and 2050, the IPCC's deadline for when the construction industry would have to become carbon neutral, more than 2 trillion square feet of construction and renovation will have taken place—the equivalent of building New York City from scratch every thirty-five days, writes Bruce King, an engineer, in his book *The New Carbon Architecture*.

It's not yet mandatory, in any green-building code in North America, to calculate embodied carbon. The Canada Green Building Council "hasn't figured out how to talk about it yet," Zytaruk says. If more institutions, governments, and even individuals took embodied carbon into account when planning construction projects, Magwood says, they could easily halve their emissions overnight. And in only a matter of years, by using materials that sequester carbon in construction, many sectors of the industry could meet the IPCC's carbon-free goals.

THE FOCUS of Magwood's work today is net carbon storage—the next step in the evolution of sustainable architecture. Using materials such as timber and straw, which naturally

store more carbon than they release, he can create buildings with materials that pull carbon out of the atmosphere. Straw, for example, is a natural by-product of farming wheat, rice, rye, and oats, so it requires little energy to create and is easily available. It also stores sixty times more carbon than it requires to grow, which makes it one of the most powerful carbon-storing building materials in the world.

Magwood is also proposing new building regulations in Ontario to make GWP computations mandatory. The carbon-storing buildings he has designed cost the same amount of money to build as the province's code-compliant structures that emit carbon, and they're just as easy to construct. A typical eight-unit residential building in Ontario today, according to Magwood, emits 240,000 kilograms of embodied CO₂e before anyone even steps inside. Magwood says that, by using materials available at a local hardware store, construction workers could be making buildings that emit less than half that amount.

Within two to three years, once they've had time to adapt their practices, they could be making buildings that sequester—pull from the atmosphere—11,000 kilograms of CO₂e instead. And, within five years, they could be sequestering more than ten times that amount. That shift in practice could make a substantial difference to climate change: by 2025, new homes built in Canada could sequester half a million tonnes of CO₂ every year, helping to offset the carbon output of other industries.

Other architects are turning to straw-bale insulation. Anthony Dente, an engineer in California, became one of the first in his field to start measuring embodied carbon in building projects a couple of years ago. His firm, Verdant Structural Engineers, often designs buildings with straw bales and earth. Now that architects and engineers are finally turning their attention to embodied carbon, Dente thinks it will eventually become standard practice. The future of building construction might look like the work of Arkin Tilt, a California-based architecture firm, which often partners

with Dente's firm. They recently completed a mixed-use commercial building with straw and clay that sequestered 10.9 tonnes of CO₂e.

Firms like that of Eldrenkramp, the veteran remodeller, have also committed to incorporating Magwood's findings into their work. They know because of his comparison data, for example, that it is generally better to use material such as hempcrete, a biocomposite made out of hemp and lime mixed with silica, instead of cement: cement represents some of the highest carbon emissions, while hempcrete will instead store—or offset—nearly 4,000 kilograms of CO₂e in an average residential building.

But it's far more complicated to scale up Magwood's work to the level of calculating the embodied carbon of an entire building. Environmental product declarations, which Magwood uses to mine data, are provided by manufacturers, which means that architects are at the mercy of various industries and just how much they're willing to disclose about their processes and materials. Whether a product is transported by rail or by diesel trucks, for example, is rarely accounted for in its EPD.

In a 2015 study, Kate Simonen, an architecture professor at the University of Washington, found that about 25 percent of a high-rise residential tower's embodied carbon came from "additional components"—plumbing, light fixtures, or exterior paving—typically not accounted for in building analyses. As the founding director of the Carbon Leadership Forum, a research group that is developing a digital calculator to help architects determine the net carbon impact of their buildings, Simonen's goal is to make embodied-carbon data more simple and accessible to construction firms.


Some scientists warn against putting too much faith in carbon-calculating technologies. By treating carbon offsetting the same way they treated energy savings three decades ago—focusing their efforts on one goal—architects risk falling into the trap of helping the planet one way while harming it another. (For instance, studies have found that, while some carbon-capture technologies—the

kind used to sell companies carbon offsets—help to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, they can have other damaging environmental impacts.) So far, however, Magwood has found that building with low-carbon products, such as straw and hempcrete, helps mitigate other harms at the same time.

For architects, one of the biggest challenges in measuring embodied carbon is setting boundaries: it's hard to know where the calculations end. Should the pollution caused by commuting to and from the job site during construction be part of a building's emissions? What about the energy used to conduct research and print documents during the initial phase of the project? Or the carbon footprint of the furniture and appliances the house will be equipped with afterward?

Zytaruk points out that many sustainable homes are built in the countryside, which feels like it should be more ecological. But those locations require more driving, so they might cause more pollution than a standard home in the city does. Does that mean it's better not to build that sustainable home in the first place?

"I think about this all the time. In everything," Magwood says. He built his first home in rural Ontario twenty-five years ago with his then partner. It was the first house approved in the province to be built with straw bales. He felt satisfied at first, but he was spending "all kinds of time" driving to and from work and other appointments. "I realized that the rural life I had attached to being more environmentally friendly actually wasn't."

Magwood built his second home in the centre of Peterborough, where taking public transit, biking, and walking are much more feasible. He keeps track of his home's environmental impact, and he conducted an analysis of its energy efficiency for the first two years. He knows that the second home, in the city, is a huge improvement over the first. In the end, "there are pretty clear pathways to doing the right thing," he says. "I calculate the things I can change, but I can't change everything." 

VIVIANE FAIRBANK is the associate editor and head of research at The Walrus.

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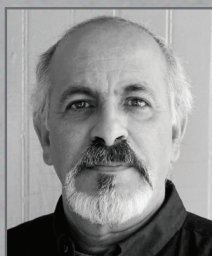
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ABOVE

The Chinese government built the town of Maqên in the 1960s to establish its authority in the region. Nomadic Tibetan herders were forced to settle here — in part, the government claimed, to protect the region's grasslands from excessive grazing, one of the factors it says is exacerbating desertification.

RIGHT The streets of Madoi County, a settlement near the source of the Yellow River, are often deserted.

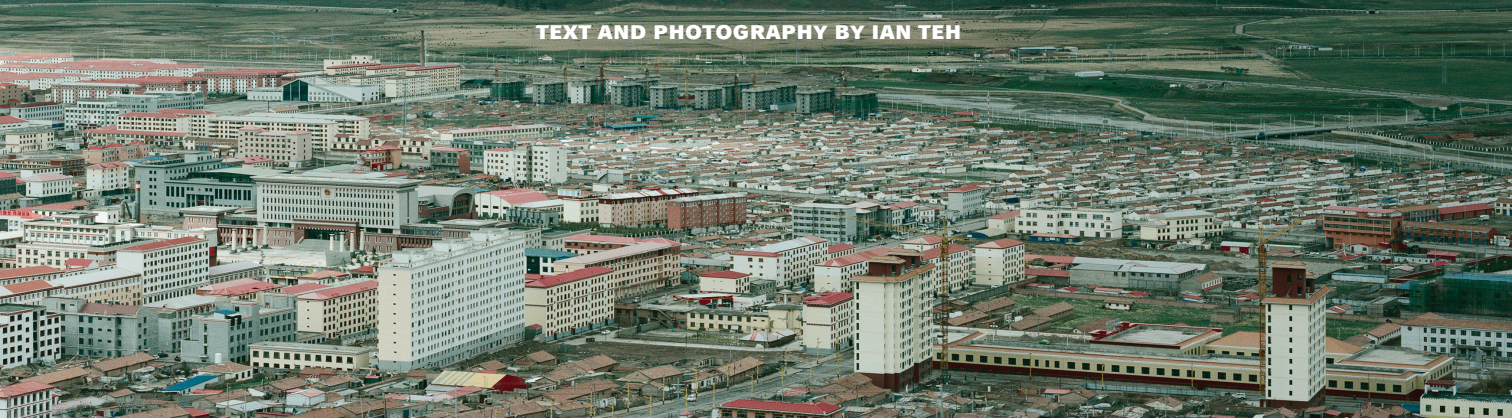


VISUAL ESSAY

China's New Deserts

The lands around the Yellow River are turning to sand

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN TEH



FROM MADUI COUNTY, a settlement near the headwater of the Yellow River, our two-car convoy headed out to visit a desert Yang Yong first viewed through binoculars in 1997. At the time, the geologist had seen a small, wind-blown patch of sand surrounded by greenery. This time, Yang looked out past a stretch of sloping grassland to where a new desert extended beyond the horizon. That sandy expanse, Yang told me, was where we would spend the night.

Yang, now sixty, is one of China's most prominent environmentalists. For nearly thirty years, he has studied environmental changes in the Tibetan plateau, in particular the region where the Yellow, Yangtze, and Mekong Rivers originate. Using satellite images, remote sensing, and data collected on expeditions, he and his crew are documenting the degradation of lands along the headwaters of China's major rivers. In May 2018, I joined Yang on an expedition to capture the transformation of the Yellow River and its surrounding landscapes.

We piled into our cars and drove off the road, with Yang's yellow SUV leading the way through the grasslands and down the side of a hill. With no obvious route, the uneven ground caused the car to jolt so violently that some of our heads hit the roof.

Partway, Yang stopped the car and got out. It looked like he had changed his mind about driving any farther. He lit a cigarette, taking long drags as he contemplated the rough terrain ahead.

Shortly afterward, Yang got back in the car and told us to buckle up. With a series of deft manoeuvres, he slalomed down the hill, twisting the vehicle like an Olympic skier. I thought that, when we reached the sand, the rest would be easy. But, almost as soon as we did, our tires spun freely. We got stuck.

There are many forces causing desertification on the plateau, including natural physical processes, human mismanagement, and climate change. The land, which ranges from semiarid to arid, is unable to sustain high densities of human and wildlife populations, while the high altitude and dry climate can make it vulnerable to wind erosion. Rising temperatures accelerate the melting of permafrost, exposing once-frozen topsoil to winds and burrowing rodents. Some claim that overgrazing has contributed to the damage. The Tibetan plateau's water cycle is also under severe stress, with shrinking glaciers, expanding lakes, and overflowing rivers in some parts.

Yang hopes his research will help officials protect the Sanjiangyuan, a nature reserve established in 2000 to protect the headwaters of the Yangtze, Mekong, and Yellow Rivers. He is careful not to criticize government officials for their mismanagement of natural resources; instead he shares his findings with them. By involving them in his work, he tries to influence rather than challenge them. To Yang, when it comes to the environment, diplomacy is far more effective than shame. 🌍

.....
IAN TEH is a photographer based in Kuala Lumpur.



ABOVE The Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve was created in 2000, when it became clear that the Yellow River was drying up: in 1997, the river failed to reach the sea for nearly eight months. Despite efforts to sustain the river, industry, agriculture, and urbanization continue to take a toll.





BELOW Yaks graze around a lake in the Sanjiangyuan. Experts disagree about whether grazing herds are exacerbating the desertification of grasslands — some believe that human activity, such as gold mining in the outer regions of the reserve, bears more responsibility.



Yang Yong (right); his wife, Wang Qiang, who handles the research team's finances; and drone operator and logistics coordinator "Captain" Lu—an old friend of Yang's—plan the next stages of their expedition.





ABOVE Yang's expedition group, the Hengduan Mountain Research Society, includes his brother Yang Hongbing—the crew's unofficial chef—and his apprentice Xiao Wei, who records Yang Yong's scientific observations. Their fieldwork can require physical labour.

LEFT Sheep graze at the boundary between desert and grassland.



ABOVE The Yellow River's Liujiaxia dam, built in the late 1960s, generates electricity and is used to control flooding and irrigation. China has more than 87,000 dams—more than any other country. Around 23 million people have been displaced from their homes for such projects.





BELOW The lush vegetation in the agricultural town of Guide is fed by upstream reservoirs. Farther downstream, the river turns its characteristic yellow, a sign of high silt content, which wears down the river's many short-lived dams.





ABOVE Saplings take root on a hillside, where they've been planted as part of a government program known as the Green Great Wall, an initiative aimed at slowing desertification in northwestern China.





BELOW Lanzhou, the last stop on my journey along the Yellow River, is also one of China's oldest cities. Today, it is a major petrochemical hub.





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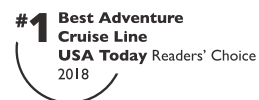
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SINCE THE LATE 1970s, Jeff Wall has been synonymous with backlit, large-scale photographs. Though his works have never maintained the same theme or genre, he has an unmistakable style: whether he is exploring gender and relationships, war, or imagined scenes from literature, his images have a subtle and sometimes humorous poetry.

Consider 1992's *Dead Troops Talk* (A Vision after an Ambush of a Red Army Patrol, Near Moqor, Afghanistan, Winter 1986): the photograph depicts a group of soldiers who have come back to life to despair and to taunt one another from beyond the grave. It is a macabre panorama, and at over two metres by four metres, the scale makes the suffering of these newly dead men seem intimate. In 2012, it was bought at auction for \$3,666,500 (US), making it, at the time, the third most expensive photograph ever sold. Another of Wall's epics, *After "Invisible Man," by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue* (2000), shows the narrator from Ellison's novel sitting in his basement suite installed with 1,369 lights—the backlit format gives the bulbs a radiant effect. Along with the work of American photographer Cindy

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jeff Wall's New Look

Four decades into his career, the artist is still pushing the limits of what a photograph can be

BY AARON PECK

Sherman and German Andreas Gursky, Wall's meticulously composed images, which nod to masterpieces from art history, helped put photography on equal footing with other forms of classic and contemporary art.

And so, one afternoon this past April, I walked to the Gagosian Gallery on West Twenty-First Street in New York to see what Wall, now seventy-three, had in store for his first exhibition of new work in four years. Most of the nine prints exhibited were signature Wall. The diptych *Summer Afternoons* presents two images of what appears to be the same room (a re-creation of Wall's former home): one with a nude

male lying on the floor, back to camera, the other with a woman reclining

ABOVE
Recovery,
2017–2018

on a daybed, not unlike the courtesan in Édouard Manet's *Olympia*. The triptych *Giardini/The Gardens*, meanwhile, seems to depict the firing of a servant at an Italian villa, each print illustrating a different point in the process. It marks the first time Wall has ever created a series that tells a continuous narrative, yet *The Gardens*, like all of his images, only offers pieces of the story's puzzle.

My eye, however, was immediately drawn to the enormous picture in the middle of the main wall: the *Day-Glo Recovery*. It wasn't like anything Wall had ever made. At first glance, *Recovery* may seem like a painting of loungers and picnickers at a park. Unlike Wall's typical realism, the scene is a barrage of brilliant colours: the ground is yellow, the tree trunks are cyan and persimmon, and the hills in the background are a light mauve. There is an otherworldly quality to the image, reminiscent of David Hockney or Henri Matisse. In the centre of the menagerie is a young man. His left leg, left arm, and shoes are of the same painterly quality as the rest of the picture,

but the remainder of his body is that of a normal, photographed person. He stares off into the distance, looking dazed and bewildered, somehow appearing more unreal than all the pigmented people around him. Only on close consideration does it become clear that the artist, who has spent nearly four decades making photographs with an eye for the history of painting, has advanced that project to a bizarre new level by taking a picture of a painting.

At first glance, *Recovery* may seem primed for the selfie generation. At about 2.5 metres by four metres, its size and brilliant colours can make it seem like trite pop art—something that would make for a nice background on a social-media post. This may be why reaction to the image has been mixed. As I stood in front of *Recovery*, another guest walked up to join me. “That fucking thing,” they said before walking away. Later, Karen Rosenberg, writing for the *New York Times*, called the work “a bold move, with an uncertain payoff” and further criticized *Recovery* for bringing to mind “Instagrammers posing in front of street art.”

But *Recovery* proves to be something more. Wall has been a consistent critic of contemporary visual culture throughout his career and has often tested the possibilities of what photography could be. Over the decades, he has constantly reinvented his work and how he approaches his craft, prodding us to see the world, and his chosen medium, in a new way. *Recovery* is not an aberration when measured against the rest of Wall’s oeuvre; all appearances aside, it’s a perfect fit.

JEFF WALL’s fascination with modern art dates back to childhood. As a teenager in Vancouver, he travelled to Seattle’s 1962 World’s Fair and saw an exhibition that included work by Jackson Pollock. In 1968, he graduated from the University of British Columbia with a degree in fine arts and, after

starting out as a painter, took an interest in conceptual art. Two years later, he exhibited *Landscape Manual* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This early piece took the form of a booklet that combined documentary photography and text. Following that achievement, he ceased exhibiting, instead studying art history at London’s Courtauld Institute.



ABOVE
The Destroyed Room, 1978

When Wall returned to his own practice, in 1976, it was as a photographer. Two years later, he exhibited *The Destroyed Room* in the window of Vancouver’s Nova Gallery and arrived as an artist. *The Destroyed Room* is a photograph that looks like its name: a pea-green mattress is torn open and thrown against a carmine wall; the drawers of a dresser are open and ransacked, their contents scattered across the floor. Within the unruly mess of broken walls and upended furniture, the composition references Eugène Delacroix’s 1827 masterpiece *The Death of Sardanapalus*. Through an open door on the edge of the *mise en scène* in Wall’s work, the viewer can see that the image is a stage set—the artifice part of the picture. Perhaps the most notable thing about the photograph was how it was displayed: in a light box, reminiscent of an outdoor advertisement. These Cibachrome, backlit transparencies soon became Wall’s signature—the use of fluorescent lights managing to be simultaneously captivating and crass.

Wall’s photographic tableaux were critical, complex, and pleasing to the eye. Perhaps unexpectedly, these radiant

scenes and the light boxes he displayed them in were received as punk-like provocations, contradicting the art-world orthodoxy that pictures could not be critical of the systems in which they circulated. (It makes sense that, years later, Wall photographed Iggy Pop for one of the singer’s album covers, and *The Destroyed Room* was used as the cover for

a collection of Sonic Youth B-sides.) Here were the old masters as modern ads.

Wall quickly proved himself a pioneer in other ways. He was one of the first artists of his generation to use movie production methods to stage his shots (from *The Destroyed Room* onward, his pictures have been taken on meticulously constructed sets, using crews and models). Wall was also at the vanguard of artists who digitally altered their

images, and starting in the early 1990s, his tableaux became composites of numerous photographs taken during production. For example, *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, based on an 1832 Hokusai woodblock print, depicts a group of people along a canal: the wind has just scattered a dossier of papers into the air, and four figures in the foreground struggle against the gale. The central figure, a man in a suit, looks to the sky to see a hat hurtling toward the heavens. Instead of capturing what Henri-Cartier Bresson called “the decisive moment” or following the street-photography methods made famous by the likes of Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and Diane Arbus, Wall planned his way to precise, deliberate pictures such as this. *A Sudden Gust of Wind* was rehearsed, shot, and shot again before being digitally collated to bring together the final image.

Wall’s style of photography was a critical and commercial success, and he has since had retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Tate Modern in London, the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation museum in Paris, the Stedelijk in Amsterdam, and the Louisiana in Denmark. He received Sweden’s prestigious

Hasselblad Award in 2002 and the Order of Canada in 2007.

By that year, he could have easily put his production on autopilot and churned out light box after light box, making certain collectors and vendors very happy. (Wall's large-scale light boxes can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars on the secondary market; major works go for the low millions.) Instead, when we encounter a Wall work produced after 2007, there is no radiance from fluorescent tubes: rather than retreat into repetition, he ditched his signature format altogether and began producing large prints. He has rarely spoken about the reasons for this change, but it is worth noting that the light box had morphed into a common way of viewing large-scale photography.

Few critics remarked on this departure at the time, but the shift was telling: Wall has always refused certain financial pressures and cultural trends, working instead with an eye on aesthetic goals. His risky return to painting in *Recovery* is no different.

IN ON LATE STYLE: *Music and Literature against the Grain*, literary critic Edward Said discusses the idea that age imbues some artists with wisdom and others with stubbornness. He gives the examples of Matisse, Bach, and Wagner, all of whom have later works he claims reflect harmoniously on life. "But what of artistic lateness," Said continues, "not as harmony and resolution but as intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction?"

Recovery seems to be a culmination of Wall's post-light box output, and it is certainly "intransigence, difficulty, and unresolved contradiction" in Said's sense. Wall could have exhibited the painting (and maybe even sold it for a considerably greater sum), but he didn't. In *Recovery*, after we understand that it's a photograph of a painting, the half-real, photomontaged man further disrupts the harmony of the reverie. The formal disjunction is unsettling, a reminder that the picture we're looking at is not only an illusion but also an affront to our expectations.

The sheer size of Wall's work also compromises gallery goers' attempts to capture it fully on Instagram (something I realized

myself on opening night). With *Recovery*, what might at first seem like a capitulation to selfie culture is another refusal: get too close and you miss the entirety of the image; stand too far back and you lose the detail. Like with *Dead Troops Talk*, each viewing reveals more richness: sections of *Recovery* contain miniature compositions (take the man in the towel with two dogs: each grouping of human and animal figures hints at its own story). This depth is yet another example of how Wall's images may initially seem to conform to the commercial but, on reflection, do the opposite. As David Company wrote in the *Financial Times*, reviewing the same Wall material when it appeared at London's White Cube Gallery this summer:

"If there is one photographer who has championed slow looking and an art of fewer but better images, it is Jeff Wall."

Yet, amid all this seriousness, Wall still shows his sense of humour. At the Gagosian, a self-reflexive wink came in the placement of the black-and-white *Weightlifter* (2015) on the wall opposite *Recovery*. *Weightlifter* depicts a sweaty, muscular man struggling to lift 100-odd kilograms in a gym. The strain on the model's face shows the pain, focus, and determination going into the feat. Even so, we're uncertain if he ever succeeds. 📷

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AARON PECK's work has recently appeared in the *New York Review Daily*, *Frieze*, and *The White Review*.



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Flight of Imagination

To overcome my fear of air travel, I turned to a seventh-century saint

BY ANNE THÉRIAULT

THIS PAST SPRING, I did something I thought I might never do again: I got on an airplane. The last decade had been filled with a dread of flying so intense that even watching a character in a movie board a plane made me feel queasy. I knew my fear of crashing was unreasonable, but I couldn't talk myself out of it.

It was a 2009 flight to Paris that made me swear off airplanes altogether. My husband and I were on our honeymoon, and I was buoyed by the intense romance of it all. But, as I dissolved one tablet of benzodiazepines and then another under my tongue, my fear ballooned. Every little jolt seemed like the precursor to a crash; I kept scanning the flight attendants' faces, sure I could decipher expressions of panic. I sobbed until the drugs finally kicked in, somewhere over the Atlantic. At the end of our week in Paris, I took the maximum dose of pills and forced myself to get on the plane home. I wept with relief when we landed in Montreal.

I spent the next few years using creative workarounds to avoid flying. My limitations often frustrated me; I missed family weddings, important conferences, and other events that I couldn't reach by train or car.

Seeing photos of friends jetting off on adventures gave me pangs of envy. I wanted so badly to be the kind of person who could casually fly somewhere new, but the more time elapsed since my last flight, the larger my fear loomed. I wasn't even sure what I was afraid of anymore—it wasn't crashing, exactly, or death, although those were the twin seeds out of which my anxiety had grown.



It was more the thought of being back in that full-body terror, trapped hour after excruciating hour until the plane landed. Fear of fear itself—maybe of myself, of my unpredictable reactions—was its own particular hell. I made peace with the fact that I didn't fly.

Then, at the beginning of May, I began working on a project about Saint Dymphna, a seventh-century Irish princess. After the death of Dymphna's mother, her widowed father became obsessed with marrying her. Dymphna, still a teenager, fled to present-day Belgium. Her father pursued her to the town of Geel and beheaded her. According to one version of the legend, several people who had witnessed her death were miraculously cured of their mental-health problems. Over time, Dymphna became known as the patron saint of mental illness. Her shrine is now a popular site for pilgrimages, and Geel has gained international recognition for its radical mental-health programs.

Dymphna's story touches on so many of my interests: women's history, medieval saints, psychiatry. For years, especially after my own struggles with Canada's fractured mental-health system, I've been obsessed with her life and legacy. When a magazine offered to

pay for a trip to Geel to write about Dymphna, I was ecstatic. But even as I booked my tickets, I felt panicky about boarding the plane.

As my departure date drew nearer, I started thinking that, if anyone could cure my anxiety, it was Dymphna. Although I framed it as a joke, I bought into it on some level. Years of trying to reason my way through my phobia hadn't worked. I was willing to try the supernatural.

I tucked a Saint Dymphna prayer card into my wallet and read it so often that, soon, I could recite it from memory. Praying, I discovered, is a bit like meditation: eventually, you fall into a rhythm. Once I was in my seat, I closed my eyes and began repeating the prayer; as we took off, I opened them and watched the landscape dwindle beneath us. I felt fine.

The first place I went in Geel was Dymphna's church, where I lit a candle in thanks. I spent the rest of my time there in a euphoric haze. Four days later, I boarded my flight home without a problem.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't still afraid. But taking that flight to Belgium was like opening a locked door inside myself and discovering a whole suite of rooms that lay beyond; even now that the door has swung shut, I still know the rooms exist. Did I do it? Did Dymphna do it? The best answer I can come up with is that rational beliefs can't overcome irrational fear. Sometimes, to get through the worst, we need the help of some higher power: a god, a love, a sweeping narrative. But at the centre of that higher power is always a bigger version of our own selves. †

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ANNE THÉRIAULT is a Toronto-based writer who has contributed to the *Guardian*, *Chatelaine*, and *Longreads*.



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