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# PURSuing DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Report on the Students' Dialogue  
on Democratic Engagement



University  
of Victoria



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The University of Victoria is committed to working together with communities and key partners to co-create positive change. To continuously advance engagement practices, the university piloted an engagement approach new to the university. Through a deliberative mini public, a form of deliberative engagement, the project brought together a demographically representative sample of UVic's student population to learn and deliberate on how to promote civil discourse and youth engagement in democracy. The Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement was the first of what we hope to be many such projects. This report provides an overview of the pilot including the process, participant feedback, outcomes and recommendations for potential future application.



# PART I: INTRODUCTION

## Executive Summary

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The University of Victoria Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement was a pilot program launched by the University of Victoria in partnership with The Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and Government House. The partnership engaged students in an initiative on one of the Lieutenant Governor's areas of focus: Democracy and Civic Engagement. Post-secondary institutions and public institutions like Government House have an important role to play in this conversation and in imparting the knowledge and skills to support democratic citizenship.

While the University of Victoria has a long tradition of engaging the community and students, the university piloted a new way to involve students through this unique partnership—deliberative mini-publics, which bring together a group of people that are representative of the community. Together, the participants engage in robust deliberation and learn about a particular topic.

The Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement brought together a representative group of 24 students selected through a civic lottery to learn and deliberate on democratic engagement and civil discourse, and ultimately produce the content of a report of ideas and avenues for future work. At the same time, the Dialogue satisfied the core objectives of the project and its partners, finding new ways to engage students and building a framework for future deliberative engagements.

The outcomes of the Dialogue show encouraging results along two principle tracks:

One, on the substance of the participants' deliberations, there was robust enthusiasm among UVic students for wrestling with the questions and concerns of civil discourse and youth democratic engagement. The participants created considerable momentum towards making actionable recommendations on how to make our public discourse more civil and how to get youth more involved in democracy.

And two, on the experience of the participants in the Dialogue and the role that deliberative bodies might play in university life, there was likewise overwhelming consensus that participation in the Dialogue is a positive experience for students, not only for its potential to broaden their education and expand their knowledge of democratic processes, but also for its potential to create new opportunities for students to participate in university life and strengthen the university community.

Suggestions from participants regarding where and how deliberative bodies might positively impact the university experience include mental health, housing policy, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, water management, reforming the university senate, and more.

Ultimately the Dialogue has revealed opportunities for the University of Victoria to demonstrate leadership and innovation with respect to deliberative mini-publics as a feature of the university experience and an avenue towards making university life more inclusive, participatory, and democratic.





## A Message from the Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia

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It has been my great privilege to support the Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement series at the University of Victoria. Upholding democracy is one of the three themes I have chosen to champion during my term as Lieutenant Governor; it is a responsibility that I feel deeply.

Seeing the creative process which brought together a truly diverse group of participants through the civic lottery was a strong start to this project. The question of how we can engage deeply and constructively with those whose views are different is one of great importance. What does it take to create the kind of real conversations that can deepen public understanding and move us to those places of compromise in between the extremes of public opinion? The civic lottery and ensuing conversations demonstrated a commitment to engaging with those with different views. Along with courteous dialogue, informed decision-making and agreed principles of engagement, these are the fundamental responsibilities of those who seek to uphold democracy.

As Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, I wish to thank all who participated in this series. Your generation will be called upon to lead our country in finding new and creative ways to tackle the challenges that lie ahead. I have every confidence in you; you give me hope for a better world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Austin'.

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC  
Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia







## A Message from Dr. Kevin Hall, President of the University of Victoria

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On behalf of the University of Victoria, I am delighted to join with the Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia in presenting the report “Pursuing Deliberative Democracy at the University of Victoria; Report on the Students’ Dialogue on Democratic Engagement”.

These first of their kind dialogues at UVic described in this report were designed with an inclusive diversity lens in mind, and used a civic lottery selection process to gather together participants. The report affirms the dialogues benefited deeply from the resulting diversity of people, perspectives and experiences.

Within the pages of this report readers will see just how much student interest there is in exploring the facets of democracy, and to holding discussions on powerful topics like civic discourse and youth engagement in democracy.

One of the most important ways universities can contribute to our local and global communities is by supporting students to be actively engaged citizens, and by facilitating constructive conversations on matters of significance. Public institutions like Government House and UVic play a critical role by creating opportunities and spaces for both dialogue and learning.

I am extremely appreciative for the broad perspectives, passion and knowledge our students shared during the Students’ Dialogue. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and Government House for being such an innovative and engaged partner, and for sharing this thought-provoking experience with us

As we emerge from these challenging times, I am continually reminded that our talented students, our leaders of tomorrow, will be essential to helping us to build back a stronger and healthier future.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hall, PhD  
President and Vice-Chancellor





"My experience was eye opening. It felt great to connect with other people who see issues in the system and want change, and to have the chance to discuss what that change might look like from diverse perspectives."

—Patrick Montgomery, undergraduate student, Social Sciences





# PART II: BACKGROUND

## Concept, Objectives, and Process: The Civic Lottery

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The Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement is a new approach to student engagement that builds off the concept of deliberative mini-publics, which bring together a group of people that are descriptively representative of the community to engage in robust deliberation and learning about a particular topic. The composition of a mini-public rests on the execution of a **civic lottery**, in which a broad and random sample of potential participants are invited to volunteer.

To help ensure the success of the project, the project team engaged with the University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS) and the UVic Graduate Students' Society (GVSS) and brought together an internal advisory group with representation from several faculties and administrative units including Public Administration, Business, Humanities, Social Sciences, Political Science, Student Affairs, Equity and Human Rights, Community Engaged Learning and Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement. The feedback received was used to inform the project approach.

The Dialogue had several key objectives:

- ▶ To engage students in support of UVic's Strategic Framework, and more specifically activate efforts on Strategic Priority #6: Engage Locally and Globally.
- ▶ To pilot a civic lottery and deliberative dialogue as a new way to engage students, which can be built upon/adapted, for future initiatives.
- ▶ To provide an opportunity, outside of the classroom, through which students can develop civic capacities and leadership.
- ▶ To support the advancement of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia's focus on democracy and civic engagement.
- ▶ To pilot a new way to involve students and cultivate engaged, deliberative citizens.
- ▶ In partnership with Government House, to promote civic engagement and constructive participation in democracy.
- ▶ To develop a valuable partnership to assist both the university and Government House to co-create positive change, achieve shared goals and advance reputation.

With thanks for the Office of the Registrar, invitations to participate were sent to approximately 7,500 students selected at random from the total body of enrolled UVic students. The only eligibility requirement to apply to participate in the Dialogue was that each student had to currently be registered in at least one class at UVic.

In order to determine what a representative group of 24 students would look like, the project team worked with the Office of the Registrar to retrieve demographic data of the student population based on five focal demographic characteristics: gender; academic level of study; identifying as having a disability; identifying as a member of a visible minority or racialized group; and identifying as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and/or Indigenous.

A minimum and maximum number of students for the representative sample was identified for each stratification category based on the population-level data. Interested students completed a short, anonymous survey which gathered demographic data from applicants. Random selection was then used to select participants based on the targets required for each category. The final composition of the 24 students was:



- ▶ Gender: Male (11); Female (11), Prefer to self-disclose (2)
- ▶ Academic level of study: Undergraduate (20), Graduate (4)
- ▶ Identifying as a person with a visible and/or invisible disability: Yes (5), No (19)
- ▶ Identifying as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and/or Indigenous: Yes (3), No (21)
- ▶ Identifying as a Visible Minority and/or member of a racialized group: Yes (9), No (15)

Ultimately, the effort to attract a diverse group of participants was successful. Participants were all in different areas of their academic journey, coming from diverse disciplines and various years of study. Many brought with them global perspective. Some have families of their own, while others just left home. A few students grew up in households where politics was a regular topic around the dinner table and others feel they never had the opportunity to learn about democratic engagement.

One thing all the participants had in common was a desire to learn how to be more involved in democracy and to connect with fellow students during a time of social isolation.

## The Participants & Why They Chose to Participate

The 24 students selected at random to represent the diverse fabric of the UVic community, and their reasons for volunteering are as unique as they are. However, several themes emerged as to the reasons students decided to respond 'Yes' to the invitation. Many students indicated that the topics—civil discourse and youth democratic engagement—felt important and urgent to them, for reasons including a lack practical knowledge on these subjects, a lack of exposure to different perspectives on these subjects, an interest to learn about them more deeply, a perception that political discourse is becoming more polarized and less civil, and a perception that youth are not engaging with democracy as much as they could. Several students indicated a strong level of curiosity or prior interest in the process of deliberative mini-publics and felt the Dialogue would be a unique opportunity to experience it. Several participants indicated an interest simply in engaging with their peers and community in a constructive, engaging environment, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when they may feel less connected to university life in general.

When asked if they had ever participated previously in a deliberative mini-public involving a civic lottery, every student surveyed said 'No.'

"I volunteered for the Dialogue because I felt my knowledge about democracy, how it functions or doesn't, and how we speak about it, was lacking. I was also interested in participating in a dialogue of this format in general, as the opportunity to do so had not come up before."

—Isabelle Rutherford, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"I volunteered because I have been reading about deliberative democracy and mini-publics and think it is an innovative way to engage citizens in democracy. When the opportunity came up to participate in this dialogue, I was curious to see the process in action."

—Jen Gamble, graduate student, Human & Social Development

"I realize how important democracy is to our current way of life and I thought this provided an excellent opportunity to discuss some of the biggest challenges that Canadian democracy is currently facing."

—Adam Regier, undergraduate student, Social Sciences



"As a political science undergraduate student graduating by end of 2020, I couldn't have been blessed with a better opportunity to participate in politics!"

–*Weam Abbas, undergraduate student, Social Sciences*

I am a first-year international student and the Dialogue looked like a neat way to learn more about Canadian politics as well as connect with some of my peers.

–*Nala Scott, undergraduate student, undeclared*

When asked about their expectations for the Dialogue, most students indicated that they expected the Dialogue to be an environment that was constructive, stimulating, safe, welcoming, and inclusive of different perspectives, opinions, insights, and abilities. Several indicated a desire to engage and add their voices, perhaps for the first time, to these topics and discussions. Most indicated a strong desire to learn more about these particular topics in practical or actionable way.

"I expected to learn about topics in Canadian politics and participate in discussions of our impressions and ideas. I had hoped they would be interesting and illuminating as well, and I was not disappointed."

–*Patrick Montgomery, undergraduate student, Social Sciences*

"I expected that the Dialogue would be an experience that provides a lot of insight into other perspectives and possible avenues to increase youth engagement."

–*Julia Bilinski, graduate student, Human and Social Development*

"I expected that the Dialogue would increase my knowledge on subjects surrounding democratic engagement and that my own experiences and thoughts on the subject would add to the conversation. I expected that the dialogue would allow and embrace a variety of opinions from participants."

–*Isabelle Rutherford, undergraduate student, Social Sciences*

"I expected for a few but not all guest lecturers to introduce new perspectives and spark deep thinking of political discourse."

–*Eric Willis, undergraduate student, Humanities*



## Key Questions

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Over the course of four virtual sessions, and drawing on the insights from guest speakers as well as their own perspectives, student participants considered and deliberated on the following questions:

- ▶ In what ways is civility important in public discourse?
- ▶ What contributes to uncivil discourse?
- ▶ What can be done to foster more civil public discourse?
- ▶ What are the various ways in which youth currently engage with democracy?
- ▶ To what extent do youth use the engagement methods?
- ▶ What opportunities and barriers to youth engagement with democracy do you see?
- ▶ What can be done to increase youth engagement in democracy (and overcome previously identified barriers)?
- ▶ What personal takeaways about democratic engagement and civil discourse are you leaving with?
- ▶ What, if anything, are you interested in doing to increase youth engagement in democracy?

## Overview of Sessions

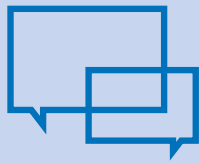
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Over four virtual evening forums, participants met to learn and deliberate about civil political discourse and democratic engagement.

The Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and President Hall launched the Dialogue with a warm and inspiring welcome as well as concluded the project at the virtual wrap-up celebration.

The first and third sessions involved presentations by three guest speakers followed by brief small-group discussions among participants, and a Q&A. The second and fourth sessions prioritized small-group discussions among participants, advancing the Dialogue towards the final outcomes. See Appendix C for full details of the sessions.





"I thought the Dialogue was amazing, I was hesitant at first at what to expect but I ended up enjoying it thoroughly and will be hoping to do another in the future."

—Reyna Galo, undergraduate student,  
Social Sciences





# PART III: OUTCOMES OF PARTICIPANT DELIBERATIONS

Participants in the Dialogue were asked to deliberate on a number of questions and consider the perspectives presented by the guest speakers as well as their own. In presenting their perspectives, concerns, priorities and ideas, participants were asked to consider not only their own points of view but those of their peers whom they represent as members of the Dialogue. The results below are not meant to express consensus among the participants—as a pilot project it was beyond the scope of this Dialogue to move towards meaningful consensus on a set of actions or policy recommendations—but rather demonstrate and articulate a set of shared values, concerns, observations, and avenues for future action.

The sections below are written in the actual voice of the participants from their deliberations during the four sessions of the Dialogue, edited lightly for clarity by the project team.

## Civil Discourse

### Why is civility important in public discourse?

Our political discourse these days feels polarized. Discussions seem more likely to involve people repeating soundbites to each other from what they hear and believe, rather than truly engaging with each other. There seems to be a lack or a loss of intelligent conversation around big issues, while at the same time emotions and stakes seem higher. We're worried that our democratic institutions could fail or be weakened, as we observe what's happening in the US. Meanwhile, social media has changed the way we talk about important issues like politics and elections—people behave differently online than in person.

As we tackle important issues and questions in our political society, civility in our discourse helps build mutual respect and allows for relationship-building. It leads us towards mutual goals for social betterment, whether legislative, administrative, or judicial. It is connected to having safe spaces, where everyone can participate without judgement or experiencing barriers. Civil discourse fosters accountability for one's words and actions, and respects different points of view and experiences.

### What does civility look and sound like?

- ▶ Empathizing
- ▶ Listening to each other
- ▶ Validating others' feelings
- ▶ Accepting others' perspectives
- ▶ Considering alternative viewpoints
- ▶ Showing mutual respect
- ▶ Using accessible and approachable language
- ▶ Being willing to compromise
- ▶ Being open to new ideas
- ▶ Acknowledging privilege
- ▶ Allowing space to change one's mind
- ▶ Debating ideas, not each other as people
- ▶ Sensitivity to how others have come to their beliefs

### What can be done to foster more civil public discourse?

In order to improve our public discourse, we need more and better education around what civil discourse is and how to participate in it, especially in our schools, but also in larger society. Learning should be collaborative, reinforcing, sustaining and inclusive. We also need to expand our notions of



what civil discourse means and what it looks like—e.g., valuing people with lived experience and from different backgrounds, as well as those with specific expertise. We need opportunities to engage each other, to practice (especially in schools), and to observe civil discourse and be inspired by it.

We need to question and improve our frameworks for civil discourse, especially online. Those that point us toward a mutual understanding of a particular problem (e.g. the climate crisis) and common values (e.g. faith in democratic institutions) should be strengthened. We need to be wary of the spread of misinformation and the amplification of harmful speech. Platforms like Google and Facebook need to get better at moderating content and stopping misinformation. Where possible, we need to spend more time engaging each other offline, while improving our behaviour and expression online.

We need to create more, better, and safer spaces—virtually and in person—where people can express different points of view, come to a shared understanding of an issue or concern, and try to work together. This will invariably involve providing resources, guidelines, opportunities, and other help to those who may not have the experience or confidence to engage in political and policy conversations.

Ultimately our discourse needs to be more participatory, something we share as a value and a framework to solving real problems. We especially need to train, trust, respect, and value the perspectives of young people, and work to ensure they have the abilities to engage in civil discourse.

## Democratic Engagement

### In what ways do youth currently engage with democracy?

- ▶ Voting
- ▶ Sharing information about voting and elections
- ▶ Staying current on political and policy issues
- ▶ Starting or signing petitions
- ▶ Encouraging each other to get involved
- ▶ Volunteering on campaigns or elections
- ▶ Volunteering with community organizations
- ▶ Participating in demonstrations and other forms of activism
- ▶ Attending school board or council meetings
- ▶ Writing to or otherwise pressuring our elected officials to act
- ▶ Using social media to highlight or question issues
- ▶ Engaging in discourse with friends and family

### What are the barriers to youth engagement with democracy?

Working diligently across multiple working groups in various breakout discussions, we, the participants, have identified numerous barriers to youth engagement with democracy, falling under four general themes.

**Failures of civic education:** Barriers to youth involvement in politics often begin with a simple lack of an entry point—youth don't always know what they need to know about how politics work, and how they can contribute beyond voting. We perceive a general lack of adequate and practical civic education in high school, both in terms of understanding how our system works and how political issues and discourse affect the lives of youth. Biases in our civic education—specifically those that focus on explaining the history and structure of current democratic institutions rather than challenging students to engage and improve them—lead to many youth feeling disempowered.

The fact that our political discourse seems to be polarized and fragmented in silos only contributes to youth feeling like they have no way to engage constructively and meaningfully, and instead we are susceptible to those same traps of uncivil discourse.

Finally, youth often lack the time and ability to educate ourselves, to read about issues, platforms and political candidates—and this is often reinforced by bad habits (e.g. apathy, feeling like we can't learn enough to start to participate) as a result of inadequate civic education.



**Lack of incentives and opportunities to get involved:** As youth, many of us do not see ourselves as being represented in the political realm because not many youth run for political office or as elected representatives in any capacity. For this to change, we also need to address barriers to other opportunities to learn and get involved, namely the lack of access among youth to political and community groups to participate in important policy discussions; the dearth of opportunities to engage mentorships programs or find mentors to enhance or open the door to youth experiences in democratic engagement; and the barriers to volunteering, chief among them the lack of time and financial resources among youth to devote themselves to volunteering. Even where the pursuit of elected office or other career options in public service are not sought, youth still face these same barriers to getting involved.

**Undervaluing youth perspectives:** We perceive a general lack of societal value placed on the perspectives, experiences, and needs of youth in our elections, political campaigns, and issues that affect our society and communities. Many youth experience a feeling of being considered politically naïve or lacking requisite life experience to contribute to civic discourse. As a result, youth often feel that the outcome of political decisions doesn't impact them. Furthermore, youth who do engage with democracy often feel that we have to fight two battles: one on the issues we care about, and the other just getting people to listen to us and take our concerns seriously.

Youth also undervalue themselves and may be susceptible to stigmas that politics and democratic engagement are best left to experts and professionals. There is a pervasive perception among youth that we simply can't make a difference, or that we should simply wait our turn. Meanwhile, youth who turn to alternative or more disruptive forms of democratic engagement, such as activism, often feel societal discrimination against those methods because they seem to fall outside the mainstream or traditional forms of democratic engagement.

**Shortcomings in our electoral systems:** We perceive a general sense of frustration among youth that the current electoral system and political climate doesn't work for us or for issues we care about. There is pervasive pessimism among youth that politicians and elections can actually make effective change on issues important to youth (e.g. the climate crisis, student debt). Additionally, our electoral system (i.e. "first past the post") contributes to youth feeling that their vote doesn't matter and might not ever matter, especially in areas where one party dominates. We believe our electoral system falls short of incentivizing participation (e.g. registering and knowing how to vote) and knowledge acquisition among youth with respect to democratic engagement, especially at the local level. And many of us question the utility of limiting the right to vote to those 19 and older, when civic education and democratic engagement can and should begin at much younger ages.

## **Towards a Set of Recommendations**

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A key aspect of deliberative mini-publics is that they provide participants with the time and information they need to meaningfully engaging in open dialogue. Information is most often shared in advance about the topic being discussed and learning from diverse opinions, experience and perspectives and a critical component of the processes throughout. While some deliberative mini-publics are used for consultative purposes, many are used to help inform policy recommendations and create reports on matters of importance.

As noted above, it was beyond the scope of this pilot project to create a set of policy recommendations or specific action items. However, participants worked together to lay the groundwork for such an outcome through their deliberations in the fourth and final session of the Dialogue.



These ideas and suggestions were not subject to the full process of deliberation and consensus-building, yet they represent the culmination of four weeks' worth of learning, listening, discussing, and building momentum. These ideas further encapsulate the reflections and takeaways of the participants from the Dialogue as to what they, as youth and UVic students, can to do improve civil discourse and democratic engagement.

### What specific things can be done to increase youth engagement in democracy?

IMPROVING CIVIC EDUCATION FOR YOUTH	OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING & MENTORSHIPS
Bring in a non-partisan voting education course into public schools, including teaching different forms and systems of democracy	Create more incentives for students to get involved in community organizations
Petition the provincial government for education reform	Create "youth champions" to build bridges between youth and government, and highlight success stories and "joys" of engagement
Hold a youth vote (though it doesn't count) to compare to the actual results	Provide more access to stories and lived experiences of current leaders, to inspire youth
Create pop-up parliaments for youth to mirror actual parliaments and highlight that youth are able to participate	Assist with connecting youth and their interests with mentors and mentorship groups
Lobby our education ministers to change the curriculum, and get youth involved in actually creating civic education curriculum that is for them	Frame mentorship for youth as a process of growing, not simply as a pathway to a career
Normalize political discourse in education so it is not seen as divisive and polarizing	Create opportunities in schools, through our civic education, for older students to mentor younger students on democratic engagement and civil discourse
Instill a sense of civic responsibility even at the elementary school age and build confidence over time (recognize that civic education is a long-term process)	Help students understand that mentorship can come in many forms, and is flexible—conversations, occasional meetings, shadowing professionals in their job, etc.
Create constructive opportunities to engage in political discourse in school, through things like mock campaigns, elections and parliaments	Create resources about engagement opportunities and groups looking for youth involvement
Focus less on the history of our democracy and politics, and more on the current political environment and what's at stake for youth	In schools, disassociate "volunteering" as something mandatory or career-building, and make it feel more exploratory to help students broaden their knowledge and learn how to engage
Streamline civic education so it is consistent across the country	Compel local politicians and community non-profit groups to come into schools and share their perspectives and knowledge, to inspire youth and make them care
Ensure access to internet tools and resources for all youth regardless of location or economic circumstance	



MORE SOCIETAL VALUE ON YOUTH PERSPECTIVES	VOTING AND ELECTORAL REFORM
Facilitate more young people running for political office	Consider bonus marks in high school for voting and/or engaging in other forms democratic action
Create Youth Advisory Councils (which might shadow a minister or a council)	Lower the voting age as part of voting reform, with an honest and unbiased campaign to educate people on the importance of more youth involvement
Spotlight youth political achievements	Create more peer-to-peer support and information-sharing opportunities around political issues
Amplify the voices of youth who are succeeding (media, social media)	Create more opportunities to vote by phone, mail, electronically
Call on political groups to signal that they want more youth involvement	Make it easier to register to vote whenever you visit a government services office (e.g. to get a driver's licence or renew your passport)
	Engage social media campaigns from government, politicians and groups that speak directly to youth and frame things in ways they can understand and digest





"It was an excellent experience that has motivated me to become more involved in similar conversations. I learned so much and am motivated to learn more about the topics that we discussed."

—Adam Regier, undergraduate student, Social Sciences





# PART IV: PARTICIPANT IMPRESSIONS OF THE DIALOGUE EXPERIENCE

In their final small-group deliberations as well as in a survey circulated at the conclusion of the Dialogue, participants were asked to provide their impressions of the process, their experience and personal takeaways from participating. Most participants expressed a degree of optimism around how the Dialogue has contributed to their understanding of civil discourse and democratic engagement, and armed them with knowledge and inspiration to become more active and engaged citizens in their communities and among their peers.

## Participant Takeaways

Specifically, as a result of their participation, students reported:

- ▶ Feeling more empowered
- ▶ Wanting to get more involved
- ▶ Wanting to share what they've learned with peers
- ▶ Being more aware of the impact of social media in our civic discourse
- ▶ Wanting to help mobilize and educate fellow youth, and build relationships around common issues and concerns
- ▶ Becoming a better listener
- ▶ That engagement isn't as hard as they'd thought
- ▶ More awareness about engaging with local politics
- ▶ Being more comfortable having these conversations with others
- ▶ Being willing to challenge existing notions of discourse and democracy
- ▶ Realizing the importance of civic education
- ▶ Wanting to start a social media campaign, some kind of grassroots action to engage and have dialogue
- ▶ Being happier with their choice of UVic as their post-secondary institution, because of its support for initiatives like this
- ▶ Feeling more confident to contact elected representatives
- ▶ Wanting to look for opportunities to volunteer or run for an office
- ▶ Wanting to take a UVic class on political philosophy
- ▶ Being less afraid of dialogue and direct action
- ▶ Wanting to become a mentor
- ▶ Realizing the role of empathy in public discourse
- ▶ Wanting to teach their children about all this some day

**75%**

**VERY LIKELY**

**SAID THEY WOULD BE "VERY LIKELY" (5 ON A SCALE OF 1-5)**

**25%**

**SOMEWHAT LIKELY**

**SAID THEY'D BE "SOMEWHAT LIKELY" (4 OUT OF 5)**

**TO PARTICIPATE IN A FUTURE DIALOGUE IF PRESENTED THE OPPORTUNITY OR INVITATION**



## Opportunities for the University of Victoria

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Participants were asked and surveyed about the opportunities for the University of Victoria to utilize student dialogues in other facets of university life. Almost all agreed that dialogues of this nature would be beneficial to the university environment and positively impact students' education, community engagement, and level of satisfaction at UVic.

Various students clarified that the topics for and scopes of future dialogues should include a survey of students and/or the UVic community to gather suggestions for those that are most urgent or interesting. Several participants noted that certain potential topics of dialogue would not necessarily be limited to students but also might include faculty, staff, and members of the wider community, where their perspectives and experience may be valid for participants to consider, and where they might have a stake in the outcome. A related suggestion held that the university should have a standing, rotating dialogue body to deliberate on regular as well as emergency concerns of the university.

### Participants' suggestions for topics of future dialogues within the university community:

- ▶ Mental health
- ▶ The role of the university in society/community
- ▶ The climate crisis and university-based action
- ▶ Student housing and the wider housing crisis
- ▶ Student debt
- ▶ Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic (and other emergencies)
- ▶ University spending and financial investment
- ▶ Media consumption, and how students can be more informed citizens and better critical thinkers
- ▶ Promoting local diversity
- ▶ The rise of anti-intellectualism in society
- ▶ Reforming the university senate
- ▶ Managing water issues and conservation on campus

## Considerations for Future Dialogues

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In considering how to design and execute future dialogues in the university community, the following considerations, reflecting feedback from participants as well as observations of the project team, may be useful.

**A clear mandate:** It was known to the designers of this Dialogue that, for the purposes of the pilot project, it wasn't feasible to devote additional time and resources to a deliberative process that included a clearly articulated set of recommendations reflecting consensus. This was underscored in feedback from participants, many of whom noted a desire for a clear mandate for the deliberative body, one that connects the topics and process of the Dialogue to tangible, actionable outcomes. The mandate would also clarify the intended audience (e.g. policymakers) for the reported outcomes and recommendations, as well as the actions expected of that audience (e.g. policy changes). A few participants even suggested that members of the target audience (e.g. university administrators, civic leaders, etc.) attend a final session or a presentation of the report. In the words of one participant, commenting on how it felt that the Dialogue produced so much good work but without actionable outcomes, "It felt like we just fell off a cliff at the end."



**More involvement in the work:** Several participants indicated a desire to participate more extensively in the drafting of the report (e.g. defining, categorizing and prioritizing the issues, concerns and recommendations). Extending the Dialogue to allow for this part of the process to be fully realized would be beneficial and consistent with deliberative democratic practises. A related suggestion was to provide more opportunities in the framework of the Dialogue for participants to define the terms they are discussing and the commonalities they share so that these become the platform from which the rest of the work, including report drafting, will follow.

**More variety in the sessions:** A common feature of feedback was a desire for more variety in the composition of the small working groups, specifically not always having the same cohort of participants but mixing the groups and thus providing more opportunities to meet other participants, listen to their perspectives, cross-pollinate ideas, and work together more as a single body rather than a cohort of cohorts. Several participants noted that the small working groups need not always work on the same questions, but rather there could opportunities for participants to choose groups and topics they wanted to pursue as part of the whole. Others expressed a desire for clearer goals, tasks and outcomes in the working groups, especially in the early sessions when there is a need to define the terms and common values for the participants. A related idea expressed that participants should have the opportunity to suggest speakers (or areas of expertise they wished to be exposed to) for a more well-rounded experience.

**Slowing the pace:** Many participants noted that the Dialogue felt rushed or overwhelming at times, especially with respect to interacting with guest speakers and digesting the ideas they presented. Several felt there should have been more time or even more sessions devoted to processing new information and folding it into the deliberations and tasks of the working groups. A related idea was to have breakout groups in which cohorts of participants could interact with the guest speakers in a setting less formal than plenary. Several participants felt that the first session in particular was overwhelming and might have benefited from slower pacing, perhaps just one speaker instead of three, and more time to comprehend the overall goals of the Dialogue as a way of getting started.

**More resources:** Several participants noted they'd love to see some sort of resource library or hub for participants to access (on an optional basis) background readings and other material related to the topics, and for participants themselves to suggest related resources for others. This would be especially helpful for dialogues leading towards specific recommendations (e.g. on policy) for which understanding the context and background of existing policies would be useful. Some participants who had more subject-matter expertise with this Dialogue felt that some of the basic "Poli-Sci 101" information presented might have been better provided as background reading rather than in the sessions.



# PART V: CONCLUSIONS

The enthusiasm with which most if not all participants in the Dialogue embraced and participated the process, provided their feedback, and suggested opportunities for future dialogues should be taken as a clear signal to the project team and the wider university community that there is a robust appetite for deliberative democracy in the university experience, and an opportunity for the University of Victoria to embrace innovation and leadership in this field.

In the survey and exit interviews, participants highlighted their belief that the Dialogue felt complementary to their overall education, especially as it engages aspects of theoretical learning and challenges participants to apply it practically—something many participants noted was an important element of higher education. In the words of one participant who is about to graduate, this experience of being challenged to put theory into practice was simply “exhilarating.”

In the words of another participant, the Dialogue format, as a deliberative mini-public, is an opportunity for the university to “meet students where they’re at” and, by its nature as a randomly selected body of diverse and representative voices, “breaks down barriers to participate in policymaking for those most impacted by policy.” Another participant concluded that this format is simply “more democratic.”

As a conduit for educating and training young people to become engaged members and leaders in society, as a model of inclusivity and diversity, and as a driving force in breaking down barriers to youth participation, the university holds a unique ability to motivate and challenge youth to participate in democracy and discourse, and should not overlook innovative ways to do so.

Ultimately, the University of Victoria should remain committed to fostering opportunities in which students can learn and deliberate about topics relevant to them and the broader community, and continue to exhibit leadership in democratic innovation.



# APPENDIX A: GUEST SPEAKERS

**Janni Aragon** is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in Political Science at the University of Victoria. She has taught courses on American Politics, Political Theory, Gender and Politics, Feminist Theory, Gender and International Relations, Model United Nations Simulation, Internship in Political Science, as well as numerous Women's Studies courses at the University of Victoria and San Diego State University. Her research interests include: Gender and Politics, American Politics, Women and Technology, Third Wave Feminisms, Social Movements, and Transnational Feminism. She holds a BA/MA from San Diego State University and MA/PhD from UC Riverside. [@janniaragon](#)

**Avigail Eisenberg** is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Victoria, and was Chair of the department from 2013-18. She has convened several conferences and workshops in Victoria, Montreal and Barcelona and hosted numerous academic visitors at UVic as co-founder of the Victoria Colloquium on Legal and Political Thought, and the Consortium on Democratic Constitutionalism. She has taught masterclasses on diversity and pluralism at Concordia University, Hebrew University and UVic. She was awarded a visiting fellowship by the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy in 2003. In 2010, she received UVic's Faculty of Social Sciences Research Award. [@eisenbergavi](#)

**John Gastil** is Distinguished Professor in Communication Arts & Sciences and Political Science and Senior Scholar at the McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State University. He studies political deliberation and group decision making across a range of contexts. His work on the Citizens' Initiative Review has helped evaluate an exciting new form of public deliberation that should improve initiative elections. His work with the Cultural Cognition Project demonstrated the ways in which our deeper values bias how we learn about issues and form opinions. His newest book is *Hope for Democracy: How citizens can bring reason back into politics* (Oxford, 2020) with Katie Knobloch. [@jgastil](#)

**Elizabeth Matto** is Associate Research Professor at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics, and Director of the Center for Youth Political Participation. She leads research as well as educational and public service efforts designed to encourage and support the political learning of high school and college students and civic action among young adults, including those holding and running for office. She is also the author of the book, *Citizen Now: Engaging in Politics and Democracy* (Manchester University Press, 2017), and the lead editor on the American Political Science Association's 2017 publication, *Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines*. [@ecmatto](#)

**Dave Meslin** is a Toronto-based activist who has spent more than twenty years as a social and political entrepreneur leaving a trail of non-profit start-ups, campaign victories, viral videos, new magazines, and public space interventions in his path. An urbanist, community organizer, author and trainer, Meslin inspires audiences to invert the traditional pyramid of hierarchy by creating meaningful opportunities to engage our employees, our members, our students. His thesis is simple: We're stronger and smarter when we're all involved. Transforming top-down leadership into bottom-up collaboration is the true challenge of the 21st century. [@meslin](#)

**Taylor Owen** is the Beaverbrook Chair in Media, Ethics and Communications, and Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy, at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University. His work explores Canadian and international platform governance policies and coordination. He is the author of *Disruptive Power: The Crisis of the State in the Digital Age*, and was the director of the Digital Democracy Project, a large-scale digital ecosystem monitoring project of the 2019 Canadian federal election. [@taylor\\_owen](#)



# APPENDIX B: PROJECT TEAM

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**Project Lead: Simon Pek, Assistant Professor, Gustavson School of Business**

Simon Pek joined the University of Victoria's Gustavson School of Business in 2017. He teaches and researches in the area of sustainability and organization theory, and has a particular interest in studying and experimenting with innovative ways of practicing organizational democracy. Simon also co-founded and serves as a member of the board of directors of Democracy In Practice, a non-profit dedicated to democratic experimentation, innovation, and capacity-building. In this capacity, he spoke at the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy 2016, where Democracy In Practice was selected as a finalist for the Democracy Innovation Award.

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**Project Sponsor: Jennifer Vornbrock, Executive Director, Community & Government Relations**

Jennifer Vornbrock leads the department which provides strategic direction and advice on community and government relations for the university. Previously, she held the position of Vice President, Knowledge and Innovation at the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Prior to joining the Mental Health Commission in 2013, Jennifer worked for more than a decade at Vancouver Coastal Health in various operational and strategic roles.

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**Project Manager: Julie Potter, Associate Director, Community & Government Relations**

Julie Potter joined UVic in 2018. In her role she works across UVic and with members of the community to strengthen reciprocal partnership that have a positive impact on the communities UVic serves. Julie previously worked in municipal government leading engagement efforts. Current co-chair of the Women in Leadership Victoria Chapter, Julie has a passion for creating connections and building community.

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**Senior Facilitator, Project Co-Designer and Report Author: Richard Johnson**

Richard Johnson is a senior facilitator with MASS LBP, where he has facilitated and coordinated Citizens' Assemblies and other deliberative bodies with partners including the City of Toronto; the City of Calgary; the Municipalities of Duncan and North Cowichan; the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; Metrolinx; Sidewalk Toronto; the Greater Toronto Airports Authority; St. Joseph's Hospital; and more. Since 2011 he has been the jury facilitator for the annual National Magazine Awards of Canada. Also a freelance writer and editor, he is a former literary journalism fellow at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

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**Project Advisor: Jerymy Brownridge, Private Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and Executive Director of Government House**

Prior to being appointed to his current position in 2015, Mr. Jerymy Brownridge acted as Director of Operations/2IC at Government House, having served the Honourable Steven L. Point and Her Honour, Judith Guichon, as well as her dog Olive. Immediately before coming to Government House, a branch of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Brownridge worked for the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the British Embassy in Beijing. Mr. Brownridge started his career in international finance, largely in investment and infrastructure development with a China and broader Asia focus.



**Project Advisor: Chantelle Krish, Director, Communications, Programs and Outreach at Office of the Lieutenant Governor – BC Public Service**

Chantelle Krish is a communications executive with extensive experience in private, non-profit and public sectors. Chantelle has led advocacy initiatives around systemic barriers to gender equality, leading to policy changes at all levels of government. In her current role serving the Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, Chantelle is building a Province-wide public education and programs framework highlighting Her Honour's key themes: reconciliation, democracy, and equality and inclusion.

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**Facilitators**

- ▶ Corie Kielbiski
- ▶ Jacob Morel
- ▶ Daniela Pinto
- ▶ Tyler Tootle
- ▶ Logan Youngberg

**Special Thanks**

- ▶ Morgan Slavkin, Special Events Officer, for logistical support
- ▶ dea Kearns, AV Services Coordinator, for technical support
- ▶ Chris Ellis, Director of Civic Lotteries at MASS LBP, for support with the Civic Lottery
- ▶ University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS)
- ▶ UVic Graduate Students' Society (GVSS)

**Steering Committee Members:**

- ▶ Jim Dunsdon, AVP, Student Affairs
- ▶ Robina Thomas, Executive Director, IACE
- ▶ Dr. Oliver Schmidtke, Professor and Director, Centre for Global Studiess
- ▶ Dr. Astrid Brousselle, Director and Professor, School of Public Administration
- ▶ Crystal Tremblay, Assistant Professor and Academic Specialist in Community-engaged Research, Department of Geography,
- ▶ Rhianna Nagel, Community-Engaged Learning Coordinator, LTSI
- ▶ Dr. Tara Ney, Associate Professor, School of Public Administration
- ▶ Saul Klein, Dean, Gustavson School of Business
- ▶ Cassbreea Dewis, Executive Director, Equity and Human Right
- ▶ Dr. Scott Watson, Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science
- ▶ Dr. Chris Goto-Jones, Professor, Philosophy



# APPENDIX C: PROGRAM

## SESSION 1: Tuesday, 10 November 2020, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

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Participants gathered virtually via Zoom and joined distinguished guests for the inaugural session of the Student Dialogue on Democratic Engagement, hosted by Professor Simon Pek. After welcoming all participants, outlining the broad objectives of the Dialogue, and acknowledging that the land upon which all participants are gathered virtually is the unceded traditional territory of the Lekwungen, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ nations, Dr. Pek introduced the **Honourable Janet Austin, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia**. Her Honour addressed the participants first with a word of thanks and reminded all that it is the role of her office to uphold the values and institutions of democracy, and in that capacity she pledged to encourage and promote dialogue and civil discourse. She followed with a word of caution: that the fragility of Canadian democracy and the respect for our public institutions cannot be taken for granted, and that it is the youth of this country who will be charged with addressing the most pressing concerns of our shared future. In concluding, she exhorted the participants to work together towards realizing that future by helping the rest of us learn how to prioritize civil discourse and youth participation in democracy.

Next, Dr. Pek introduced **Kevin Hall, President of the University of Victoria**, who remarked to the participants that universities are all about student experience, and that events like the Dialogue—in which students can engage with each other and with leaders in their fields—are an important part of a well-rounded experience in the university community. He encouraged participants to offer each other a space for constructive dialogue and mutual empowerment, and advised them to keep their minds open, to learn about new ways to engage with each other, to be respectful, and also to be curious, to disagree with each other, and to discover new perspectives.

Dr. Pek then introduced the first of three guest speakers, **John Gastil, Professor and Senior Scholar at the McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State University**. Dr. Gastil introduced participants to the underlying values and hallmarks of participatory democratic engagement and the role of civil discourse in fostering participation and the search for common ground. With respect to how we engage each other, he advised participants to ask themselves: Is there open-heartedness as well as open-mindedness? Are we respecting how others have arrived at their perspective? He further advised participants to seek connection with people whose perspectives are different from theirs.

Dr. Pek then introduced the next speaker, **Avigail Eisenberg, Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Victoria**. Dr. Eisenberg introduced participants to another view of participatory democracy and civil discourse: that it is potentially exclusive of those it means to include. She reminded students that dialogue and deliberation privilege the value of rational discourse, and that value may not be available to everyone, for a variety of reasons, nor is it the only value by which democratic change can happen. She urged participants to resist internal exclusion and expose biases that may prevent the process of deliberation from being truly inclusive.

Finally, Dr. Pek introduced **Taylor Owen, Beaverbrook Chair in Media, Ethics and Communications at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University**. Dr. Owen introduced participants to the digital framework of political discourse, specifically online platforms and their tendency to amplify uncivil discourse and misinformation—among the threats to democratic engagement. He advised students to question the very structure of our digital communications, their role in democratic society, and how they may be barriers as well as tools to civil discourse and democratic engagement.



Following the three presentations, the participants broke out into six groups of four, plus a facilitator, to have a small-group discussion in which they shared their takeaways from the three presentations and prioritized a set of three questions they'd like to ask of the speakers. In plenary, a representative from each group asked questions of the speakers, and a lively dialogue ensued during the final half hour of the session.

## **SESSION 2: Tuesday, 17 November 2020, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.**

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A week later, participants gathered via Zoom for the Dialogue's second session. Dialogue host Professor Simon Pek welcomed all participants and delivered a brief recap of the previous session before clarifying the agenda ahead. Participants then broke out into six small working groups of four students, plus a facilitator, and began by introducing themselves and describing a recent personal experience engaging in or observing civil discourse. Participants then discussed the characteristics of civil discourse and the reasons they felt civility was important in public discourse, especially in conversations around politics, democracy, and public policy. They further discussed the factors that they believe contribute to uncivil discourse, and what can be done to foster more civil discourse. Working together, each group came up with a short list of their group's ideas to present in plenary. Following the breakout deliberations, one student from each group presented the highlights of their deliberations in a plenary session moderated by Senior Facilitator Richard Johnson.

After a short break, Dr. Pek introduced the next set of deliberation questions on the topic of youth democratic engagement, and participants again broke out into the same small groups where first they articulated all the ways in which they or their peers currently engage with democracy. Then, working together, participants came up with a list of barriers to youth engagement in democracy, as well as a list of opportunities for youth to engage better and perhaps overcome the identified barriers. Once again, Senior Facilitator Richard Johnson then moderated a plenary session in which a representative from each group reported on the highlights of their group's deliberations.

## **SESSION 3: Tuesday, 24 November 2020, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

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The third session of the Dialogue saw participants gather again via Zoom, welcomed by Professor Simon Pek. After clarifying the agenda for the session, Dr. Pek introduced the first of three guest speakers, Elizabeth Matto, Associate Research Professor at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics. Dr. Matto presented some of her research on youth engagement in democracy, articulating why it is important to examine political engagement through a generational lens as well as her typology of the types of democratic engagement in society. She advised participants to examine the structure as well as social/cultural limitations on youth participation, and how to find resources for better engagement.

Professor Pek then introduced the second speaker, **Dave Meslin, a Toronto-based community organizer**, who delivered an enthusiastically received presentation on the extent to which the current political climate as well as the infrastructure of our democracy are themselves barriers to participation and are evidence of a system that needs to be fixed. He advised students to think big but act small and locally, at least at first, highlighting the importance of community organization, building alliances, volunteering, engaging mentorship opportunities, and building momentum towards political change.

After a short break, Professor Pek introduced the third guest speaker of the evening, and the sixth and final speaker of the Dialogue, **Janni Aragon, Assistant Professor in Political Science at the University of Victoria**. Dr. Aragon began by reminding students of some of the recent achievements by youth in democratic engagement, including on issues like the climate crisis and global labour practices.



She further articulated four general ways that youth are especially adept at participating in political culture—as consumers, creators, activists and representatives—and concluded by advising students to find their own best paths to engagement, to amplify the successes of their peers, to galvanize one another to participate, and to harness the power of tools like social media and ‘disruptive’ tactics like protests and activism that may be uniquely available to their generation.

Following the three presentations, the participants broke out into their small working groups, with a facilitator, for a discussion in which they shared their takeaways from the three presentations and prioritized a set of three questions they’d like to ask of the speakers. In plenary, Professor Simon Pek moderated a lively Q&A in which a representative from each group asked questions of the speakers, who concluded with final words of encouragement for the participants.

#### **SESSION 4: Tuesday, 1 December 2020, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.**

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For the fourth and final session of the Dialogue, participants and facilitators gathered once more via Zoom, welcomed by Professor Simon Pek. Prior to the session, each participant received by email a document summarizing the outcomes of the deliberations in Session 2, including the barriers and opportunities to youth engagement in democracy that had been identified in all groups. After a note of welcome and setting the agenda, participants immediately broke out into their working groups of four students, plus a facilitator, to pick up the deliberations where they left off after Session 2. Working together, and also drawing on the knowledge and insights from the six guest speakers, participants identified what they felt were the three most promising ways in which youth can engage with democracy, and also worked to clarify what they felt were the biggest barriers to each. Back in plenary, Senior Facilitator Richard Johnson asked a representative from each group to report back on their top ideas.

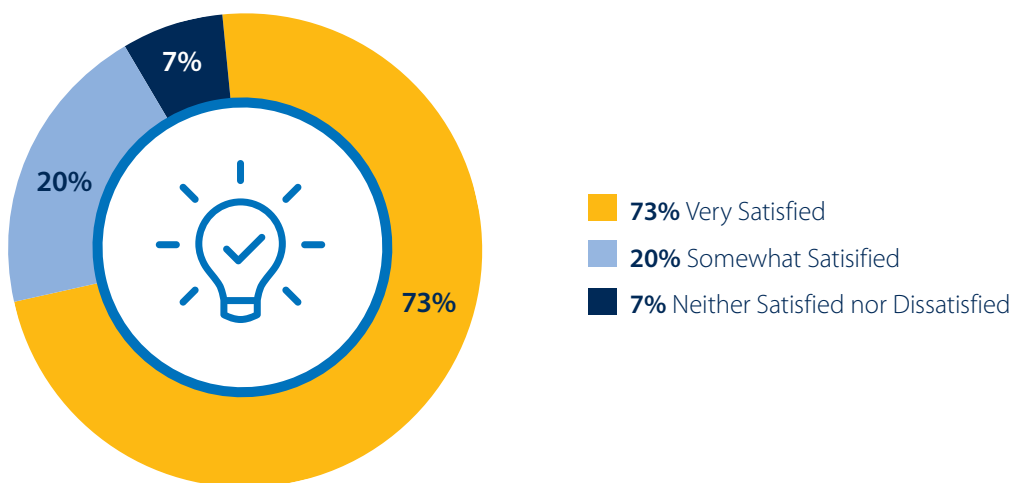
After a short break, participants returned to their small groups and worked to further define the three opportunities identified for youth to overcome barriers to democratic engagement, laying the groundwork for specific priorities and recommendations—although this inaugural dialogue, as a pilot project, would not allow time for further work. Once again, the groups reported back the results of their deliberations in plenary, and then, in one final breakout session, the participants debriefed about their overall experience and top-three takeaways from the Dialogue, and articulated what they’d like to do next to act on the knowledge they’ve gained. Professor Simon Pek closed the final session by thanking all participants and encouraging them to continue these discussions in their communities and among their peers, and to send their feedback informally or via the forthcoming survey.



# APPENDIX D: SURVEY RESULTS

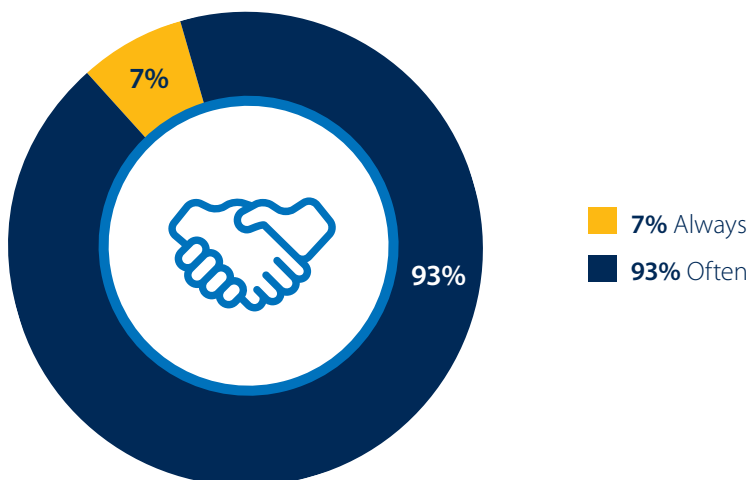
When surveyed on how satisfied participants were with the opportunities the Dialogue provided to express their views, 73 per cent reported 5 out of 5, 20 per cent reported 4 out of 5, and 7 per cent reported 3 out of 5.

How satisfied are you with the opportunity to express your views during the Dialogue?



When asked how often they felt their fellow participants treated them with respect, 93 per cent reported "Always" and 7 per cent reported "Often."

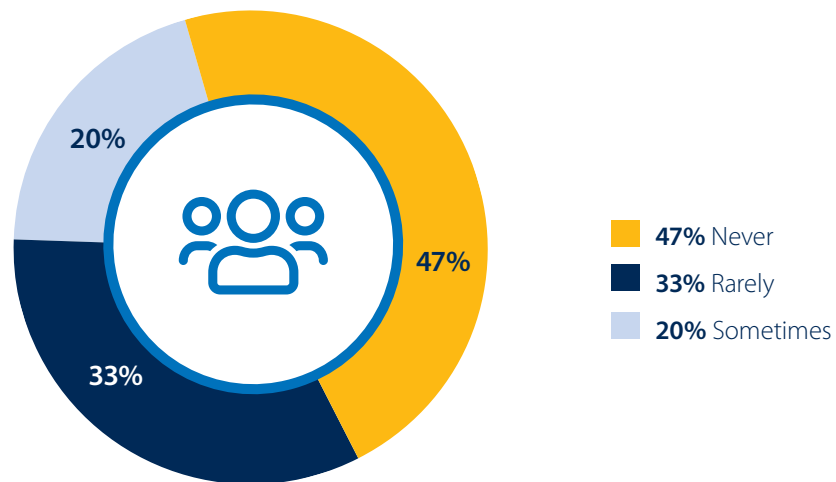
How often did you feel your fellow participants treated you with respect during the Dialogue?





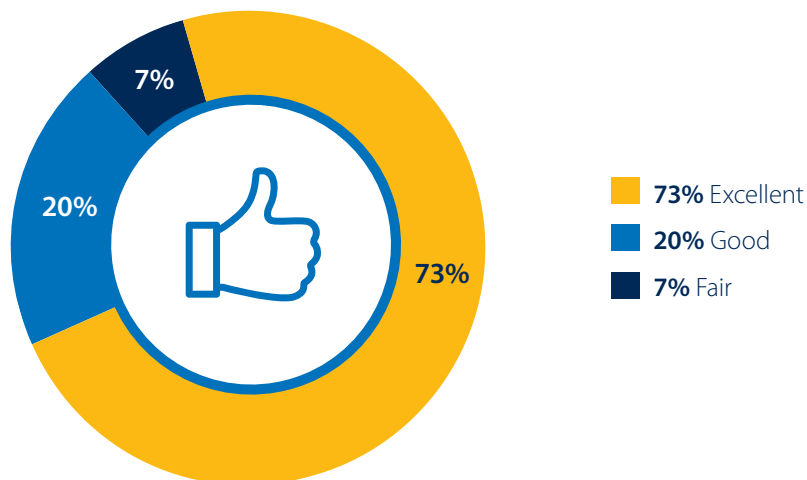
When asked how often they felt pressure to agree with something that they weren't sure about, 47 per cent reported "Never," 33 per cent reported "Rarely" and 20 per cent reported "Sometimes."

How often did you feel pressure to agree with something you weren't sure about, during the Dialogue?



Seventy-three per cent of participants said they found the quality and clarity of the guest speakers' presentations to be "excellent," 20 per cent said "good," and 7 per cent said "poor."

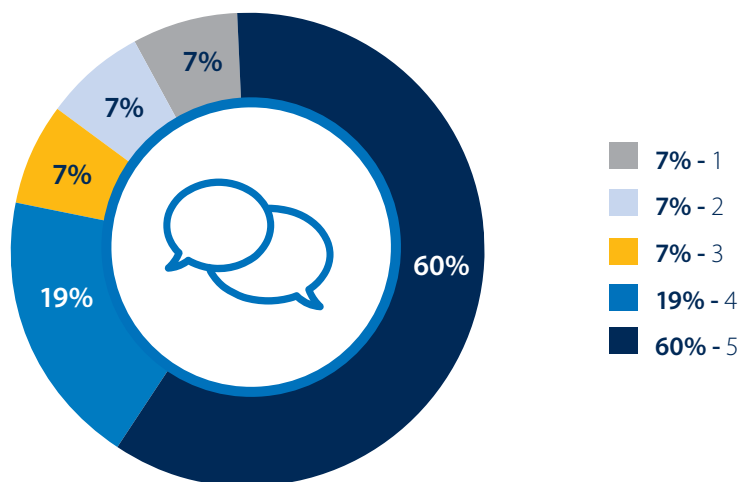
How did you find the quality and clarity of guest speakers during the Dialogue?





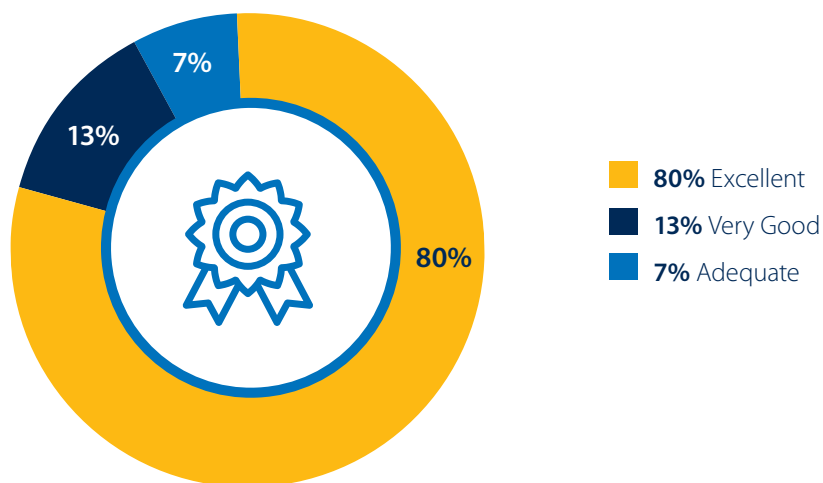
When asked the degree to which the Dialogue met their expectations for participation, 60 per cent reported 5 out of 5, 19 per cent reported 4 out of 5, and 7 per cent each reported 3, 2, and 1 out of 5.

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most satisfied, to what degree did the Dialogue meet your expectations for participation?



Eighty per cent said the facilitation team did an “excellent” (5 on a scale from 1-5) job in their roles to provide clarity to the tasks, create momentum in the dialogue as needed, and ensure a space where all participants feel welcome and heard. Thirteen per cent said the job was “very good” (4 out of 5) and 7 per cent said “adequate” (3 out of 5).

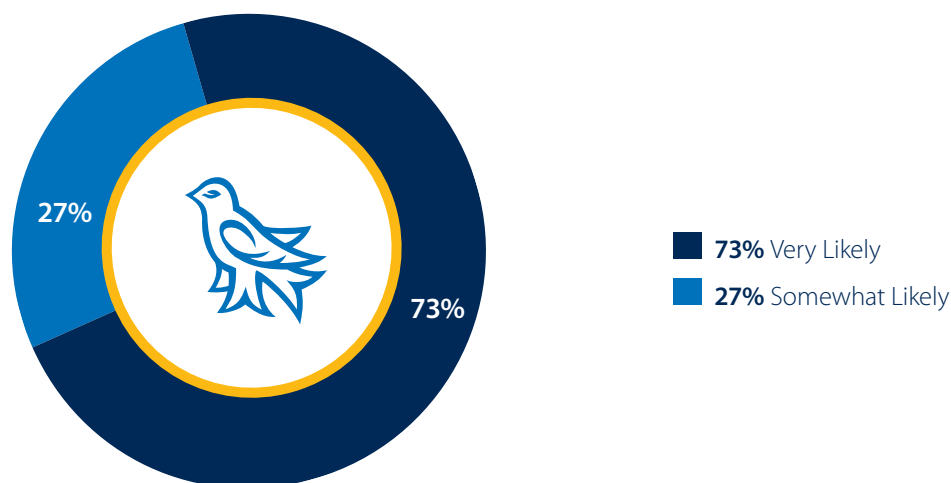
How would you rate the performance of the facilitation team during the Dialogue?





Seventy-three per cent said they would be “very likely” (5 on a scale of 1-5) to participate in a future dialogue if presented the opportunity or invitation, while 27 per cent said they’d be “somewhat likely” (4 out of 5).

How likely would you be to participate in a future UVic Dialogue if invited?



**Participants’ Impressions of the Speakers:** At the conclusion of the dialogue, participants were asked in a survey to note which guest speaker(s) made an impact on them.

“I especially appreciated Avigail Eisenberg’s presentation on critiques of ‘civil deliberation,’... [and] how ‘civil deliberation’ is perhaps not a perfect democratic distillation of the ‘marketplace of ideas’; that it can be an exclusionary format, and that direct action can be an equally valid way of presenting ideas.”

–Nala Scott, undergraduate student, undeclared

“David Meslin [made a big impact] especially because he proposed ideas that might seem radical but totally possible on a democratic concept. Made me hopeful that some changes can be in fact be done even though it seems too impossible or complicated.”

–Isabela Carneiro, undergraduate student, Humanities

“Taylor Owen got me thinking a lot about the role of technology in politics, and Dave Meslin opened my mind to the possibilities for different systems in politics, as well as the many forms of engaging in democracy.”

–Patrick Montgomery, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

“John Gastil’s idea of enlightened understanding and intentionally recognizing the alternative opinion, viewpoint, or consideration of other people with deliberative democracy allowed me to consider being more open minded for the future.”

–Participant who wished to remain anonymous

“All of the speakers were impactful.”

–Reyna Galo, undergraduate student, Social Sciences



## The Overall Experience of the Dialogue

### How would you describe your overall experience of participating in the Dialogue?

"It was exhilarating to engage in conversations with guest speakers, organizers, and attendees. It was truly educational to be exposed to others' perspectives on democracy and the ways with which we participate in it."

–Weam Abbas, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"Partaking in the interesting discussions and being exposed to new ideas through this Dialogue was a wonderful experience. Each segment was well thought out and served to deepen the conversations we had."

–Isabelle Rutherford, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"My experience was eye opening. It felt great to connect with other people who see issues in the system and want change, and to have the chance to discuss what that change might look like from diverse perspectives."

–Patrick Montgomery, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"I thought the dialogue was amazing, I was hesitant at first at what to expect but I ended up enjoying it thoroughly and will be hoping to do another in the future."

–Reyna Galo, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"It was an excellent experience that has motivated me to become more involved in similar conversations. I learned so much and am motivated to learn more about the topics that we discussed."

–Adam Regier, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"I am glad I was able to participate because it was fun and I got to hear a number of perspectives on issues I am interested in that I may not have encountered otherwise."

–Nala Scott, undergraduate student, undeclared

"This event was worthwhile and I am thankful that I had an opportunity to participate in it. This is a topic that truly impacts many young people and it is everyone's responsibility to engage with one another and to engage with youth voices."

–Julia Bilinski, graduate student, Human & Social Development

"I really felt I came out of this experience with more questions and new ideas on deliberative democracy. I realized there is still so much I need to learn but it was a good place to start on that journey to learn more. For that, I am grateful to have been a part of it."

–Participant who wished to remain anonymous

### What was the best or most impactful part of your experience in the Dialogue?

"The most impactful part of my experience in the Dialogue was being able to hear the opinions of my peers and to share my own on topics that wouldn't generally come up in regular conversation. The facilitation team did a wonderful job making sure that conversation flowed easily but also allowed us to steer it where we wanted it to go. I feel that I was exposed to ideas from my breakout group that I would not have considered otherwise and really enjoyed that experience."

–Isabelle Rutherford, undergraduate student, Social Sciences



"The best part was probably the awakened sense of being able to make a difference in some way. Discussing big ideas with such a diverse crowd makes me hopeful that positive changes can happen."

–Patrick Montgomery, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"Hearing different perspectives on resolving engagement issues."

–Nathaniel Sukhdeo, undergraduate student, Law

"Expanding my ideas of democratic engagement, especially far beyond just voting."

–Isabela Carneiro, undergraduate student, Humanities

### **What was the weakest or most disappointing part of your experience?**

"Mostly an issue with time, but not being able to engage in discussions with more people and not being able to dive deeper into the discussions with my own group."

–Patrick Montgomery, undergraduate student, Social Sciences

"That we didn't have a chance to scramble the small groups. I appreciated the continuity but would have enjoyed engaging with others beyond the three in my group."

–Jen Gamble, graduate student, Human & Social Development

"I did not hear an idea which blew my hair back. I really expected to. Some ideas repeated themselves quite a lot. And the worst part of it all, I did not face any harsh criticism and neither did anyone else. No one tried to rip the presented ideas apart. That indicated a lack of the scientific temper to me."

–Sanchit Sharma, undergraduate student, undeclared

"How short the experience was. I would prefer more opportunities to examine the topic. I would also like to be able to speak at length with others in the group rather than returning to the same breakout room every time."

–Adam Regier, undergraduate student, Social Sciences