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North American Cultural  
Diplomacy Initiative

# Players: We Are All Practitioners

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**VIRTUAL RESEARCH SUMMIT**

Hosted by the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism  
#NACDISUMMIT2021 @nacdiplomacyi

[www.culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com](http://www.culturaldiplomacyinitiative.com)

This document is the second in the North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative series on  
The Cultural Relations Approach to Diplomacy: Practice, Players, Policy

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**EDITOR:**

Amanda Rodríguez E. (Universidad Panamericana)

**FORWARD AND EDITORIAL SUPPORT:**

Nicholas J. Cull (University of Southern California)

**DESIGN AND FORMATTING:** Ada Sokolowski

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## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Although we meet virtually in conversation, we acknowledge that our bodies occupy lands that belong to Indigenous peoples. We encourage readers to consider their specific relationship to these lands and to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here since time immemorial.

The University of Southern California acknowledges its presence in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Gabrielino-Tongva peoples. We recognize that these Peoples were forcibly removed from their homelands and recognize the history of conquest that they have endured. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the generations that have gone before as well as the present-day Gabrielino-Tongva people. With humility, we recognize and respect all Indigenous peoples, their histories, and their ties to the land.

We also recognize the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneno, and Luiseno People for the land that USC occupies around Southern California.

We pay respects to their past and present.

Let this acknowledgment serve as an ongoing reminder of the original inhabitants where you reside.

# NICHOLAS J. CULL

*Professor of Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California,  
Local host for 2<sup>ND</sup> Summit of NACDI, Players: We are all practitioners.*



Cultural diplomacy is a topic which is both blessed and cursed by the extent to which it is known in the world at large. It helps that some people are aware that culture has always played a role in international relations and that presenting elements of a community's lived experience to others can build bridges of understanding. It is hurt by the assumption – derived from memories of expos, biennales, embassy-sponsored speakers, concerts and educational exchanges – that the actor in cultural diplomacy must necessarily be a nation state. By extension from this, the discussion of cultural diplomacy tends to affirm narrow nation-focused ways of thinking, including ideas of zero-sum competition in international space, as if one national culture's success necessarily implies another's subordination. This report is intended to help push boundaries beyond such narrow thinking and open the concept of cultural diplomacy to critical insight. The summit summarized here was designed to show how the concept of cultural diplomacy is broader than the national practice; how key platforms like museums and computer games are already engaging audiences on behalf of communities who have not historically been priorities for state-based cultural diplomacy, such as indigenous and diaspora groups; and how those groups can connect with each other across the fault lines of national borders and establish new relationships for mutual benefit. As will be seen from the discussion summarized in the report, some practitioners participating had not previously considered their work to be a variety of cultural diplomacy.

In the months since the summit meeting the world has become a darker place, but the significance of our discussions has grown. Russia's invasion of Ukraine underlined the enduring power of culture in international affairs, both because of the positive spectacle of Ukraine successfully harnessing its culture as a way to explain the country's value to outsiders and the negative example of Russia deliberately attacking cultural targets in Ukraine, and limiting cultural responses within its own domain. As the world slips further into competition and uncertainty the importance of preserving and promoting the spaces in which communities are known and know each other is enhanced. We all face the same challenges of climate instability, pandemic, corrosive inequality, and migrations. Only collective action can address such issues and effective collective action requires mutual understanding and trust. Cultural discussions, including the most challenging conversations that open issues of previous injustice and discrimination are an essential foundation for future collaboration and may yet prove the key to our collective wellbeing and even survival. I believe such discussion is greatly helped by the cultural expression, dialogue, and exchange now taking place at a level other than that of the nation-state. In the hope of further and better understood cultural dimension in our transnational dealings this report is offered. •

*– Nick Cull, Summer 2022*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November and December of 2021, The North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative held its second research summit, *Players: We Are All Practitioners*. Hosted by the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, the summit was held virtually on November 17 and 19 and December 1 and 9. This report documents the experience of the summit with the intent of making the conversation and insights generated widely available to practitioners and scholars in order to stimulate conversation going forward, with the goal of establishing Cultural Diplomacy as a critical practice.

*Players: We Are All Practitioners*, is the second of three research summits taking place across North America, that form the larger project entitled *The Cultural Relations Approach to Diplomacy: Practice, Players, Policy*. The goal is to bring together academics and practitioners from both sides of the culture/diplomacy divide to consider the potential of a Cultural Relations Approach to diplomatic activity in an effort to reframe the current narrative around the relationship of “the cultural” to diplomacy in the study and practice of international relations. These summits are intended to generate scholarship that treats cultural diplomacy as a multi-directional, inclusive, and potentially activist practice that encompasses a diverse range of actors and their networks. The first summit’s focus on practice feeds into the second summit’s acknowledgment of global players, which informs the third summit’s interest in the development of effective and inclusive policy responses. Our hope is that these summits provide a space for discussion and emerging lines of inquiry as practitioners and academics alike advance research, advocacy, and policy development.



This summit was comprised of four sessions taking place over the span of four days. Each session considered different ways in which cultural workers are involved in the performance of the diplomatic activity. The first session, *Decolonizing Diplomacy*, focused on indigenous diplomacies and the possibilities they offer to counter colonial narratives around culture and diplomacy. Through two panels, the speakers pondered the role of protest as a diplomatic act, the opportunities that emerge from digital technologies, and the spaces where indigenous ways of knowing can be considered to address global challenges. In the second session, *(Re)Constructing Identity: Diaspora Diplomacy*, panelists explored the role of diasporas in Cultural Diplomacy as stewards of culture. The three panels and keynote speaker that comprised this session underscored the importance of diasporas as actors in global relations. The third session, *Cultural Practice and Transnational Outreach: The practitioner in Sport, Art, and Music*, displays the broad spectrum of cultural relations. The speakers of this session addressed the question of whether or not practitioners in these fields can be considered diplomats in light of new approaches to Cultural Diplomacy. Finally, in the fourth session, *Locations of Cultural Diplomacy: From Your Neighborhood to the World*, panelists situate the city as a space of diplomatic activity where players can address global challenges and conduct more effective cultural relations.

The summit hosted attendees from diverse backgrounds: academics, personnel from non-government organizations and museums, private cultural consultants, video game designers, visual artists, musicians, and other cultural producers. Their approaches echo the diversity of actors engaged with Cultural Diplomacy, making them all practitioners. The input of panelists and guests builds on the project's efforts to present Cultural Diplomacy as a critical practice. The sessions of *Players: We Are All Practitioners*, generated key takeaways that are reflected in this report. Participants reflected on their role as diplomatic actors and that of other non-state actors and called for the recognition of innovative approaches to

Cultural Diplomacy in light of other ways of knowing decentering from the nation-state approach.

As we look ahead in this research project, we hope to build on the results of previous and future summits to continue conversations around culture, cultural relations, and diplomacy. The third summit on Policy will be hosted by the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City.

The 2021 summit was organized by NACDI team members and research fellows from across North America. The organizing team would like to thank all those involved in the summit's organization, their dedication was key to the success of this event. All NACDI members would like to thank the participants, whose enthusiastic and thoughtful participation resulted in valuable contributions to the furthering of the field.

We hope this report serves to document the knowledge generated throughout the summit, that it may spur the creation and strengthening of existing networks, and most importantly, fosters further conversation, insight, and research on Cultural Diplomacy. •



# SUMMIT CONVENORS



**JEFFREY BRISON**

Co-Director,  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**NICHOLAS CULL**

Center for Communication,  
Leadership and Policy,  
University of Southern California



**LYNDA JESSUP**

Vice Dean,  
Faculty of Arts and Science,  
Queen's University



**SASCHA PRIEWE**

Director of Collections  
& Public Programs at the  
Aga Khan Museum



**CÉSAR VILLANUEVA RIVAS**

Department of  
International Relations,  
Universidad Iberoamericana



**SARAH E.K. SMITH**

Department of Information  
and Media Studies,  
Western University



**JAY WANG,**

Director Center for  
Public Diplomacy,  
University of Southern California



# RESEARCH FELLOWS



**BARAA ABUZAYED**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**SAADA EL-AKHRASS**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**SIMGE ERDOGAN-  
O'CONNOR**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**LINDA GRUSSANI**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**EDUARDO TADEO  
HERNÁNDEZ**  
Communications Program,  
Universidad Iberoamericana



**BRONWYN JAQUES**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**AMY PARKS**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University



**AMANDA RODRÍGUEZ  
ESPÍNOLA**  
Research Fellow,  
North American Cultural  
Diplomacy Initiative



**FRANCISCO ZEPEDA  
TRUJILLO**  
Cultural Studies Program,  
Queen's University

# PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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# We Are All Practitioners: Pushing the Boundaries of Cultural Diplomacy

BY AMANDA RODRÍGUEZ ESPÍNOLA

**S**tate-centered Cultural Diplomacy has been the traditional approach to the field in practice and in academia. However, the mediatization of the field has underscored the importance and constant participation of non-state actors. It is not that they were not a part of the equation prior, but rather that we, as academics, were failing to give them their righteous place in the scholarship. The North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative (NACDI) has been committed to challenging the state-centric notions that are accompanied by colonial rhetorics to recognize the labor of those who serve as diplomatic actors outside the scope of government institutions.

After the first NACDI summit in September 2020, entitled *Cultural Diplomacy as Critical Practice*, the second summit considers the international players' role in (re)shaping the landscape of the field. Under the title *Players: We Are All Practitioners*, this second summit wants to recognize those cultural workers who, sometimes without considering themselves diplomatic actors, are pushing the boundaries that contain the notion of Cultural Diplomacy. Non-state actors contribute to Cultural Diplomacy by engaging in activities that highlight diverse ways of knowing beyond the Euro-centric notions of cultural representation.

# Cultural diplomacy needs to be understood as a long-standing process

Cynthia Schneider (2006), defines new cultural diplomacy as the “use of creative expression and exchanges of ideas, information, and people to increase mutual understanding” (p. 191). Using Schneider’s definition as a departing point to understand how non-state actors engage in Cultural Diplomacy efforts is useful as it suggests that it is “capable of going beyond any partisan, national interest by fostering mutual understanding, which presumably is of common interest” (Ang et al., 2015, p. 369). As the scholarship shifts from the notion that it should fulfill a national interest based on the rules of the international order, there is a generalized agreement that Cultural Diplomacy serves the main purpose of fostering a sense of common interests and understanding to build lasting relationships (Arndt, 2005; Bijos & Arruda, 2010; Cummings, 2003; Kim, 2017; Lubecka, 2012; Schneider, 2006; Villanueva Rivas, 2010).

Cultural diplomacy needs to be understood as a long-standing process with results that are seen also in the long-term, some of which are hard to quantify and hence evaluate, as Schneider herself suggests in this summit as a plenary listener. Resorting to Cultural Diplomacy in response to a crisis would not be beneficial because building relationships takes time to establish trust between the parties. Quite the reverse, using it as a rapid response could potentially alienate foreign publics even more (Schneider, 2006). Cultural Diplomacy can provide better results when it is approached as a consistent effort, at times becoming the only viable means of communication with the publics (Schneider, 2006) during conflicts and political tensions. Ultimately, cross-cultural exchanges that result from Cultural Diplomacy can help individuals from diverse backgrounds find common ground, sympathize, and form a relationship of trust by humanizing otherness through culture (Cull, 2008; Nye, 2019; Schneider, 2006; Sonenshine, 2013; Zaharna, 2019).

## Cultural Diplomacy and Non-State Actors

Non-state actors have attained a more significant role in Cultural Diplomacy as a result of changes in the international political landscape and communication and information technologies. In Cultural Diplomacy scholarship, there has been some debate regarding who should be considered a practitioner. As the field evolves and other disciplines inform new approaches, an increased number of scholars agree on the importance of non-state actors in carrying out Cultural Diplomacy efforts (Bjola et al., 2019; Cull, 2013; Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Henders & Young, 2016; Kim, 2017; La Porte, 2012a; Nye, 2008, 2019; Schneider, 2006; What Is Public Diplomacy?, s/f).

There is a growing perception that the understanding and practice of Cultural Diplomacy have changed since the end of the Cold War. Kerr and Wiseman (2018) point to three interlinked qualities that characterize

the complexity of Cultural Diplomacy in the 21st century: diversity, hyper-connectivity, and adaptivity.

Diplomacy's diversity takes form in practice and thought (Kerr & Wiseman, 2018). The performance of diplomacy has become more varied, resulting in the inclusion of new topics and actors in the practice. The types of relationships formed in diplomatic endeavors are also diversifying, hence bringing more complexity to its understanding. Diversity of thought also paves the way for new theories, scholars, and disciplines that showcase the interdisciplinarity that pervades the field. A larger number of scholars are incorporating new actors, issues, and technologies into theories of diplomacy while "different disciplinary theoretical perspectives—such as sociology, anthropology, and geography—help us better capture the essence of diplomacy" (Kerr & Wiseman, 2018, p. 2). Consequently, recognizing diversity in Cultural Diplomacy is vital to understanding how connectivity and adaptivity influence thought and practice.

With access to information increasing exponentially through current communication technologies and the cost of transmitting and storing information reduced, there are more opportunities for interaction and rapid connection among diverse actors looking to foster common values. As a result, the transmission and production of information have diversified and new actors can "compete effectively in the realm of soft power" (Nye, 2019, p. 10) forming stronger and larger networks of communication. The "vigorous communication activities [of non-state actors] appear to be generating soft power" (Zaharna, 2019, p. 214) in ways that were not seen before, enhancing Cultural Diplomacy's hyperconnectivity based on horizontal communication and multimodal flow of information (Castells, 2010; Dutta, 2015; Lee & Ayhan, 2015).

The adaptivity of diplomacy shows the coexistence of old and new diplomatic processes which recognize the "assumption that the actions of the agents (diplomats) have consequential effects on the structure (the international system). Thus, state-based diplomats and non-state actors constantly create, modify, and even undermine international and domestic institutions" (Kerr & Wiseman, 2018, p. 2). For Cultural Diplomacy to be successful, the institutions performing it need to be trusted by the foreign publics they are addressing. However, "post-modern publics are generally skeptical of authority and governments are often mistrusted" (Nye, 2019, p. 15). Therefore, governments are frequently better off partnering with private organizations and taking a background role, while the face of Cultural Diplomacy activities are nonprofit organizations, private corporations, and local communities. With culture is constantly being produced, performed, and distributed by non-government actors, Cultural Diplomacy scholarship is increasingly accepting and adapting to the role of non-state actors in its performance, especially as it embraces a





framework that is not exclusively dependent on national interest but one of attitudes, values, and behaviors (Bjola et al., 2019; Grincheva & Kelley, 2019; Henders & Young, 2016; La Porte, 2012a; Nye, 2019).

The acceleration of the development of information and communication technologies and the growing development of international networks have changed how Cultural Diplomacy is conducted. This has allowed for a new set of players to gain access to information, economic resources, and public support (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019). These entities are now able to perform economic, political, or social power at national and international scenarios, thus influencing “political discourses and agenda-setting by participating in global networks, mobilizing resources for addressing social and political issues, and directly engaging with civic societies from various countries” (Grincheva & Kelley, 2019, p. 201).

These new developments open the space for new research opportunities with regards to the field’s capacity to engage in different ways, through different actors, and with different target audiences, all still with the primary goal of Cultural Diplomacy in mind: creating conversations and fostering lasting relationships with audiences different from the ones sending the message.

Non-state actors have raised a new question about the way in which scholars and practitioners perceive Cultural Diplomacy. While historically scholarship has focused on the subject performing Cultural Diplomacy, nowadays the focus has been set on the object of action (La Porte, 2012a; Lee & Ayhan, 2015; Zaharna, 2019). In other words, instead of solely focusing on who is performing the Cultural Diplomacy initiative and if they are qualified to be considered cultural diplomats, this approach considers the objective and intentionality of the action. These can include but are not limited to, encouraging relationship-building, mutual understanding, and influence. Non-state actors are carrying the development of new strategies for communication and creating new opportunities for dialogue, core to Cultural Diplomacy efforts (La Porte, 2012a).

Furthermore, successful Cultural Diplomacy relies on legitimacy. States and their government institutions are not always considered in this way by the foreign public. While non-state actors do not have the legal status to represent a country, they have “diplomatic capabilities and sources of legitimate representation that make them actors in the field of diplomacy, thereby disrupting the state monopoly on diplomacy” (Ayhan, 2019, p. 70). In this sense, there is a shift in the agency of the diplomatic field, and non-state actors, relying on connectivity, adaptivity, and diversity, hold increased legitimacy with the public opinion.

Once the non-state actors are recognized as legitimate, they need to maintain it, which is a constant effort, since they can only use strategies of persuasion and attraction to keep public support. Actions like defending global interests, mobilizing strategic sectors of the public opinion that support them, and being transparent, participative, and consensual are some of the elements to gain and maintain legitimacy (La Porte, 2012a).

Authors have argued that the “diplomatic actorness” comes from the actor’s influence in policy and the diplomatic process, where meaning-making takes center stage to inform understandings of identities and values (Constantinou, 2010; Henders & Young, 2016). Other diplomacies, how non-state actor diplomacy has also been referred as, have as key diplomatic practices: 1) creating, maintaining, and managing relationships; 2) communicating, such as to convey purpose and intent; 3) formulating, identifying, and negotiating individual and shared goals; and 4) representing identities, values, and interests (Henders & Young, 2016, p. 335). These practices coincide with other authors’ arguments for recognizing non-state actors as Cultural Diplomacy practitioners by virtue of their object of action and not their political status. In other words, other diplomacies’ practices consider the objective and intentionality of the endeavor, rather than who performs it (La Porte, 2012b; Lee & Ayhan, 2015; Zaharna, 2019).

## Indigenous Diplomacies

One of the core objectives of the summit Players was to highlight the work indigenous communities are doing as cultural workers who strive for recognition of their world views, values, and rights. Cooperation within this network is essential to achieve their goals and protect their overall interests, but cooperation and engagement with foreign publics are also critical. Here is where Cultural Diplomacy becomes an important element in not only building relationships but also nurturing them.

In reevaluating the role of non-state actors in Cultural Diplomacy we have seen that it serves as a tool to advocate for strategies that go beyond the national interest as expressed in the traditional Westphalian system, aiming at state sovereignty as a global principle. Thinking more broadly about the diplomatic work acknowledges shared interests that are not articulated in the name of the nation-state, like indigenous identity, and uses collaboration as a way to legitimize them (Ang et al., 2015).

Indigenous peoples have been diplomatic actors prior to colonization and in many cases continued their traditional forms of diplomacy even after being colonized. If, as scholars engaging with decoloniality, we also understand diplomacy as an activity performed by other forms



# Cultural Diplomacy is a means for indigenous peoples to share their values, and voices with global reach.

of knowing (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Sharma, 2021), we can engage humanity-centered diplomacies that give prominence to cultural diversity as a diplomatic site. Communication and information technologies give other diplomacies new opportunities to flourish. In a mediatized environment we can visualize that “the more interconnected people become, the greater the potential for direct interaction of diverse cultural perspectives” (Zaharna, 2019, p. 125) and can prepare “other forms of international co-operation and when these are not possible culture is used as the basic tool to anticipate them in the future” (Lubecka, 2012, p. 355). For other diplomacies, culture takes an important political role because it can interfere with the distribution of the sensible: the tactic and unquestioned societal conventions, which determined what is visible, thinkable, doable. Art interferes with these conventions because it seeks to challenge what we see and accept as natural. It aims not to depict the world as is, [...] instead it creates realities and worlds and in doing so triggers emotional and psychological reactions that allow us to reorient what we see and know. (Bleiker & Butler, 2016, p. 72)

Cultural Diplomacy is a means for indigenous peoples to share their values, and voices with global reach, where their discourse about their identity and the way they wish to be represented is communicated to members of other societies, enabling a multidirectional flow of information and a direct experience of a foreign culture to promote interpersonal relations (Lubecka, 2012). The central purpose of Cultural Diplomacy then is to build and manage those relationships.

In this sense it is important to understand that Cultural Diplomacy is not an activity that on its own serves all the diplomatic needs of a group. It is an instrument to understand cultures, attitudes, and behaviors to, as we said, build and manage relationships, which can then be influenced to mobilize actions to advance the interests of that community (Ayhan, 2019). Cultural diplomacy serves as a force amplifier.

These goals have international projection as indigenous diplomacies continue to promote policy that recognizes their rights. Because non-state actors have no legal power to implement government policy, organizations and cultural workers rely on strategies of persuasion and attraction to obtain and maintain public support and grow their networks. They defend their global interests by mobilizing sectors of public opinion that support them, even thru protest and refusal, as we learned throughout the panels of the summit.

Overall, this summit advances the idea that non-state actors are becoming increasingly relevant players in diplomacy and transforming how we understand international relations. To a great extent, the mediatization of the field has paved the way for this transformation, allowing the development of new strategies for communication and influence, en-



# TERRITORIES OF RESILIENCE

## TERRITORIES OF RESILIENCE

Indigenous people have experienced profound displacement and loss of autonomy as a result of unbridled relocation patterns caused by landless and colonialism. Our resilience continues to be grounded in a deep knowledge of place embodied in stories of the land, our communities, and an abiding relationship with the natural world. In the work of recovery and new growth, we draw on our spirituality, language, the teachings of our Elders, ceremonies and rituals, oral traditions, art, and support networks.

## TERRITOIRES DE LA RÉSILIENCE

Les peuples autochtones ont subi des profonds bouleversements et ont subi une perte d'autonomie en raison des déplacements forcés qui ont débouché sur l'érosion et de la colonisation. Notre résilience repose toujours sur une connaissance intime du lieu qui trouve son expression dans les histoires de la terre, nos collectivités et une relation permanente avec le monde naturel. Dans ce processus de rétablissement et de nouvelle croissance, nous nous appuyons sur notre spiritualité, de notre langue, des enseignements de nos aînés, de nos traditions orales, de nos traditions artistiques, de nos rituels et de nos réseaux de soutien.

## TERRITORI DI RESILIANZA

La resilienza indigena è un concetto complesso e sfaccettato che si radica in una profonda conoscenza del luogo, delle comunità e della relazione con il mondo naturale. È un processo di recupero e di nuova crescita che si nutre della spiritualità, della lingua, delle tradizioni orali, delle tradizioni artistiche, dei rituali e delle reti di supporto.

"Unceded: Voices of the Land," Venice Architecture Biennale.

gagement techniques, and opportunities for dialogue, all core aspects of Cultural Diplomacy. The discourse of these players reflects the interests of sectors of society that have been under and misrepresented in states' agendas, like indigenous populations. Additionally, in the networked environment accelerated by mediatization, domestic and foreign publics should be perceived as active stakeholders "whose satisfaction, collaboration, or resistance and pressure can be vital" (Lee & Ayhan, 2015, p. 62) for Cultural Diplomacy efforts.

There are many dimensions at play in non-state Cultural Diplomacy, especially when transnational indigenous groups are involved, given their intermestic nature. Thus, the field needs to be understood as a critical practice that is reflective of approaches outside of the Euro-American centric discourse. Other diplomacies can challenge the normative notions of the discipline of international relations as a whole, but particularly of cultural diplomacy. Indigenous diplomacies can provide a "unique source of knowing on how to do IR" (Sharma, 2021, p. 37) that enables us to recognize other forms of interaction. These disruptions can invite us to de-link from Euro-American ways of knowing and think about the ways in which we, as scholars and practitioners, can reengage with alternative understandings. The complex mediations through which reality is constantly being shaped and produced need to engage with decolonial frameworks (Shome, 2016) as a way to challenge the inequalities the colonized subject has been subjected to. •



# The Cultural Relations Approach to Diplomacy Summit II: Players

## Summit Description: Players: We Are All Practitioners

*Players: We Are All Practitioners* focuses on the activities of diplomatic practitioners broadly conceived. Hosted by the University of Southern California, the summit brings together academics and practitioners from both sides of the culture/diplomacy divide to consider the role of practitioners of a Cultural Relations approach to diplomacy as an interpersonal stance – as a set of behaviors, orientations, and attitudes within a broader spectrum of cultural relations.

This summit underscores worldviews of *players* who challenge statist and Eurocentric definitions of diplomacy and diplomatic activity – definitions which preclude other worldviews, and other ways of knowing and being in the world. By reconceptualizing “players” in this manner, we aim to reorient our understanding of the role of culture in diplomacy. We aim to disrupt colonial and statist frameworks in order to center histories, practices, and ways of relating to one another that offer alternatives to the currently dominant state-centric international order.

*Players: We Are All Practitioners* is the second in a series of three research summits

organized as part of *The Cultural Relations Approach to Diplomacy: Practice, Players, Policy* research project. Advancing our interest in reframing current discussion around the relationship of “the cultural” to diplomacy in the study and practice of global relations, we consider the Cultural Relations approach to diplomatic activity through the three dimensions suggested in the overall project’s title. Our inaugural summit, *Cultural Diplomacy as Critical Practice* (September 2020) focused on practice and feeds into players, the featured dimension of this second summit. Finally, the discussions generated in *Players* inform the third summit’s interest in the potential they hold to vitalize an environment conducive to the development of effective policy. The three summits aim to facilitate discussion through a sequence of exchanges that brings emerging lines of inquiry forward for consideration. They also serve as focal points for networking among partners in charting directions for further research, advocacy, and policy development. The intention is to generate scholarship and practice that treats cultural diplomacy as a multidirectional, inclusive, and potentially activist practice that encompasses a diverse range of actors and their networks. •

## SESSION I

# Decolonizing Diplomacy

### PANEL 1:

## Call and Response: Resistance and Refusal as Diplomacy

### **RYAN RICE,**

(Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawake), Associate Dean, Faculty Arts & Science,  
OCAD University, Curator Indigenous Art, Onsite Gallery

### **LINDA GRUSSANI,**

(Algonquin Anishinabekwe, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg), Ph.D. Candidate,  
Cultural Studies, Queen's University

### PANELISTS:

### **EMILIANA CRUZ,**

Professor at CIESAS-CDMX

### **HAYDEN KING,**

(Anishinaabe, Beausoleil First Nation on Gchi'mnissing, Huronia Ontario),  
Executive Director, Yellowhead Institute

### **CHRISTINA LEZA,**

(Yoeme-Chicana), Associate Professor of  
Anthropology and Indigenous Studies, Colorado College

### **DOLLEEN TISAWII'ASHII MANNING,**

(member of Kettle & Stony First Nation), Assistant Professor, QNS,  
Anishinaabe Knowledge, Language and Culture, Queen's University



**E**ven the briefest survey of Indigenous diplomacies demonstrates a “radically divergent approach to the international” (King 2017) than that arising from the sovereignty-based normativity of the Westphalian state system. This requires nothing short of a move toward decolonizing diplomacy which necessarily involves a challenge to the underlying Eurocentrism of statist diplomatic activity.

This panel considered how North American Indigenous communities have and continue to practice diplomacy and engage within the global arena; specifically, how historical and current forms of resistance, refusal, representation, and activism – all of which exist at the edge of conflict – function as avenues through which Indigenous nations exercise agency and force nation-states to engage in negotiation. Examples range from the Kanesatake land defenders to the Zapatista uprisings; from the Spirit Sings museum controversy to the toppling of colonial monuments; from the anti-pipeline grassroots movements originating from Standing Rock to the Wet’suwet’en and Tyendinaga territories to the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) territories impacted by the Line 3 pipeline route. This discussion examined the ways that Indigenous peoples, the first diplomatic Players of this continent, continue to advance diplomatic practices and objectives.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:


### On indigenous diplomacies and cultural workers

**EMILIANA CRUZ:** “Something that I’m really-interested in is showing that the knowledge that indigenous people have is very valuable and we can learn a lot from it.

For example, organizing, medicine, and how

to take care of the environment, something that really in our times is a critical issue that we have to think about. It’s challenging sometimes when we find ourselves in academia or in the other world, the non-indigenous world, which continues having discrimination and continues practicing this isolation where we often find ourselves. It is not in a space where we can dialogue or we can actually bring some of the ideas of the communities into the scholar arena.”

**HAYDEN KING:** “One of the things that I am concerned about when we describe this type of work that defies traditional notions of diplomacy



is that it has a tendency to be infantilized, as if indigenous diplomacy is not on the same level as a nation-state diplomacy. By no means do I have aspirations to reflect the institution's attitudes or philosophies of state politics but I think that Anishinaabe International Relations, indigenous diplomacies are, as Marshall Beier has said, bonafide IR in their own right and not something that can be distilled or assumed as beneath the type of politics that traditional or orthodox thinkers and writers in academia tend to presume."

**CHRISTINA LEZA:** "The individuals that I have worked with who do the work of the cultural worker do not see their work as accidentally doing the work of diplomacy. It's very intentional on their part to represent their communities and to speak to other communities, including those with the most power in the broader society, about the concerns of their communities in ways in which to create change in order to address concerns and to very much confirm and secure the rights of their peoples. That work is highly intentional."

## Protest as diplomacy

**CHRISTINA LEZA:** "I think that the definitions of what constitutes protest and what is seen as legitimate or not legitimate can shift according to the situation, the audience, and also over time as the context may change in terms of the types of political circumstances which may develop. But I do see protest as something that has been always necessary and it's even been necessary to the creation of the types of more legitimized forms of leadership that we have in place today. For ex-

ample, the types of leadership structures that we see associated with sovereign tribal nations were very much the type of recognition of sovereignty that we see today or were developed out of the important protest movements of American Indian rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Protest has always been essential."

**EMILIANA CRUZ:** "In Mexico, indigenous people have been fighting daily for their lives so they have no choice [but to protest]. We have always protested. The indigenous protest, to me, is really about following their ways of how they organize in their communities and how the assemblies work because you can't make a decision just as your own person or just leaders making those decisions. It has to go to the assembly and if the assembly says yes, then the authorities can actually work."

**HAYDEN KING:** "I think of protest, or more specifically the blockade, as diplomacy in three ways. I think when the media goes and covers a community that's protesting the construction of a natural gas pipeline, the narrative is often one of savagery, it's one of "these angry Indians what do they want, why are they standing in the way of progress". This goes back to an earlier stereotype of the savage Indian who has to be contained, the savage Indian has to be suppressed to make way for civilization. It's the same narrative repackaged 100-150 years later. But the media doesn't understand that what indigenous people are trying to do is respect our relationship with the land. I think about treaties that we have with the deer and the moose, actual treaties that children are taught about when they start relating to the land. Our



People united against racism, holding hand-made signs on cardboards during a protest.

clan system is thought of as a treaty. We have a canon of treaties with the land that predate treaties with other indigenous folks and with settlers and those treaties have to be honored. So when we have few opportunities for political engagement or negotiation with the state or industry to enact our own laws, sometimes you have to block the road and that's diplomacy. It is diplomacy with the land, we're speaking on behalf of the land. We're honoring our obligations to the land, we're upholding our law. The second is with the state. With so few opportunities to compel negotiation, when you get on the blockade and you prevent that pipeline from being built, or as we just saw at 1492 Land Back Lane in Six Nations when you occupy a housing development that's on indigenous territory, you can actually compel negotiation with governments and with business and, in some cases, actually stop the unwanted development in your territory. Diplomacy is with the land, diplomacy is with the state through this particular mechanism, and it's diplomacy with other indigenous nations."

## Allyship

**HAYDEN KING:** "Allies should be focusing on the institutions of settler colonialism almost exclusively. It's not for you to come into our communities and provide advice on what we should do or represent the issue or even write about it. I think instead, the role for allies is to look at the institutions of settler colonialism that get us in this circumstance in the first place."

**EMILIANA CRUZ:** "We need allies, we need people who have different skills. We need the lawyers, we need people who are reporters, we need the news. I think that the Zapatista movement was very successful at being able to have the international community know what they were asking for and how they were going to do things."

**CHRISTINA LEZA:** "I have shifted a bit in terms of thinking about allyship more in the language of what I hear a lot among grassroots activists, not only in the indigenous community but also



in other communities of color which is this idea that you need to be an accomplice, not an ally. To be an ally, is to say "I'm doing the work with you and alongside you", but to be an accomplice is different, is to say "I'm coming into this situation with privilege. I am a player in this movement because I'm committed to it but I'm not the main player, you who are more invested in this movement than I am, as someone who is from this community, who is more critically harmed by the types of things that we are addressing through this movement, you are the main player in this particular movement. I'm someone who is saying I'm going to help you I'm going to support you, and I'm going to use my privilege in ways that are going to support your work".

Protest, representation, and monuments  
Hayden King: "Representation is a big part of diplomacy, as was mentioned in the prompt for

our introductions, and statues and renaming is at the heart of that representation. We, as indigenous people, black communities, are saying "these are our territories and we're not going to allow monuments to colonial villains to stand on them and so we're going to tear them down and what are you going to do now?" and I guess that's where diplomacy sort of kicks in."

**CHRISTINA LEZA:** "I think those local movements because of both the shared interests across indigenous communities around the globe and also the ways in which we can very quickly share information and strategies, are bound to have a really significant impact. Some movement in one part of the world can inspire a really similar movement in another part of the world when there is this recognition that there are shared goals in mind for the types of work that is being done." •

A woman, with face covered, passes by a mural painting in the Oventic village, run by Zapatistas. Many areas of Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico, are under control of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), a leftist armed militant group that is trying to alleviate the suffering of the people in these poor underdeveloped lands. The group's name comes from Emiliano Zapata, one of the main leaders of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917.



## PANEL 2

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# Indigenous Video Games as Tools to Decolonize Cultural Relations

### MODERATORS:

#### **AMY PARKS**

Research Fellow, North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative,  
Ph.D. Candidate, Cultural Studies, Queen's University

#### **AMANDA RODRÍGUEZ ESPÍNOLA**

Research Fellow, North American Cultural Diplomacy Initiative

### PANELISTS:

#### **MEAGAN BYRNE**

(Apihtawikosisân, Métis, Ontario), Narrative Mechanic  
Designer and Owner, Achimostawinan Games

#### **ASHLEE HOPE BIRD**

(Western Abenaki of the Champlain Valley), Moreau  
Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of Notre Dame

#### **SAMIR DURÁN**


CEO and Producer, Bromio

#### **ELEANORE FALCK**

3D Environment Art Student and Developer  
of Growing Up Ojibwe: The Game,  
University of Wisconsin – Stout

#### **KAHENTAWAKS TIEWISHAW**

(Kanien'kehá:ka, Kanehsatake), Skins Workshops  
Associate Director, Initiative for Indigenous Futures (IIF)



**T**his panel explores how video games can put decolonial scholarship, diplomacy, and media in conversation. In the past two decades, digital resources have become an essential tool for cultural diplomacy and cultural relations, giving way to the concept of digital diplomacy. However, this notion is commonly limited to social media communications. Likewise, digital media have enabled and highlighted the role of non-state actors, allowing various new players, such as indigenous communities, to access resources and networks that situate them as diplomatic actors. These players represent non-sovereign entities with economic, cultural, and political interests. For indigenous communities, cultural relations and soft power are a way to share their values and culture, form relationships with foreign audiences, strengthen their network, expand their area of influence, legitimize their foreign policy agenda, and open the possibility to mobilize actions to advance their interests. Video games offer an opportunity for cultural understanding in cultural relations, highlighting the role of indigenous diplomacies while also being a platform to question, challenge, or disrupt colonial discourse. The virtual third space where video games take place becomes a valuable alternative when cultural relations cannot occur in person. These spaces can reinforce the legitimacy of indigenous actors and facilitate relationship-building in the long term.

Video games also act as an instrument for economic pursuit, decolonized media representation, and an opportunity to challenge the power relations in the video game industry. At the macro-level, vid

eogames open the possibilities to imagine indigenous diplomacies differently. The practitioners in this session represent some of the efforts made by Indigenous communities throughout the region known as North America to decolonize diplomacies, narratives, and business models to put different forms to conceptualize diplomacy outside of the Eurocentric worldview at the forefront.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

### Challenging the video game industry's colonial logic

**ASHLEE BIRD:** "Through play, games are teaching you the logics that construct their spaces and if you're not careful you're going to get caught up in them, and it happens in a lot of other ways too. So try to bring awareness to those types of things and then talk about how do we change that. In my own particular design, my game *One Small Step* is a spacewalking simulator and it's all about critiquing the colonization of space like the last frontier. It very much looks like an open-world sandbox game, but then you quickly learn that there's nothing there for you to fight or collect and your exploration is not free and it's not unaccounted for and it's going to change the world so much eventually it's going to close itself off to you. You have an impact on the spaces that you're in, so I think identifying those colonial logics and then turning



them on their head is something that indigenous designers are really, really good at.”

**SAMIR DURÁN:** “We had to face trying to get all these very complicated issues on one easy-to-play mobile game, and it was quite complicated. But with the help of the researchers from the UNAM we were able to create a really straightforward narrative where the player can take not only the role of a male warrior but also a female warrior and understand how the Tlaxcaltecas were at the heart of the battle, they were leading armies under on their side and also eliminate all these misconceptions that the Tlaxcala people, which is the main tribe you control in the game, was not a subjugated tribe, but more like the real conquerors of the different tribes that were in the region at the moment.”

**ELEANORE FALCK:** [In the game *Growing Up Ojibwe*] “I think the spearfishing level is especially important due to the history of spearfishing in northern Wisconsin during the 1980s and 1990s. The spearfishing controversy was going on when the Ojibwe Treaty rights to spearfish during the spawning season were reinstated. [Previously,] the state had not been allowing tribes to exercise their Treaty rights for years and the tribes were able to legally gain this right that they had always had. There was a lot of backlash in the area from white and non-indigenous people in the community, there were a lot of violent protests and, to this day, there are so many misconceptions about this that are still happening in that very area where all the spearfishing controversy happened. In this level, we try to break down the myths, some of them that did inspire the violence and misunderstanding during the height of the spearfishing controversy. Some of these myths that we’re trying to break down are the idea that Native Americans are greedy and they’re going to take all of the big fish and there won’t be anything left for other fishermen. And indigenous people don’t want to do that, they want to only take a sustainable amount of fish so that there are fish for future generations, that’s something that’s very important and urgent to Ojibwe culture. I think the idea that Native Americans are going to take all of the fish is a very colonial idea.”



Tlaxcala, Mexico, Murals in the town of Tlaxcala

**KAHENTAWAKS TIEWISHAW:** “In my work, the first thing that comes to mind is a lot of my characters. I really love my games to portray women as leaders and knowledge keepers because that’s what we were. A lot of indigenous societies were matriarchal, so the first thing the colonizers did when they came over here was to disenfranchise women, to subvert, to take us out of our positions of power because what happens when women are in power? You have empathetic societies that care about the emotional well-being and the fulfillment of the people in those communities.”

**MEAGAN BYRNE:** “probably the biggest challenge that I put forward in the piece that I’m working on now *Hill Agency*, which is a detective game, is a refusal of education. One of the things that is really prominent, I’m speaking outside of educational specific pieces, so if a piece is made

by an indigenous group specifically for education that's one thing, is this attitude, and I think it's probably propped up by so many years of the explanation, of "this means this, this means that" even in pieces that aren't meant to be educational. [...] I think sometimes we don't put enough faith in our audience that they will just go do the work on their own. We have been raised up in this culture of spoon-feeding and I think that does come from this idea that indigenous people are consumable. That means you have to give the indigenous people and their culture to settlers in sort of a baby-food way, make it palatable, make it simple, make it not crunchy, and no choking hazard it's that kind of thing and we're like okay we're done with that so that's."

## Indigenous knowledge in games

**ELEANORE FALCK:** "Speaking with the culture that you're trying to represent or multiple cultures about what their values are and how that should influence gameplay, I think that is the biggest idea that I see. I think challenging the idea that everything is consumable but definitely just speaking to the people whom you are trying to represent or whom you are trying to make a game for and what they want is important."

**SAMIR DURÁN:** "We had the aid of many researchers in the area, who took the enormous task of really researching, really getting into the historical facts of what really happened, also try to understand their vision, not only what is socially accepted, really try to understand the values and also the role of the Tlaxcalteca people in the conflict. Make all the due research. I was impressed because when we started working, we agreed that we had to make a really comprehensive narrative of how the conflict developed during the whole conquest, so they made really, really big research, they gave us these enormous documents with all the facts of all the different aspects of the Conquista, like actors, main battles and stuff like that, and then we took all this information which was a very complicated task because we had to get all the information and try to put it in an interactive way."

**KAHENTAWAKS TIEWISHAW:** "One of the things that come up during the Skins video game workshops is obviously what kind of game the participants want to make, so we start off all of our skins workshops with a bit of a storytelling session. The purpose of those storytelling sessions is to get participants to think about the types of stories they want to tell in their games, the type of values they want to instill in the game, and just basically what type of worldview they're trying to share because game mechanics if you really think about it, it's the rules for how your player is going to interact with the world you've made for them, so it's like training your brain to think and act as if you are actually in that world. That's why it's such a powerful tool for bridging the gap between cultures because it allows you to step into the world and perspective of another person."

**ASHLEE BIRD:** "I try to talk about the two languages that I see video games operating in which is the visual representational language which is your character and environmental designs, your story dialogue, all of those things. And then, the mechanical coded language of games which is everything happening underneath the surface, the actual structure of the game that is dictating how and what you can do. Those two languages are inherently related to each other and they shape the world and even if you change just the visual language of it, the same mechanics are still going to be happening so sometimes it's not going to change the message in the way that you think it would or vice versa, if you change the mechanics and you don't change visually what's going on, it might not do that much. I study a lot of the games that have these kinds of colonial narratives or poor indigenous representations. The one that jumps to mind is *Assassin's Creed III*, which was the first big-budget game to feature Native American protagonists. The main character is half Mohawk and half British and there's a hunting mechanic in the game and the developers were like "we did a good job because he says a prayer every time you skin an animal" and if you don't skin five in a row you'll get a message that says "Connor used every animal he killed". So that's all well and good, but mechanically, as long as you skin them all, you



can kill all the wolves in North America. Also selling pelts is the quickest way to make money in that game and it's a very capitalistic colonial narrative so the mechanical language of the game is directly contradicting the narrative language of the game. I use examples like that to break it down for students. We really have to look at both ways in which games are operating."

## Indigenous Futurism

**KAHENTAWAKS TIEWISHAW:** "One of the things that I love to talk about when we're thinking about indigenous futurism games, is that it provides a window for not only our people but for non-indigenous people as well to get a glimpse of what an indigenous society might have been if we hadn't been interrupted by colonialism halfway through. What would those types of places look like and what would the people be like? [...] Imagining indigenous futurism in video games creates this space of what could we have been if we weren't interrupted and where can we go now

because we're living with the reality of colonialism and the effects of intergenerational trauma caused by colonialism. In video games, we can picture a better future for ourselves and start to imagine the steps that we have to take to get there by presenting our perspective of our histories and our stories and inspiring people."

**ELEANORE FALCK:** "I really love portraying nature as a beautiful almost magical space that deserves reverence. It is partly why I want to be an environment artist because I really love natural spaces and creating those natural spaces that inspire exploration, but not necessarily conquest. I really love inspiring players to explore the spaces that I create and feel the magic in that game. Those are the kinds of games that I really like playing and making and after some introspection, I discovered that my motivation for that, that I didn't realize, was growing up in an indigenous culture and being taught that nature is something that deserves our respect and we should be aware of and say thank you for and appreciate." •

Assassin's Creed III, Connor  
Free running. Video game  
image capture.



## SESSION II

# (Re)Constructing Identity: Diaspora Diplomacy

### KEYNOTE:

Mexican Diasporas in the United States:  
Tools for Engagement that Center  
Community Knowledges and Experiences

### SPEAKER:

#### ALEXANDRA DELANO

Associate Professor and Chair of Global Studies,  
the New School, New York City

### CHAIR:

#### CÉSAR VILLANUEVA RIVAS

Associate Professor of International Relations and  
Public/Cultural Diplomacy, Universidad Iberoamericana



Since the mid-19th century, Mexican migrants in the United States have organized through mutual aid groups, community organizations, and cultural programs. With multiple objectives and motivations, from celebrating and sharing cultural traditions across borders and across generations, to maintaining ties with and supporting their communities of origin, or making claims for political rights in Mexico and the United States, they create spaces for cross-border dialogues and engagement with multiple actors in both countries, challenging the fixed territorial boundaries of categories of citizenship and access to rights. In this presentation I focus on the history of engagement between different groups in the Mexican diaspora and the Mexican state, emphasizing practices of engagement that build from knowledges and experiences of the community, considering the opportunities that arise from them as spaces for new imaginaries and political horizons, as well as their tensions and limitations.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

**ALEXANDRA DELANO:** “Over the years, and particularly in the last five-six years, the Mexican Government has shifted its focus to think about diaspora engagement in relation to these migrants communities well-being in the United States. Not so much in relation to what kinds of skills and knowledge they can bring back to Mexico or how they can collaborate more closely with the Mexican Government for political or economic purposes, but rather how they can be more fully integrated into their host country. This shows for me, that when we talk about diaspora policies, we can’t just think about them in relation to what the origin

country is trying to establish a relationship with its diaspora, but also what space, there is for action in relation to the conditions that the diaspora faces in the host state. In this case in the United States, they face discrimination but also policies that exclude them and we’ve seen this more and more over the years of the Trump administration, and even before, with the Obama administration with significant deportations, detentions, and anti-immigrant legislation at the local and federal level.”

**ALEXANDRA DELANO:** “The strategy has been: if we empower them if we support their integration in another country, then they will be in a better position to interact politically and economically with both countries and to develop initiatives that can support their well-being in both countries. Which are interesting interpretations of what inte-

gration means, and also the role that that origin country might have in integration, because this is a term that often we only use in relation to settlement in the country of destination and the services and support systems that the country of destination offers for that process of integration. But here we see 1) A lack of support for integration from the US Government in general, not just for Mexicans, but there is no policy for integration at a broad level in the United States; 2) There is a population that has a wide proportion of undocumented immigrants and therefore doesn't have access to the services; and 3) a Mexican Government that sees an expansion of the need for protection of immigrant rights as the first thing that it has to offer, in order to engage the diaspora in any other way and shifting its strategy in order to offer that kind of support as a basis for a broader engagement with its communities."

**ALEXANDRA DELANO:** "The Mexican government is able to connect immigrant communities with public and private institutions in the US, in Mexico, and also with participation from other consulates from Latin America, for example, to create some of these programs and these possibilities. So mobilizing resources from foundations, hospitals and clinics, space in churches, public education like public schools, banks, and even local community centers so that they can bring together space, resources, teachers, clinics, and health professionals, to offer these services. In reality, what the Mexican Government offers in terms of money or material resources, or personnel is little, but what it does is create the space where there can be this collaboration across these multiple actors to create opportunities for these kinds of engagement and that's one of the points where I see opportunity and innovation in creating a more horizontal strategy for collaboration."

**ALEXANDRA DELANO:** "In education, there's a program called Plazas Comunitarias, which shifts how many plazas there are around the country, but at some point 300- 400 plazas that operate

through community centers, health clinics, offering support to offer adult literacy, primary/secondary education, and high school programs in Spanish in these community centers, but at the same time, create a space where English, computer skills, GED in English and Spanish, citizenship courses can be offered. There are between 30,000 and 40,000 students enrolled in these programs across the United States, and there are also students from different countries a majority from Latin America, enrolled in these programs.

**ALEXANDRA DELANO:** "I attended a workshop recently in New York, where an indigenous community in New York from the Mixteca region organized the workshop to teach people in the community, how herbs that are grown in their Community gardens can be tools for healing and showing how each herb is relevant to a different aspect of their bodies and their healing, but also thinking of healing, not just from a medical perspective, but also in connection to their struggles and their challenges and the opportunity that some of these practices can also offer for community building. So these are the types of initiatives that I think, need to be centered and brought more to the fore in this context of the opportunities that exist in working horizontally across different sectors and what can be offered there."

**ALEXANDRA DELANO** on the PochHouse project: "Diasporas see the connection between fighting for their political struggles or economic and social needs very much in connection to cultural development, and how there's a need to shift a culture that discriminates against them, but also that looks at migration issues. The migration issues are the issues that the returnees or the diaspora in the U.S. face are disconnected from the realities of local communities, so their discourse and their action are through culture, through working together: 'collaborating we can change not just the conditions that are affecting and oppressing us, but the conditions that are affecting our local communities as well'." •

## PANEL I

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# Remembering and Engaging: Diaspora Museums as Cultural Diplomacy

### MODERATORS:

#### **SASCHA PRIEWE**

Associate Vice President, Strategic Planning  
and Partnerships, Royal Ontario Museum

#### **SIMGE ERDOGAN-O'CONNOR**

Ph.D. Candidate, Cultural Studies,  
Queen's University, Research Fellow, NACDI

### PANELISTS:

#### **ADÁN B.F. GARCÍA**

Academic Chair, Memory and Tolerance  
Museum, Mexico City

#### **PALINA LOUANGKETH**

Founder & Executive Director,  
Idaho Museum of International Diaspora

#### **GRACE WONG**

Board Chair, Chinese Canadian  
Museum Society of British Columbia

#### **ULRIKE AL-KHAMIS**

Director & CEO of the Aga Khan Museum,  
Toronto

**M**useums are increasingly recognized as diplomatic players in their own right. Associated with cultural diplomacy activities and foreign policy agendas of the nation-states they are located in, museums have long played a role in global cultural relations through their exhibitions, collecting, and research activities. Museums are also active in globe-spanning professional networks. They are increasingly shaping their global engagement activities through the lens of their own agendas, priorities, and principles, rather than being simply subsumed under a nation-state-driven soft power paradigm. This session explored 21st-century museum agendas by foregrounding diaspora museums, museums that sit at the intersection between the heritage of the host population and the inheritance of the source country.

Museums are important platforms to promote a nation, a people, or a culture, and are being harnessed by diaspora and other communities as vehicles to channel their cultural and national expressions, histories, and location. This session addressed the role of diaspora museums at the junction between the local and the global alongside their negotiation of identities. Additionally, it considered in what ways museum projects are deemed diplomatic activities, as well as how their activities are affected by the increasing push among other museums to include diaspora and diverse voices and representations.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

### Notions of museums

**PALINA LOUANGKETH:** “I used [the melting pot] framing so loosely ‘we are the melting pot of cultures here in the United States. And that has been widely received positively and also we’ve seen negatively. It has elevated my recognition of ‘I no longer can use this framing in certain contexts’. So in the spirit of unity, uniting a diverse community, it is so important that we reach out to the players

and the practitioners for them to really lead the charge about sharing their stories and their histories.”

**ADÁN B.F. GARCÍA:** “The idea of bringing in different voices and how we tackle this is that we are open to diversity. We work with those who have made work before us, and we try to be open to what is the memory of Mexico as a multicultural, pluricultural nation.”

**ULRIKE AL-KHAMIS:** “For us, the museum as a concept, as an animal, is not tainted with nationalistic narrative at all. It’s actually giving a turn the traditional nationalistic agendas and act as a hub



of intercultural coming together and learning with each other, from each other and then also imagining better futures.”

**GRACE WONG:** “The Chinese Canadian Museum aims to recognize the significant and diverse diaspora community that has contributed to the establishment of the country while enduring historic and continuing racism and exclusion. [T]his backdrop gives our initiative a much greater sense of purpose and urgency.”

## Diaspora narratives

**ULRIKE AL-KHAMIS:** “We have to dismantle certain traditional approaches and the whole notion of museum comes into play here because when we look at our respective communities, cultures, all over the world, these have always collected on their own terms and what is of specific importance, significance, and meaning to them. This collecting has always incorporated not only material collecting but also the collecting of stories, music, memories, genealogies, wisdoms, and histories. All of that has become much more one-tracked through the domination in modern and contemporary times of Western-centric museology and what that should be. When we look at museums and the notion of diaspora what we should also keep in mind is that we should always look for appropriate museology that takes into account from within the collecting of traditions of different communities and making real active space for the tangible dimensions of that.”

**ADÁN B.F. GARCÍA:** “What we [the Museum of Tolerance] have to look for is to not alienate those whom we speak about, de-humanize the story of the others. We attempt to bring balance for people to have some empathy with what went on with the memories we are keeping and for them to become engaged to some extent and to share the values

of justice, equity, and humanity. Our idea is that we mobilize the initial intuition of justice of the people who visit us so the past genocides and crimes against humanity are not repeated and to stop discrimination, stop hatred so that when the people we talk about, feel it’s a safe space and share their stories. Where they hope for a better future where they are not excluded and feel like they are part of this society.”

**GRACE WONG:** “The diaspora narrative is very wide-ranging, is very complex, so how can we best represent it? Is it traditional museum exhibits? Or not either-or, but together with digital technologies? We have to have our museum reach beyond the walls of the physical space and reach across not only our immediate community, our region, our province, but in fact internationally too.”

**PALINA LOUANGKETH:** “This really is a pivotal moment for all of us in the museum sector but also diverse practitioners to engage in this journey of transformational change. In order for us to really impact positive change, we have to get to the minds of the people that we serve and in our communities to get to their hearts and open it up and receive information about their diverse community members.” •

Visitors at the Royal Ontario Museum.



# Flipping the Script: Bottom-Up Methods for Diaspora Diplomacy Studies

## **MODERATOR:**

**EDUARDO LUCIANO TADEO  
HERNÁNDEZ**

Adjunct Professor, International Studies,  
Universidad Iberoamericana

## **PANELISTS:**

**VANESSA BRAVO**

Associate Professor of Strategic Communications  
and Chair of the Department of Strategic  
Communications, Elon University

**MARIA DEMOYA**

Associate Professor, Program Chair – Public  
Relations and Advertising, DePaul University

**ALINA DOLEA**

Principal Academic in Media, Communication  
& Politics, Bournemouth University

**ILAN MANOR**

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of  
Communications, Tel Aviv University

**D**iaspora studies offer a transdisciplinary approach to the study of the movement and transnational settlement of people. The dispersion of populations across borders and the construction of an identity as a distinct community, which invokes in many cases connections to the homeland and reconfigured relations to the host country, has existed throughout history. However, in our globalized age, the phenomena of communities that maintain transnational connections have become more prevalent. As the field evolves, the methodological toolkit for its study is expanding to encompass the proliferation of meanings and applications. Diaspora diplomacy scholars are engaging with new forms of understanding diasporas as communities that are constantly negotiating and constituting their identity. We continue to recognize the fluidity of the ethnicity category that relies on social practices. In that process, it is important to give more attention to the power dynamics that ultimately converge in the diaspora.

In reflecting on the opportunities for a deeper engagement with the communities, new methods for diaspora diplomacy studies would enable scholars and practitioners to better align themselves with stakeholders and to articulate the changes in practice needed to serve an increasingly transnational public. This session brings together scholars working in the cultural aspects of diaspora studies and whose work outside of North America has relevance in grasping the diversity of the communities.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

### Preferred methods to study diasporas

**VANESSA BRAVO:** “In-depth interviews allow you to collect information not only about what is happening, what are diaspora groups doing, what our state’s doing, but also why, how are they doing this, how they did that in the past, what is happening now, how are they planning to do it the future, by whom (who is leading these efforts), with what

results. [T]he challenge with in-depth interviews is that it is a method that requires time, it’s slow, it requires access, and it requires building trust. The other thing is that no matter if you’re interviewing government officials or diaspora members, both processes are messy in that these groups are constantly changing. They have different levels of stability, there are different perspectives within the same community, and there are political pressures involved.”

**MARIA DEMOYA:** “I prefer content analysis as one of my methodological approaches, usually or often I go directly to framing analysis, whether it’s to look at frames that have to do with existing re-



search or theories, or to see the emerging frames. With Vanessa we work around strategic narratives which I really appreciate. So when we look at diasporas as groups that are not very formalized and not very together, we might think that we all act individually or, on the contrary, when you think of them as very formalized very organized you might think that they all act strategically together. However, most of the time it's a combination of both, so looking at strategic narratives and the language that they use and the message that they communicate allows us to see, as a collective, how is the diaspora communicating, whether they are doing it in coordination for not because it's based on the understanding that we influence each other as diaspora members."

**ALINA DOLEA:** "In public diplomacy, indeed, the more traditional roles of diasporas are those of agents, instruments, or circumstantial partners; but if anything, the pandemic, I think, showed us the diasporas can also be disruptors. What we've seen is the pandemic legitimizing diasporas as transnational actors in their own right and the key question is how do we analyze diasporas as disruptors? Here comes the need to flip the script as the panel is entitled. [I] conducted focus groups within the Romanian community in the UK, which is the second-largest nationality in the UK at the moment [and] what's been very interesting in that research is the emergence of a variety of perspectives from the diaspora, so what we need to do is basically to unpack the seeming uniformity of diaspora as a category, so that we go beyond the homeland of loyalties conflated in the concept of citizen diplomat that obscures contestation and the challenges from within."

**ILAN MANOR:** "Diaspora diplomacy has also undergone an accelerated process of digitalization which impacts the norms and values, and diplomats, reconstitutes the publics the diplomats interact with, and even changes the ways in which foreign ministries operate daily. The digitalization of diaspora diplomacy has led many foreign ministries is to place a renewed emphasis on diaspora engagement. This is because of the network logic

that governs our digital societies. Diplomats now tend to view diasporas as boundary spanners, a global community that is networked, and that can help a nation advance its foreign policy goals. The importance of diaspora grows because it is easier for diplomats to converse with and engage with the global diasporas, so countries such as Israel, India, Mexico, and more are using social media dedicated websites to interact with the globally dispersed diasporas."

## The role of media

**ALINA DOLEA:** "What is interesting to study is also the emergence of some micro-influencers on social media. It was fascinating to see, especially during the pandemic, how some Romanian influencers, or some diaspora representatives let's put it like this, assumed this role of micro-influencers starting micro-communities."

**ILAN MANOR:** "Trust in social media and understanding the importance of social media to contemporary life can have a dramatic impact on the actual practice of digital diaspora and diplomacy."

**VANESSA BRAVO:** "One of the most powerful and dynamic processes in diaspora diplomacy is the involvement of diaspora groups in the mass media as content producers, but also as activists promoting their ideas in traditional and online media. But diaspora groups themselves have created websites, podcasts, TV shows, social media spaces and posts, blogs, community newspapers, radio, shows, YouTube channels, etc., so for many of these groups diaspora media gives them the possibility to say abroad what people at home wish they could say but cannot and to make foreign audiences more aware of what is happening at home. Some of these groups are going to interact with diplomatic actors at home or in the host country but many of these groups are going to be present in media outlets whether the state is trying to engage them or not. That's why I'm saying that they are an actor on their own with their own activism, etc. There are several caveats or things to consider: one is that many voices are not going to

be represented due to fear of retaliation, especially if you have family or friends at home and you know that your government at home is authoritarian because people know that their family members can pay steep prices and consequences if they speak, even if the diaspora member is safely living somewhere else but the family remains behind. Another caveat is that sometimes governments at home are financing diaspora media to voice support for the state's views to make it seem that the support for the state is organic public opinion when in reality it is a concerted propaganda effort led by the state and homeland."

**MARÍA DE MOYA:** "I think that there is a little bit of tokenism in the worst-case scenario, best-case scenario laziness in the media, sometimes when they go to the diaspora for the news. However, I am happy and proud of the work the diaspora does in media relations, especially with mainstream media, because if not, there would be issues in our homelands, that would be completely overlooked and completely ignored. But I do want to point to the fact that there are power dynamics and that the people who are getting the louder voice are those in the diaspora who would traditionally because they're famous, because they're rich, etc."

## Facing challenges

**ALINA DOLEA:** "Another interesting aspect is the relationship between the diaspora communities and the media in the host country. Especially here in the UK, for instance, where media has led so many anti-immigration campaigns, it becomes very problematic for diaspora communities to actually be representing and have their perspectives into British media. I think this is another area to look into: is it about the fact that the diaspora community leads PR to get their stories across or is it the historicity of so many anti-immigration campaigns that makes it difficult for whomever it doesn't matter what diaspora community it is just systemically difficult to actually have their points of view represented unless different political parties, like the Labour Party which has traditionally taken some of the discourses put forward by different diaspora communities and different NGO's and activist groups that have that talk in the name of migrants.

I think this leads us to new aspects when we discuss media and diaspora in a variety of perspectives."

**ILAN MANOR:** "It's important to bear in mind that digitalization can have a re-territorializing effect and a de-territorializing effect. And if governments wish to enhance diaspora ties, they can extend their digital boundaries so that the nation-state comes to include the diaspora. But countries can also emphasize national borders and deliberately treat diasporas as an external force to the nation-state. When does this happen? Well, one of the cases is when diasporas turn to the media to criticize their countries of origin. And diasporas that rally opposition to government policies are soon shunned and no effort is made to communicate with them digitally. In fact, some nations will use digital tools to discredit diasporas, to label them as traitors, and use digital tools to prevent diaspora discussions on online forums. And the more critical a diaspora, and the greater its media profile, the greater governments attempt to silence or discredit the diaspora, and this, of course, is done both online and offline."

**VANESSA BRAVO:** "Simply a change of government means, in some cases, a strong change of priorities and of types of engagement with diaspora groups. So not only do governments change, but the diasporas change. Diasporas are different from one geography or geographical location to another, their goal sometimes changes, so it is a very interesting topic, but it's hard too."

**MARIA DE MOYA:** "One of the notes that I had for myself is emotion in terms of how we approach and how we do our research and often I struggle between thinking of myself as a social scientist looking at a phenomena and understanding as it is and as an advocate or an activist doing work in support of the views of the diaspora, that I find laudable and important, and that should be magnified; and I think that, of course, both are legitimate I'm sure but it is, it does speak a little bit to our reflexivity, especially those of us who are members of the diasporas that we research on how that can affect our work and our role with the diaspora, as we interact with them as researchers." •

# The Scholar as Diplomat: Diaspora Intellectuals and (Cross) Community Representation

## MODERATOR:

### NICHOLAS J. CULL

Professor of Communication and Global  
Communication Policy Fellow, Center for  
Communication, Leadership, and Policy,  
University of Southern California

## PANELISTS:

### JOHN BIETER

Professor, History Department, Boise State University

### SALPI GHAZARIAN

Director, USC Armenian Studies Institute

### Yael SIMAN

Associate Professor at the Department of Social  
and Political Sciences, Universidad Iberoamericana

**D**iaspora diplomacy is a rich academic field as well as a vibrant space for activism. Diasporas play important roles such as building and nurturing relations between their host country and their homelands and assisting in the democratization processes of the latter. Furthermore, they can create solidarity groups with other diasporas, increasing organized mobilizations and establishing wider networks of support that acquire economic and political resources to affect the structure of the host country, allowing claims and demands in the public sphere. With increased access to information and communication technologies (ICT's), such associations can become more diverse and open the path to new forms of organization, calling for new models of practice.

Diaspora communities form g/local networks of relations and hybridized visions of nation which challenge the primacy of state-centric diplomacy. The Scholar as Diplomat session brings together scholars of diaspora to consider the evolution of individual diasporas and their interaction including the emergence of reciprocal campaigns.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

### On the historical background of the diaspora diplomacy

**JOHN BIETER:** "The eight provinces of what the basque diaspora refers to, remember those seven provinces in the Basque region, the diaspora being the eighth, provides their cultural ambassadors when their central roles. Another important element is they highlight both traditional and modern expressions of identity. It creates an international network that can be energized in all kinds of ways. There's a validation that comes with these kinds of events and it's the play between the diaspora and the Basque Country itself. These kinds of activities

and these kinds of connections validate both sides, the host countries and the Basque Country, the country of origin and I think increasingly important for the Basque Country itself. The last thing that these elements, these delegations and these hubs of the diaspora really function as de facto embassies, with an emphasis on cultural because there is not a nation-state, and because of the complexity of that region, that aspect plays a particularly significant role in the spreading and understanding the education and a whole host of other connections with a diaspora."

**SALPI GHAZARIAN:** "The [Armenian] diaspora has been there and intense and sustaining the nation for centuries, and the reality has been that not only has there not been a center and a relationship with a center, but the diaspora has had its own centers over the centuries depending on where the



power sources, the resource spaces were. Armenia didn't really exist until the collapse of the Soviet Union and Armenians have lived on lands that are essentially the crossroads of what used to be the Persian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Russian Empire in the Caucasus. In those years with no state and no center and just diaspora centers, the diaspora determined its own agenda, and often it had to do with either the needs of immigrants in their new post-countries (language, culture, integration) or most likely it had to do with seeking justice retribution, but an agenda that has to do with being the children and the descendants of survivors of the genocide still unacknowledged and still no retribution. And so, around the world, not only were there diaspora institutions over 100 years old, just kind of picked up from the Ottoman Empire and recreated whether in Europe or South America or North America or the Middle East, of course, there were leaders, there were structures of leadership and even leadership legacy situations where the same families dominated institutions but also there were professional Armenians. The diplomats are professional Armenians: I was a professional Armenian, and that is, I live my professional life, nine to five, but the rest of the time I was pursuing an Armenian agenda."

**Yael Siman:** "I tried to think of what are the aspects that the [Mexican Jewish] diaspora mobilizes around. I think one is antisemitism, another one is Holocaust education/ Holocaust prevention. The third one would be Israel, this is a very Zionist Jewish community. About 95% percent of the Mexican Jews attend a Jewish school compared to Argentina, which is about 45% I think, I don't know the exact percentage. I know about exogamous marriages, but it's very much lower. Mexico, I think, has the highest number of Jews who attend Jewish schools. And then lastly, religion, because there is also a very active diaspora in terms of networks and exchange of ideas and activities around orthodoxy. So I think that we can say to conclude that this diaspora does diplomacy in Mexico, political diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, but also diplomacy abroad, and I think that the diplomatic priority is the security of the Jewish community."

## The relationship of the diaspora to the host state

**Yael Siman:** "[In the Jewish community we have] now, lobbying is very active and the main thing is the security of the community. If the community is under some kind of perceived threat our main leadership will do everything to talk to politicians and make them sensitive about the situation. I should say that when the Palestinian-Israeli conflict erupts, the Jewish community feels threatened in a symbolic way because we don't face physical attacks, but we do face very hostile articles in the media and on social media even worse. Regarding Israel, it's a highly Zionist community. In the past decades, a new movement has emerged in Mexico of left-wing liberal progressive Jews who identify themselves as Zionists but who portray themselves as critical of the mainstream Zionism and who find more proximity, with, for example, the Meretz political party in Israel. So that has created another subgroup within the diaspora but it's very small. I would say that the mainstream still widely shared is very traditional Zionism, almost non-critical of anything that the State of Israel does. But we don't emigrate to Israel, we stay in Mexico, I think, perhaps as a hypothesis, because we have a good life and we feel Mexicans too."

**Salpi Ghazarian:** "Most Armenians in the diaspora either live in the Middle East, where the whole concept of interacting with a government nation-building state-building actually working on and through institutions as foreign that's not what you do you stay as far away from government as you possibly can, or the Armenian diaspora is in the West and there again we don't really interact with government, the potholes somehow gets fixed on its own, you know taxes either go up or they go down and I not quite sure if I really can do anything about that and so again there's no tradition of no skill set of actually working with governmental institutions and building a state, and yet that is Armenia's primary agenda today. It is an agenda for state-building, so the diaspora hasn't really found ways to practically meaningfully sustainably interact there's a lot of parachute interaction, you know a lot

of doctors will go in and put in some great state of the art something that's wonderful, but to actually work on overhauling that Soviet health system."

**JOHN BIETER:** "Internally, what starts out as an educational institution or educational element within Basque culture what becomes Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), becomes a group that in the post-Spanish Civil War is counteracting all the oppression, all the violence, all the suppression within. That's a long and checkered story. Consequently, the Basques and the Irish and the diasporas within that, really link, really see a coalition between the efforts that they're making culturally and linguistically fighting against the oppression that both groups are feeling. That's manifested and gets pretty broad support from the diaspora. And as things radicalize, it gets even more complex. 9/11 again changes that conversation because of how terrorists are branded. South America is much more involved than North America, nonetheless, the diaspora on both sides has been involved throughout the 20th century.

## The role of memory and identity formation

**JOHN BIETER:** "The American West was largely uneducated and for many immigrants, they first understood their Basqueness when they came here. In other words, they had never really lived outside of the Basque Country, never really identified themselves as anything else, but who they were, and so that first-generation really just began to understand themselves as something distinct from the rest of the Americas. My mother-in-law says "I found out that I was Basque when I came here". So a consciousness is really what that first generation was trying to have. [...] By the time the third generation's here, they speak English enough, they're settled enough to be able to ask questions of identity. Those kinds of questions really only come after stomachs are full and you're accepted enough at that point. And that's what I've seen. The megaphone comes because every generation has to ask core questions: Who am I? What do I want to be? What do I want my children to be?

And you see the megaphone shape of what they say because there's a great diversity of responses that comes with the third and the fourth and the fifth generation. A lot of that is based on what do I want to remember."

**SALPI GHAZARIAN:** "The fact that we have an institute for contemporary Armenian studies at USC means that the community evolved in such a way that those original immigrants, the ones who made it big, who are able to contribute at university levels and have most of them never seen the inside of the university, except maybe in their grand-kids pictures, are the people who are funding an institute that studies things they don't even understand. So it's a fascinating full-circle come around. I'm going to take the word remember and turn it into connect. In other words, not just the abstract remembering, but how do you turn that into connecting and belonging? We have this parallel set of experiences, the Armenians who now are from Armenia, a place where Armenian was the official language, where music was Armenian, and where Armenian is what you were not what you thought about being. The set of questions is very different from the questions that the Western Armenian immigrants, the ones who were kicked off their historic homelands and the Ottoman Empire, who ended up in the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Those questions that my parents asked, that I asked, and even my kids who are now quite adults ask are very different. They are very conscious about being Armenian and transferring and transmitting knowledge."

**Yael SIMAN:** "I think that in Mexico today, we may see a combination of both delusion and renewal. The second and third generations of Jews I think became memory entrepreneurs. I have been very sensitive all my life to the memory of Holocaust survivors which has led me to be sensitive about the memory of other victims of state and non-state violence in a very powerful way. I don't think my kids feel the same way, I don't think they connect in the same way. I feel strongly Mexican, my place of origin is not Israel, it is Mexico. I don't have a strong connection with Israel." •

## SESSION III

# Cultural Practice and Transnational Outreach

### KEYNOTE:

Minding the Gaps: Connecting Diversity,  
Diasporas, and Skate Diplomacy

### SPEAKER:

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS** Provost's Post-Doctoral Scholar at the  
Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, University of  
Southern California. Visiting Fellow in Race, Culture & Community,  
Yale Schwarzman Center

### CHAIR:

**NICHOLAS J. CULL** Professor of Communication and Global  
Communication Policy Fellow, Center for Communication,  
Leadership, and Policy, University of Southern California

**D**r. Williams' keynote argues for a new sport and cultural diplomacy agenda which reimagines diverse non-state actors as the critical connectors and agents of change capable of advancing multiple interdisciplinary policy goals of nation-states. Drawing upon experience as envoy for the US Department of State in Cambodia, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, and NGO efforts in South Africa, and Cuba, Williams demonstrates how his efforts to develop skateboarding as a tool for cultural diplomacy operates at the nexus of sport, culture, education, and community. Williams' talk establishes a new critical paradigm for developing more inclusive sports and cultural diplomacy efforts that simultaneously speak to the needs of diverse audiences. When utilized, this framework places both state and non-state actors in allyship with the movements driving positive change across the globe.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS:** "For those of us who are in public diplomacy skateboarding holds a particularly fertile ground to draw upon and use as a tool that aligns with the goals and missions of nation-states."

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS:** "One of the major findings was that skateboarding showed improved mental health for young people. It also enhances the development of community across racial, gender, and generational lines. Another key finding that's important to where we are right now, is that I also saw that the skateboarding identity acted as a defense against racism, and in that finding, a particular was that skaters of color, particularly black males, felt

that they were judged less harshly and seen as less of a threat from non-skating, non-BIPOC people."

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS:** "The research informs my practice and vice versa. While I serve in my role as a researcher, my other role is actually as a skateboarding envoy for the US Government. In that position, I use skateboarding as a tool for cultural diplomacy and social change and I reach communities in Brazil, South Africa, Greece, Cuba, and other countries. When I was working in the Netherlands, which was my first mission, I worked with the young Syrian refugees who were granted asylum in the Netherlands and I helped them implement and see the value of local and international partners and sponsors. When we put that in place that was the first time that the US Government was thinking about skate diplomacy as something that could be used and what they saw quickly is that skateboarding was already international and that there was a global





A skateboarder in LA, California rides at a skatepark, attempting an assortment of flip tricks and grinds.

community for them to tap into. When I went on this mission, I was able to tap into skaters from Belgium, skaters from France, and other local skate parks and local companies whom all wanted to be a part of welcoming these new young people to the Netherlands and letting them know that simply by stepping on a skateboard they had a community to join, that was already international not just them being in the Netherlands. We really focused on getting them to understand that they had a new home and a shared community that they could tap into whenever they wanted through skateboarding culture.”

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS:** “I’m not a sports scholar who focuses on sport as the savior of all things, that is not my role. I simply believe that it’s a channel for us to talk about all those other things that we want to get to. In that capacity, I demonstrated how skateboarding was an emerging inclusive sporting culture that [people] can get involved in, no matter what age, at what time. And most importantly, expose the youth to the government officials to think about how they might develop a community.”

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS:** “Developing skate diplomacy as a framework really draws on critical concepts by focusing on skateboarding as a shared identity (the shared identity being them as skateboarders). Then learning together and recognizing that, at a certain point, after placing your foot on that board and pushing down the road, you’ve now graduated from a pedestrian to a skateboarder and build on those shared experiences because it doesn’t matter who you are, from an Olympian to the skater who started

yesterday, there is a shared experience in what it is to have those first pushes and no one forgets the first pebble that you encounter while you’re rolling. That ability to know that humility and humbleness that affects all of us, no matter how good you are as an athlete is something that we all deal with on a daily basis, so they really build a connection from the top of the line to the neophyte. And it really builds upon when we encounter cultural diplomacy because skateboarding is something that actually touches the art, music, media, and entrepreneurship, all those other aspects of the culture which we as diplomats are always trying to engage with.”

**NEFTALIE WILLIAMS:** “When we’re working in Cuba we’re talking about skateboarding in a different manner. We’re talking about skateboarding in the sense of collectivism and cooperation, which are two things that work very well as dialogue in Cuba. Part of that is having the conversation where we are both teaching skills that they can use to do other things from workshops to the educational space. Also, they get a chance to see that everyone is teaching together and that, while you are practicing individually, you’re also part of a collective. And that’s really important in dealing with Cuba, which is Communist. But if I’m having a conversation in the US, the US is always focused on narratives of freedom and individualism and skating does allow you to do that too. There’s truly no greater joy than the moment you realize that you can step on your board and push faster than the people who are around you. And that translates to “whoa I just moved through a crowd, that is freedom.” •

# Always Already Players: Considering the Cultural Diplomacy of Artists

## MODERATORS:

### **SARAH E.K. SMITH**

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Information  
& Media Studies, Western University

### **LINDA GRUSSANI**

(Algonquin Anishinabekwe, Kitigan Zibi  
Anishinabeg), Ph.D. Candidate,  
Cultural Studies, Queen's University

## PANELISTS:

### **CARLA RIPPEY**


Visual artist

### **JEFF THOMAS**

Curator and Photographer

### **LORI BLONDEAU**

Assistant Professor at the School of Art,  
University of Manitoba



**R**ecent scholarship in cultural diplomacy has focused on institutions and national players; overshadowing the role and impact of cultural producers. Reflecting the emphasis of the second summit on players, this panel engages with visual artists to understand their contributions and experiences, as well as the diverse networks to which they contribute. The cultural diplomacy of artists is often addressed within larger frameworks, such as national representation and foreign policy agendas, or alternatively, artists are perceived to be isolated within creative discourses. Conversely, this session seeks to advance visual artists as engaged players within the diplomatic landscape; and notably, players who have long been participants and initiators of significant networks, contributing through complex relationships that work in hand with (and at times against) cultural institutions (public and private), as well as with other cultural producers and workers, and a range of geographic structures (local to global).

The panel will address how artists wield their agency, even when contributing to larger institutional and structural agendas. Additionally, the panel will consider the issue of artists' lack of self-identification as players within cultural diplomacy. Further, the discussion will attend to how artists build productive collaborations globally, and how artists seek to challenge normative frameworks and understandings which encompass issues from artists' material conditions to decolonial agendas, and more.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

## Activist agendas and artists

**LORI BLONDEAU:** "I think a lot of us indigenous artists, there's always some activism involved in how we make our work or want to make our work. I see myself as a recorder of history and I think that's what our artists were in all indigenous communities, that's what we were there for to record even down to our winter accounts or you know just even the designs on our tipis and even the rock art."

**CARLA RIPPEY:** "Recently I've been thinking about who has the right to use images [of indigenous people]. Since I'm not a representative of that culture, I'm an outsider, is it useful or is it okay for me to be using these images? I know there's been a lot of reaction say to fashion shows using indigenous textiles without permission. I first did it because I was interested in a sort of rescue of these images and went to bring them out to the world, but the question is do I have the right to do that? I've also worked a lot with images of women in prison from the Mexican national archives, women who were detained in Mexico City in police stations in the 1930s. I started off because I was fascinated by the images, but once again I was questioning my right to use these images and I think, among other things, I really have to look for ways of presenting this work in the context of more serious social research on why women are in prison and what we can do about it. I began to realize the importance of context and presenting this information."

**JEFF THOMAS:** "I found that over time a new era began to open up. I was commissioned to produce an exhibition on residential schools in 2001, it

opened in 2002 at Library Archives, Canada. It was given to me by what was then known as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and they said that this exhibition had to be curated for indigenous people and you have to make it practical in terms of how the exhibition can be displayed anywhere, even in a shopping mall which was in Thunder Bay Ontario. The idea was that the people in the communities were the ones that were in charge of this exhibition, how it was presented, how it was seen. [...] So it was about empowerment and that was my experience the first time that I had an exhibition where the groundwork was laid in terms of "this is for indigenous people".

## The role of institutions

**LORI BLONDEAU:** "I think my work with Tribe was a real example of trying to decolonize the institution which is a huge huge thing to be put on a small nonprofit organization, but that's the reality of these institutions, whether they are art galleries, museums, or even the academy. It does get put on our shoulders as I know for being the first indigenous scholar hired in the school at the University of Manitoba. I just know how much work they tried to put on my shoulders and I just tell them "no, it doesn't work like that", but I think my presence, being there is really important, and that's a form of decolonizing, at least for me as an indigenous person. And then also when trying to just take over spaces, that was another form."

**JEFF THOMAS:** "Over the last couple of years I've found out how effective my work has been by people who have told me that. It's always good to hear those types of things, to know that your work is having an impact on people. I think, for me, more importantly, in terms of the institution, and it's not necessarily the art gallery but places like the archival collections, that are the most difficult and problematic. The first one was Library and Archives and I was very fortunate, it was early in my career and I met some very progressive thinkers who were archivists at that time and they were around my age

or maybe a bit younger and they open the door and they found a way to bring me in at first to rewrite captions for photographs in the collection that kept inappropriate language like "half-breed" and things like "redskin" and to make new captions along with the old ones as a part of the permanent record. And then, to find a way to bring me in as a curator for my first exhibition project. So it was just kind of like one of those things where you plant yourself there sitting in the research room all the time and people will eventually notice you there."

**CARLA RIPPEY:** "I'm really interested in the alternatives to institutions, what we could create as alternative projects. I have worked with women's projects, for instance with the Women's Museum in Mexico City which is exhibiting photographs of women in the demonstrations in Chile in 2018-19, and came up with this incredible way of covering their faces. Another is something called the ANTProject, which is based in Miami but it's basically trying to get artists to communicate, to organize among themselves and they recently organized this show in the Mexican Consulate in Miami, which was composed of Americans working in Mexico and Mexicans working in the United States."

## Bridging cultural gaps

**LORI BLONDEAU:** "I think there's been a huge amount of progress made when it comes to presenting indigenous art and indigenous people running artists centers and galleries in [Canada], it's really changed."

**JEFF THOMAS:** "It's always been my philosophy that indigenous art is not only about informing people in their own community but also the larger population as well. In terms of finding a way to fill in those gaps, it is about creating conversations that don't exist and how do we begin to do something. Because things won't change until we can reach a point where we begin doing that and I believe that indigenous artists are the ones that lead the way in that movement too, I've always believed that" •



# Performing Connections: Musical Performance and Cultural Relations

## **MODERATOR:**

### **ERIC FILLION**

Buchanan Postdoctoral Fellow and Term Adjunct,  
Department of History, Queen's University

## **PANELISTS:**

### **ASTRID HADAD**

Artist, musician, and performer

### **UMAIR JAFFAR**


Executive Director, Small World Music

### **MARK KATZ**

John P. Barker Distinguished Professor of Music  
and Director of Graduate Studies, University of  
North Carolina at Chapel Hill

### **JULIA PALACIOS FRANCO**

Liaison and Special Projects Coordinator  
of the Communication Department,  
Universidad Iberoamericana



**M**usic is a powerful medium through which cultures around the world have expressed themselves. It can organically bridge cultural divides and allow communities to explore common cultural identities. As a practice of cultural relations, music can break down language barriers and promote cooperation and understanding among different cultures and communities to promote social cohesion. It is an artistic expression that can inspire people to create community and build something together that would not be possible to build separately. Governments have also used music as a diplomatic tool to connect their citizens with citizens from other countries to build or improve relations. Besides being a language for community building, music is also a form of dissent through which disenfranchised communities express their social, economic, and political realities in ways that question oppressive governments, racism, and systemic power inequalities affecting their livelihoods. As this initiative continues to look at cultural diplomacy critically, these inclusions become an essential aspect of its practice.

Music is inextricably linked with the context in which it is produced and consumed. It is not only an instrument to improve intercultural communication and cooperation, artists become diplomats whose music serves as a vehicle for conveying messages of resistance and subversion. The Performing Connections brings together practitioners, artists, and academics whose work in and about the music industry suggests different approaches to music diplomacy. It suggests questions such as: What is the relation between the society we live in and the role, function, and position of music within that society? How is mu-

sic influenced by social, political, economic, technological, and other developments and vice versa?

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

### Music as activism and protest

**ASTRID HADAD:** “My shows combine music, theatre, humor, and visual art, they support the point that I set for myself. My themes go beyond songs of popular music. They are always linked to a political scene in the broad sense of the word because I think that even love or sexuality are political. The human being is one, and that is why my themes affect each and everyone whether we live in China or Mexico. My luck is that the vector of transmission is music, a universal language, supported by the costumes that are my center.”

**UMAIR JAFFAR:** “As part of the export work, we send Canadian artists and industry professionals around the world to different conferences as delegations of the Canadian creative music industry, and we also represent different conversations that are relevant to the music ecology, music activism, and music politics in America. These issues for us are under three pillars, the first one being equity, the second one being sustainability both environmental and financial sustainability, and the final one being accessibility. [...] For Canadian talent, our Conference itself attracts more than 50% of delegates that’s confirmed that this is their first Canadian contact event.”

**MARK KATZ:** “Some of the roles that music play includes entertainment, socialization, identity formation, cultural preservation, communication, education, activism, protest, and resistance, and actually I want to also mention indoctrination and dehumanization as roles that music can function. We are here to celebrate the role of the arts and culture, but we have to be well aware of the ways that music can be used and has been used for very deleterious causes.”

**JULIA PALACIOS:** “In the last decade of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century migration to the United States has increased tremendously. Many Mexican artists have moved to the United States and are now US residents or citizens, have had children born over there, or are first-generation immigrants themselves. But a new phenomenon is developing, which I find most interesting. In very recent years, due to the increased production of music with Mexican roots, the Grammy’s and the Billboard Latin American Music Awards put all this music together in the so-called regional Mexican or RegMex category. [...] Its main following is in the United States. Mexicans and mostly Mexicans in the center have problems relating to music that appeals mostly to nostalgia and roots, identity origins, and an idealized Mexico that is far away, yet so close by. Interestingly enough, it is not a genre that has to do with Mexico, because there are no defined regions. It is an invasion of sound and mixes a consequence of a social imaginary mostly consumed in the United States by immigrants and children of immigrants.”

## History as a catalyst for cultural relations

**JULIA PALACIOS:** “I cannot live without history, but I believe it’s very important for us to make these references to the past, and in my head sometimes in the radio station I get to most singers and I say come on this was done many years ago, propose something new or take the past and bring it to the present to propose something new. I think this is very important, and also either to take it and use it or be original and propose something different.”

**ASTRID HADAD:** “For my shows, history is very im-

portant because I use it to speak about things that now are important. For example, the new show that I just finished, is a show about the baroque. I use baroque music but combined with another genre and I speak in my new show about the abuse of power, slavery, migration, the statement of social class, and many other things. So for me, for my shows, history is very important, not only for music but also for a range of the themes that you can take from there to put in this moment.”

**MARK KATZ:** “To understand hip hop diplomacy I think you have to go back to the earlier period of jazz diplomacy. In my interactions with people at the Department of State, it’s very clear that they are looking to that program as a kind of golden era of musical and cultural diplomacy and see what Next Level is doing as ideally an extension of that. I think that history is both valuable for knowing what has come before you, but also actually I would say very practically for me as a practitioner of cultural diplomacy, I’ve read about not just what went well, but also what didn’t go well. And how the US has often overstepped, has undermined, has fueled coups, undemocratic elections, and there’s a whole history. I feel that every time US practitioners of cultural diplomacy go to another country, we have to understand the relationship between our country and the country we’re visiting, otherwise, we will be very bad guests. [...] I think being good guests means knowing a little bit about the history of those countries which also involves knowing the musical history of those countries.”

**UMAIR JAFFAR:** “I’m actually currently traveling north of Norway and the traditional territory of the Sami indigenous people. I’m here as part of a mission for exploring the indigenous music of the Sami people across the Nordic region and in that context for this specific example that I want to use to explore history and its relationship to colonization across the world. As I’m sitting on Sami territory we’ve been discussing the history of colonization of the Sami people and how such fundamental forms of music like the lur (LUR), which are fundamental to the Sami people, were banned not too long ago, and how with that awareness of the history of the injustices, of the inequities, of colonization it becomes even more important for us to consider equity.” •

# Plenary Listeners' Closing Remarks & Discussion

## **MODERATOR:**

### **AMANDA RODRÍGUEZ ESPÍNOLA**

Research Fellow, North American Cultural  
Diplomacy Initiative

## **PLENARY LISTENERS:**

### **ROSALBA ICAZA GARZA**

Associate Professor at the International Institute  
of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam.  
(Session 1)

### **GERARDO OCHOA SANDY**

Journalist, writer and cultural worker, former cultural  
attache for the Mexico Embassy in Czech Republic,  
in Peru and the Consulate of Mexico in Toronto  
(Session 2)

### **CYNTHIA SCHNEIDER**

Distinguished Professor in the Practice of  
Diplomacy; Co-Director, Laboratory for Global  
Performance and Politics Georgetown University  
(Session 3)



## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

### ROSALBA ICAZA:

"In the first panel I found so many resonances in relation to the notion of cultural worker, for example, I heard about the challenges of access that still is a condition faced by many originary women and indigenous women in the context of Mexico as Emiliana has mentioned in the panel and how this recognition is still given on the parameters given by colonial institutions such as universities, for example. And it's in these parameters that the notion of the cultural worker is being presented as a particular representative of communities indigenous and originary communities who have culture, Which is extremely problematic. But I also learned from the notion of cultural worker that there is an important work on producing this label, refusing to be named, to be represented as a cultural worker, precisely because of the terms given by academia in terms of readability given by academia and settler-colonial institutions like those in North America, setting Mexico."

"I realized these forms of being not only a cultural worker but to be in relation with plural ways of acting politically, this is for me already a form of resistance to colonial logic. The colonial logic of homogenization of First Nations people, and this is perhaps one of the most important realizations and learnings that I got from listening to this part of the panel."

"I also heard in the first panel of all the protests or to what extent protest can be understood as resistance and how important is to understand protest as diplomacy, as something that is context-dependent, and how important it is to keep an eye on how protest as forms of diplomacy are parallel to legitimate forms of leadership, but also marked by for example Oaxaca pueblos' assemblies decision-making processes how for example blockades is a form of diplomacy of the land and can also be a possibility for reconstructing col-

lectivity. I found these particularly beautiful and powerful."

"Something that I really will carry with me and I will be thinking about and talking about with people around me is video games as possibilities, when these are designed by indigenous and originary people designers, how they can subvert the colonial logic of pleasure and enjoyment that is tied to the consumption of Earth and the consumption of the life of others and how this can be subverted in different, creative, powerful ways."

"I take with me as well this idea of the futures that are emerging, how these futures can be designed, how these futures can be presented to those who play video games, and how these futures are informed by the past. The past, of course, is not fixed and is something that is always evolving but is something that, for me, is very important, because then the game designers are not discovering anything but they are unmuting what has been silenced. How these different futures have the past in front of them and how this is this past of complexity, of different narratives about nations, about agency, about enormous contributions of different sort of originary people and indigenous people can actually be unmuted in these particular gaming interventions."

### GERARDO OCHOA:

"Part of the most relevant aspects during the session according to with my point of view, first I would like to emphasize the multicultural diversity of experiences and perspectives that the panelists share with us during session number two Reconstructing Identity: Diaspora Diplomacy. It allowed us to reach our wide vision of the origin, current status, and perspective of professors, museums, and academic representatives in the North America region and abroad."

"The remarkable contribution made by the keynote speaker Alexandra Delano to the understanding of the Mexican migration into the United States and the unfortunate lack of interest of the Mexican government administration on the Mexican immigrants. This topic is a very important

matter for professors in Mexico, the United States, and Canada, as a matter of research.”

“Regarding panel number one, Remembering and Engaging: Diaspora Museums as Cultural Diplomacy, I also would like to pay attention to the experience shared by the players themselves, participants from the US, Canada, and Mexico, which gave us a clear exposition of its origins, development, and strategies to surpass the challenge they are dealing with. I underline that the museums, the three of them, pay special emphasis not only on historical background and the current situation of the migrations they approach but also on the future developments that vision of the role of the museums as an active part of the contemporary history of the immigration, contribute to the renewal of conceptions of themselves.”

“There can be coincidences between political authorities and diaspora organizations or different points of view and struggles, which means they can run in similar, parallel, or opposite tracks. Eventually, the diaspora digital diplomacy can set out matters that are not related with institutional digital diplomacy, nationalism, and soft power.”

A group of Central Americans walks down a road prior to being picked up by the Border Patrol for illegally crossing the Rio Grande River into the U.S. in deep south Texas.

“One matter was mentioned frequently on panels regarding the role of the diaspora as diplomatic players and this can be the opportunity to go in deep. I just would like to mention briefly, it was said in different moments that the diasporas are not homogeneous and significant examples were shared in panel number three, The Scholar as Diplomat. The immigration cartography can be done as a long-term project, but particularly focus on the wide diversity of immigration in the three countries that are part of North America. In this respect, working in this cartography will help to shed light on the immigrations inside the immigrations, an aspect that also was mentioned more than a couple of times during the session, in order to realize the difference between them, not only historical, cultural, political, about the conflicting interests among them in the past.”

“In my experience in the host countries of different Mexican diaspora, in the Czech Republic, Peru, and Toronto, in general, I realized that the three of them are totally different from the diaspora of Mexicans in the United States. I realized that there are micro-migrations and some of them have different interests: some of them are more interested in integrating themselves into the host country, others are interested in organizing by themselves and far from Mexican governments, represented in this case by the consulates and embassies, and others have a specific political-activist agenda that they are doing in the host countries. Government authorities should focus on being in between.



It's a difficult position but it's important to continue with the activities that the previous administrations focus on, such as legal orientation, protection of their rights in the host country, and so on."

#### **CYNTHIA SCHNEIDER:**

"Naftalie Williams got us off to a fantastic start with a great talk about skateboarding and in it he raised a lot of the themes that we heard the rest of the day. He talked about skateboarding as a kind of action diplomacy. I was so impressed with how he teased out the kind of egalitarianism aspects of skateboarding: that it involves a lot of improvisation and risk-taking, there's not a system like becoming a great tennis player where there's a set number of steps and specific technique, any body type can do it, it's intergenerational, it's interracial, it's intergender, it's all these things, and the lack of hierarchy, and specific skill set, a specific body part, make it, I think, in so many ways ideal for cultural outreach and building cultural connections."

"One thing that drives me crazy about official cultural diplomacy is that people are always looking for the outcome, what do you get out of doing this? Which I just hate and the only thing I hate more is measurement. I understand you have to do it, people are paying for it, you have to do it. But the transformation is often so internal and personal it's not that easy to be concrete about, but I thought Neftalie threaded that needle brilliantly and talked about the connection between skateboarding and entrepreneurship, taking an individual initiative, and, very importantly, the connection between skateboarding and mental health. Especially during the pandemic how it's something people could still do and maintain a distance but do physical activity."

"The second panel focused on indigenous artists and their art, but with a particular emphasis on, I would say interfacing with institutions and exhibiting and also being in academic institutions. I thought it was so interesting and ultimately had such a positive but cautiously positive message. One speaker spoke about how exhausting it was to be the one indigenous artists in the institution where people come to you for absolutely every-

thing. This is something we've heard for decades from black artists and academics and I'm sure it's exactly the same thing."

"I thought what Jeff [Thomas] said kind of summed it up, and he talked about some mistakes he made but ultimately was positive and he said, and I quote "it's up to us", and I took that to mean indigenous artists/curators "to have the sightlines to recognize when something is important, and then to figure out how to negotiate it". I thought that was really actually taking on a lot. But he seemed he seemed to actually do that, and it was emphasized that it was, in fact, the indigenous artists who were leading the way in building bridges but also in having very honest conversations."

"[Astrid Hadad] said the goal of her art was to give pleasure but also have a political message. Personally, I always feel that fun and pleasure are underrated in this. You only have a chance to make an impact if you've reached people in some way, and things often get so serious about what art is doing and we should not forget fun because it's really hard to, I think, make a lot of progress without reaching people."

"My answer is "do the projects without necessarily a relationship to any government". There are a lot of people who do that. I do that with the Timbuktu Renaissance, which is a Mali initiative with the goal of supporting Mali's recovery from conflict through a focus on Mali's culture specifically, we've launched the first public concerts in Timbuktu since the occupation as a way to bring people together and break down some of the divisions that occurred during the occupation. And that raises another field, I think if you look at culture as a component of preventing and resolving conflict. Then you've taken it out of the representation of government and it's used often very creatively in this way by people. Thinking of the role of culture in the context of conflict is one way and even more fundamentally than that, making culture a key way that you look at and understand countries and peoples and regions."•

## SESSION IV

# Cultural Diplomacy In Your Neighborhood

### PANELISTS:

**JUTTA BRENDEMÜHL**

International Arts Programmer, Goethe-Institut Toronto

**EDWARD T. CHANG**

Professor of Ethnic Studies and Founding Director of the Young Oak Kim Center for Korean American Studies at the University of California at Riverside

**SHAHRZAD (SHERRY) DOWLATSHAHI**

Chief Diplomacy & Protocol Officer, Global Engagement Office,  
City of San Antonio Heather Kelly, Founder, Bloor Street Culture Corridor,  
Toronto

### MODERATOR:

**JAY WANG**

Director and Professor, USC Center on Public Diplomacy,  
USC Anneberg School for Communication and Journalism



**P**resented in collaboration with the USC Center on Public Diplomacy and the Korea Foundation, this session puts forth the city and its constituent actors as players in their own right in global cultural relations. Specifically, the event will delve into the diverse ways that local spaces and communities are actively engaged in cultural diplomacy in North America.

To fully understand the dynamics within the city, we attend to actors across the municipal landscape, from representatives of city governments to representatives of urban neighborhoods, cultural districts, businesses, and non-profits. The aim of the discussion is to extend conversations to the diverse players that constitute the city—those who are not only involved but in many cases driving new networks and relationships with global implications. By magnifying the local while retaining the North American focus of the summit, the session pushes us to consider the nuance of the local—the types of spaces, organizations, and communities that facilitate city diplomacy today.

## Recommendations

The following are some of the main takeaways that emerged from the discussion:

**JUTTA BRENDEMÜHL:** “I don’t often get asked about the importance of neighborhood engagement in ICR, International Cultural Relations, and I think it is a really undervalued area of exploration and opportunity in a wider global context.”

**JUTTA BRENDEMÜHL:** “What is very important to me is the interpersonal encounter, and with that I think every cultural experience and learning starts there, at the personal level.”

**JUTTA BRENDEMÜHL:** “Neighborhoods can be active places where inter-community exchange happens. Neighborhoods also have the amazing potential to be the ground zero for critical engagement, protest, resistance, and guerrilla action.”

**JUTTA BRENDEMÜHL:** “What these engagements can be when they are well done on an ICR level is they are glocal. They are local and global not next to each other but rolled into one. I use here the example of the European Union Film Festival here in Toronto, which was founded at the Goethe Institute in Toronto 17 years ago now. The beauty is that we do the screenings at the Royal Theatre and it’s in the heart of Little Italy and that was important to us to choose this as a home base for this film festival that is rooted in the multi-European communities here and all European Union countries and representations are participating in this festival.”



**JUTTA BRENDEMÜHL:** “Over the last few years we have worked out how to go digital and amazingly, neighborhood encounters can be digital and can work digitally.”

**EDWARD T. CHANG:** “During the 70s and 80s Koreatown in Los Angeles served as a traditional ethnic enclave serving immigrants arriving from Korea help them adjust and make an American dream come true. However, today it serves as a major focal point of transnational enclave and is recognized as one of the most visible largest concentration of Korean immigrant community.”

**EDWARD T. CHANG:** “Until 1992, Korean Americans were invisible, no one really knew anything about them and no one really cared. But everything changes, and that’s when Korean America was born and reborn and Korean American identity was born and Koreatown became a very focal point for politics, economy, and cultural hub.”

**EDWARD T. CHANG:** “Koreatown has expanded from traditional ethnic enclave serving primarily Korean immigrants to more of a transnational enclave that all kinds of different ethnic generational background are catering and are coming to Koreatown not only to enjoy Korean BBQ but also K-Pop as well as cultural diplomacy, where all the important visitors from Korea come to Koreatown and meet Korean immigrants. So Homeland politics also plays a major role today.”

**SHAHRZAD (SHERRY) DOWLATSHAHI:** “San Antonio is the largest Hispanic majority city in the US. 64% of our population is Hispanic and that’s very important in terms of the identity and the heritage that we celebrate in our community.”

“Recently, the state of Texas designated in downtown San Antonio what we call a Zona Cultural. It’s kind of a neighborhood, it has this official designation, which is now allowing for private and partner private and public investment in an area to celebrate this very rich heritage.”

**SHAHRZAD (SHERRY) DOWLATSHAHI:**

“We’ve kept very good relationships with the Mexican government through the Mexican Consulate here and when we talk about cultural diplomacy, I think definitely, undoubtedly culture speaks to all of us, especially in the field of the visual and performing arts. It’s a language that everyone understands, a universal language. And we in our office when we are talking about international relations, to promoting international relations, we have found that the cultural activities and relationships are very often the easiest to promote and foster, especially with the official relationships that we celebrate around the world.”

The San Antonio Riverwalk is a world-famous park and walkway along the scenic canal of the San Antonio River, in downtown San Antonio Texas.



**SHAHRZAD (SHERRY) DOWLATSHAHI:**

"We have made it part of our work in our office to connect with our diaspora groups in San Antonio, to get to know them, and to know what is happening within specific groups. I would say that in the immigrant community the largest growing group is our Asian minorities, and as part of for instance a celebration of Asian culture many diaspora groups have their celebrations."

**SHAHRZAD (SHERRY) DOWLATSHAHI:**

"We oversee our sister city and friendship cities around the world. That of course means that the world that we do in cultural diplomacy is one of the pillars of the activities that we carry out with our sister and friendship cities."

Shahrzad (Sherry) Dowlatshahi: "We always have to remind our authorities about reciprocity and what do we give in return and find ways to return and reciprocate these gifts [from partnership cities] and also take our culture and provide opportunities for some of our local artists to be able to be seen abroad. So there is always that interweaving and cross-section of the work that we are doing with our department of arts and culture as well as other city departments."

**HEATHER KELLY:** "Not only is connection and respect a baseline for understanding and appreciation, and caring for each other as community members, it's also been shown that these people who are friends, and colleagues, and neighbors, also act as ambassadors for their local neighborhoods and the culture of their chosen home city both when they travel and when they have visitors come to the city."

**HEATHER KELLY:** "There are many ways that our arts and culture organizations have been engaging in what we might call international cultural relations. A few specific examples include things like bringing performers, films, and artists from all over the globe and presenting them here in our city; creating performance productions, exhibitions, and even ensembles that are presented in other cities and countries around the world; bringing in delegations of culture professionals from all over the world

for symposia, conferences or to experience some of the performances and exhibitions that have been created here."

**HEATHER KELLY:** "I believe that neighborhood cultural diplomacy is culture-centered relationships within the neighborhood as well as the neighborhood's relationship with the rest of the city, as well as the individual collective and international endeavors and relationships that are stewarded."

**HEATHER KELLY:** "We know that there is almost nothing that thrives in isolation. The exchange of information, ideas, and inspiration, as well as collaboration and working together for larger purposes is vital for developing, understanding, and influencing; creating spaces, programming, and relationships that have meaning and value and to fostering vibrant neighborhoods that can have a global impact." •



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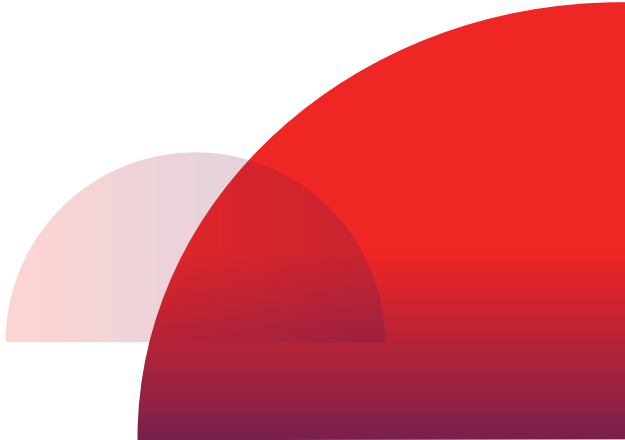
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