

Désirée McGraw Welcome Remarks

Victoria Forum 2017 – Meet, Mingle, Magnify

17 November 2017

Thank you, Jamie Cassels, for that kind introduction and thank you for inviting Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific to be a partner in this first Victoria Forum whose theme of “Promoting Diversity and Inclusion” is so directly aligned with the mission and purpose of Pearson College. I congratulate UVic and Global Affairs Canada on the dynamic start to what promises to be an engaging and thought-provoking program.

Good evening and welcome to all! Bonsoir et bienvenu à tous et à toutes!

A warm welcome to “our distinguished guests” The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, The Honourable Yuen Pay Woo, member of the Senate, the Honourable Jinny Sims, Minister of Citizens’ Services, Pamela Goldsmith Jones, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of International Trade and her worship Mayor of Victoria Lisa Helps. And a warm welcome in particular to the Pearson community: faculty, staff, residents, students, our alumni, sponsors, supporters and wonderful volunteers including host families.

I hope you enjoyed the video presentation of Pearson College UWC. It is, of course, only a brief glimpse of our amazing College and the values it represents, however, the rest of our short program this evening will give you more perspectives on Canada’s School for the World.

We acknowledge with respect the Lkwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce distinguished – and devoted – Pearson alumnus Senator Yuen Pau Woo, who came to Pearson College from Singapore as one of the sixth cohort, graduating in 1981. Senator Woo is widely recognized as a leading thinker on international economic issues and Canada-Asia relations and formerly headed the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. He was appointed Senator by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in October 2016 and assumed his seat almost exactly a year ago on November 10. He was elected leader of the Independent Senators Group (ISG) in September of this year.

Thank you, Senator Woo, for that wonderful testimonial on behalf of our alumni!
And now for another perspective from Pearson Faculty member Andrew Sewell who teaches

Philosophy and Theory of Knowledge and introduces students to the joys of sailing the waters of Southern Vancouver Island.

Andrew is an alumnus of UVic, where he completed a Masters' Degree in Leadership Studies in the Department of Education. He has been a member of the Pearson Faculty for 20 years pursuing his passion for working in culturally diverse settings while supporting international students studying in Canada.

You have heard from an alumnus and a Faculty member. Now, I am happy to introduce representatives of our *raison d'être* - our talented students. As many of you know, every year in early Spring, Pearson students share the music, dance and stories of their homelands and their experiences at *One World* — an inspiring student-driven performance of dance, song and international collaboration. This evening, we offer you an *avant-goût*.

First, I am pleased to introduce a spoken word by one of our second-year students, Ali Ibrahim-Hirji from Alberta. In this piece entitled "I belong here" Ali recounts his experiences growing up in Canada. Through lots of laughs and smiles, this comedic piece opens us up to a whole new perspective on what living in Canada can be like.

I Belong Here will be immediately followed by *Uajii*, an Inuit entertainment dance performed by 9 of our talented students on *Sila*, a song by a tribe called Red and Inuk throat singer Tanya Tagaq. *Uajii*, or Mask dance in English, is one of the oldest dramatical expressions among the Inuit People of Greenland and has also been used as a tool to educate and address taboos, as it plays with three main elements: fear, humour and sexuality. It is a way of dancing like the spirits Greenlandic people call *Tupilak*, spirits that can transform from one animal creature into another, spirits that can both help and harm.

After those two performances, please let me introduce you to Tomma Bambara, a second-year student at Pearson coming from Burkina Faso, who speaks to his experience as a student and to the power of unity and intercultural understanding.

Et voilà, I hope you have enjoyed this lively tour d'horizon of the heart and soul of Pearson College UWC.

The [Study Group on Global Education Report](#) was released last week.

Deploring that Canada lacks a strategy to boost participation in global education, the report calls for dramatically increasing the participation of Canadian university and college students in international learning.

It reminds us that "We must prepare young Canadians ... to build Canada's global connections, expand and diversify our trade relationships, uphold the values of openness and tolerance ... International education is part of the answer."

We know Pearson College and the UWC movement are an important part of the answer.

Pearson is a bold experiment founded by a visionary leader who believed that education, experience and friendship could lead to a more peaceful and understanding world.

Lester B. Pearson believed that the creation of a United World College of Canada could shape and inspire young change-makers from across Canada and around the world to go on to make a difference in their respective careers, communities and countries.

In his Nobel Lecture, Mr. Pearson asked: *“How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don’t know each other?”* Every one of us at Pearson College strives every day to respond to that challenge.

There is no better way to build the bonds that will go the hard, long distance required to create lasting change than to have a deliberately diverse and dynamic group of young people live, learn, lead - and laugh- together. And that’s what we do at Pearson, Canada’s School for the World.

Thank you all for being such a wonderful audience! I invite you to enjoy the delicious refreshments while meeting and mingling with alumni, students, members of the Pearson community and fellow Forum attendees.

Merci. Je vous souhaite une bonne soirée et une excellente conférence!