



# PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

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## JACINDA ARDERN'S ADVICE FOR WORLD LEADERS: DON'T BE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had some choice words at the recent World Economic Forum for fellow heads of state who aren't pulling their weight in the fight against catastrophic climate change. "You don't have to cede power by acting on climate change," she said. "There's nothing to fear about your individual status ... This is about being on the right side of history. Do you want to be a leader that looks back in time and say that you were on the wrong side of the argument when the world was crying out for a solution? It's as simple as that." She also spoke about New Zealand's plan to implement a "wellbeing budget, where we're embedding that notion of making decisions that aren't just about growth for growth's sake, but how are our people faring... (and) how is our environment doing? These are the measures that will give us a true measure of our success." [Read More at World Economic Forum](#)



Credit: Getty Images

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## HERE'S HOW 40 COUNTRIES RANK WHEN IT COMES TO CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD SAFETY

According to a new report called "Out of the Shadows" by The Economist Intelligence Unit and the World Childhood Foundation, the 40 countries in the index represent 70 percent of the world's children. "With approximately 200 million of the world's children experiencing sexual violence each year, the need to document and benchmark the global effort to prevent child sexual violence has never been more important," Sweden's Princess Madeleine, co-founder of the World Childhood Foundation's #EyesWideOpen campaign, said in a press release. The top ten countries on the index of a safe child environment were all high-income: U.K., Sweden, Canada, Australia, United States, Germany, South Korea, Italy, France and Japan. Brazil ranks next. "The countries where there is most risk is where we have the least information on the issue," Paul Stanfield, the director of organized and emerging crime at INTERPOL, said in the Out of the Shadows report. [Read More at Undispatch.](#)



Credit: Out of the Shadows report

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## AFRICA'S GREAT GREEN WALL: A WORK IN PROGRESS

Much has changed since 2007, when the African Union launched the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI) as a bulwark against the encroaching desert. The 55-member African Union and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) now refer to the project as "Africa's flagship initiative to combat land degradation, desertification and drought." We moved the vision of the Great Green Wall from one that was impractical to one that was practical," says Mohamed Bakarr, a lead environmental specialist at the World Bank. "It is not necessarily a physical wall, but rather a mosaic of land use practices that ultimately will meet the expectations of a wall. It has been transformed into a metaphorical thing. The program has moved from forestry to sustainable land and water management," he says.

[Read More at Landscape News](#)

Credit: Great Green Wall

## COULD A GREEN NEW DEAL SAVE CIVILIZATION?

Could a big government jobs and spending program succeed in kicking into gear the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and ultimately save us from catastrophic climate change? The energy transition is currently going way too slowly; it needs money and policy support. And many people would need job retraining in order to work in re-engineered, renewable-powered industrial systems. Today, as we confront the requirements to produce energy sustainably; to use it differently in transportation, manufacturing, and agriculture; and to reverse the current trend toward increasing economic inequality—in effect, to save and reinvent industrial civilization—the need is arguably much greater. Is there a set of policies that could actually avert climate catastrophe while saving civilization? A Green New Deal would be only the first step. [Read More at Common Dreams](#)



Credit: Michael Duffy



## IN MAURITIUS, SUGAR CANE MEANS MONEY, RENEWABLE ENERGY

Far out into the Indian Ocean where it is forced to be self-reliant, the island nation of Mauritius is weaning itself off fossil fuels by turning to its main cash-crop, sugar cane, for electricity. "The government's goal is to increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix to 35 percent by 2025," said deputy prime minister Ivan Collendavelloo who is also energy minister. "Independent producers in the sugar industry will continue to provide the largest share of renewable electricity from bagasse," he added. In Mauritius, around 60 percent of the island's electricity is generated by four sugar companies, each running its own thermal power station. The question is whether Mauritius will be able to produce enough sugar cane to meet its target for renewable, bagasse-based electricity. [Read More at Bio Fuel Daily](#)

Credit: La Baraque, Mauritius (AFP)



## GLOBAL HEALTH: BOOM OR GLOOM? THE DATA THAT DISPEL THE MYTHS

The news is full of horror stories and it's easy to think that the world is falling apart around us. But the truth is very different. While journalists rightly shine a light on the many terrible events and risks we face, the big picture in terms of human health and security is one of steady – and, often, dramatic – improvement. We've pulled together 10 charts which reveal that progress and also show the risks that still remain:

- We're living longer than ever before
  - Child deaths are becoming much less common
  - Fewer mothers are dying in childbirth
  - We are winning the fight against infectious diseases
  - Tuberculosis remains the biggest infectious killer worldwide
  - Vaccines have been a game changer
  - We live in a much less violent world
  - Resistant superbugs pose a major threat
  - So-called 'lifestyle' diseases are on the march
- Beware 'disease X' and more [Read More at The Telegraph](#)

Credit: Aisha Majid

## HOW A YEMEN WATER PLANT HELPED CUT CHOLERA BY 92 PERCENT

Since October 2016, Yemen has been in the grips of one of the worst epidemics of cholera seen in modern history. From April 27, 2017 to Oct. 31, 2018, 1.3 million suspected cases were reported, and as recently as October 2018 the WHO estimated about 10,000 new cases were added every week. Al Barzakh is one of around 10 water treatment centers in Yemen. After conflict damage in 2015, however, it was only partly operating, meaning just a portion of the population was getting served and that the water wasn't getting thoroughly cleaned. UNICEF undertook the plant's restoration two years ago, while also analyzing the infrastructure needs of the region. While peace talks to attempt to resolve conflict in Yemen have taken place in Sweden, water isn't an issue that can wait. It's increasingly used as a tool of war as in Syria in 2016. [Read More at OZY](#)



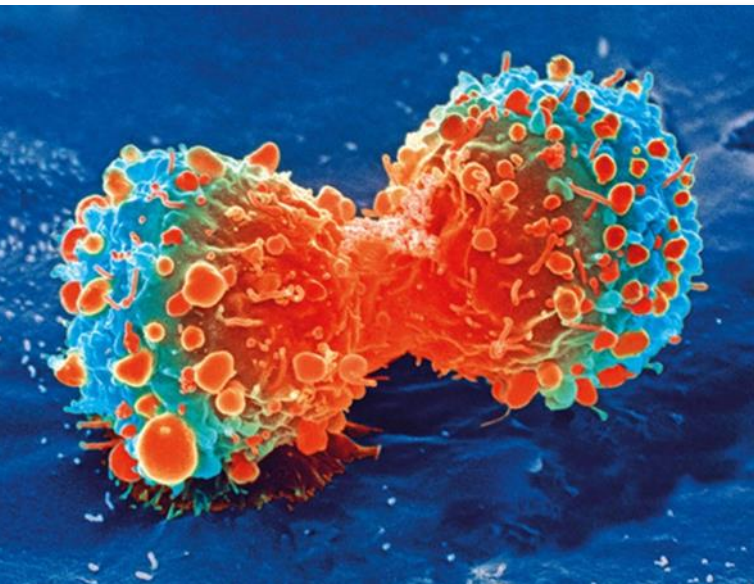
Credit: MUATH ALGABAL/OCHA



## IN DEFENCE OF CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE

Nearly Canada's new food guide is an audacious piece of healthy public policy. It reminds us that government is working for all Canadians, not just a fortunate few, when it takes action on health. We're proud of Canada's new guidance on nutrition. But we're also optimistic about the potential for the food guide to shine a light on the broader set of circumstances — the social determinants — of how we eat. Healthy public policy means fitting the pieces together. Canada's Food Guide holds up an uncomfortable mirror for us to acknowledge the social structures that make achieving healthy eating difficult. It lays out a practical vision and goals, so that as families, schools, workplaces and communities, we can now work together to bring those recommendations to life. [Read More at The Conversation](#)

Credit: THE CANADIAN PRESS/Paul Chiasson



## CANCER PSEUDOSCIENCE AND MYTHS – A DANGER TO HEALTH

Anyone who follows the cantankerous feathered dinosaur knows that we tend to focus on vaccines, where the [anti-vaccine religion](#) focuses on tropes, [pseudoscience](#), misinformation, and outright lies. Cancer myths seem to steal from the anti-vaccine playbook by pushing similar tropes, pseudoscience, misinformation, and lies. Even though there will probably never be one cure to cure them all, it doesn't mean that we have been unsuccessful against cancer. Many of the 200 or more cancers have been effectively defeated by modern science-based medicine. However, as a result of powerful new therapies, the five-year survival for children increased from under 10% in the 1960s to 90% in 2015. We are seeing both long-term and short-term declines in cancer mortality rates. [Read More at Daily Kos.](#)

Credit: National Cancer Institute

### SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY:

#### SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS MEANS TACKLING WHAT WE EAT

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that avoiding catastrophic climate change can only succeed if governments take immediate, ambitious action across all sectors. That means a rapid shift to renewable energy and away from fossil fuels. But even that won't be sufficient. Policy makers claim that what people eat is a personal decision, not a political one. We are led to believe that what we eat, grow, and produce is determined by consumer demand as opposed to artificial price supports that encourage farmers and agribusinesses to produce more and more of fewer and fewer commodities to justify sunken costs. We can avoid the worst impacts of climate change, and do so in a way that supports the health of people, communities, and the natural world. But it will only happen if world governments help reduce meat and dairy consumption and production. [Read More at Medium](#)



Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Jirangmoon



### SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS:

#### CANADA'S PLAN TO ELIMINATE TUBERCULOSIS IN INUIT COMMUNITIES: WILL IT BE ENOUGH?

The deaths of two Inuit teenagers, aged 14 and 15, in the past two years brought the tragic reality of endemic tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat, the traditional Inuit territories spanning four provinces and territories, into the Canadian and international spotlight. These deaths of otherwise vibrant and healthy young people inspired outrage at the ongoing failure to prevent tuberculosis in Canada's North. Motivated by the recent tragedies, this past December the Canadian government and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the organization representing Canada's 65,000 Inuit, announced the first stage of their plan to eradicate tuberculosis in Inuit communities. This new strategy looks to improve on past failed tuberculosis interventions in Inuit Nunangat, by bringing Inuit peoples to the centre of the planning and by addressing social determinants of health. [Read More at Healthy Debate](#)

Credit: Ouranos



Credit: UCLA Magazine

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“If you know there’s some chance of catastrophic risk, then you need to know if you have options or not,” says Holly Buck, a postdoctoral fellow at UCLA who works on the socio-political side of geoengineering.

Buck thinks the anger over the need for the field is “a completely appropriate response,” but geoengineering researchers are not the right target.

“People should be livid that elites and governments are presiding over a slow-motion apocalypse,” she says, “and have let global warming get to a point where some careful geoengineering research is warranted.”

[Read More at National Observer.](#)

# EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
Feb 23 – March 4	Third Canada-Guatemala Knowledge Exchange	Guatemala	<a href="https://www.horizons.ca/blog/2018/8/1/mnch-apply-now-third-canada-guatemala-knowledge-exchange">https://www.horizons.ca/blog/2018/8/1/mnch-apply-now-third-canada-guatemala-knowledge-exchange</a>
Mar. 8th-10th	10th Annual CUGH Conference—Translation and Implementation for Impact in Global Health	Chicago USA	<a href="https://www.cugh.org/events/2019-annual-cugh-global-health-conference">https://www.cugh.org/events/2019-annual-cugh-global-health-conference</a>
Mar. 20th -22nd	2019 Climate Leadership Conference and Awards	Baltimore USA	<a href="https://www.climateleadershipconference.org/">https://www.climateleadershipconference.org/</a>
Apr. 30th- May 2nd	Public Health 2019 (CPHA)	Ottawa Canada	<a href="https://www.cpha.ca/public-health-2019-program">https://www.cpha.ca/public-health-2019-program</a>
May 13th - 15th	Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics (CSEB): 2019 Biennial Conference	Ottawa Canada	<a href="https://cseb.ca/conferences/2019-conference/">https://cseb.ca/conferences/2019-conference/</a>
May 22nd-24th	3rd International Integrative Nursing Symposium	Galway Ireland	<a href="https://www.integrativenursingsymposium.com/">https://www.integrativenursingsymposium.com/</a>
June 10th-21st	5th McGill Summer Institute in Infectious Diseases and Global Health	Montreal Canada	<a href="http://mcgill-idgh.ca">http://mcgill-idgh.ca</a>
June 14-16	North American Refugee Health Conference	Toronto Canada	<a href="https://facmed.registration.med.utoronto.ca/portal/events/reg/participantTypeSelection.do?method=load&amp;entityId=1469515">https://facmed.registration.med.utoronto.ca/portal/events/reg/participantTypeSelection.do?method=load&amp;entityId=1469515</a>



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## SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA: THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED HEALTH RISKS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Credit: Joe Brusky/flickr

Due to food shortages related to climate change, the Earth may experience a net increase of 529,000 adult deaths by 2050, according to a new review article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The article highlights the state of the research on climate change, including projected global temperature increases, anticipated health impacts, adaptation strategies and health benefits associated with reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions. It cites 54 sources, including government reports and peer-reviewed academic research, as evidence.

“Climate change is happening, and it’s going to have all sorts of impacts on human society,” said lead author Andy Haines, an epidemiologist and professor of environmental change and public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. To that end, Haines and his co-author Kristie Ebi set out to summarize relevant climate research in four main topic areas. While the review ends with a call to action for health professionals “to protect the health of current and future generations” against the risks posed by climate change, Haines stressed that journalists can play a role as well.

[Read More at Journalist's Resource](#)



## IS WINTER MISERABLE FOR WILDLIFE?



Credit: Tim Elliott/Shutterstock.com

In fact, wildlife can succumb to frostbite and hypothermia, just like people and pets. The unfurred tails of opossums are a common casualty of cold exposure. Every so often an unusual cold snap in Florida results in iguanas falling from trees and manatees dying from cold stress. Avoiding the cold is important for preserving life or limb (or, in the opossum's case, tail) and the opportunity to reproduce. These biological imperatives mean that wildlife must be able to feel cold, in order to try to avoid the damaging effects of its extremes.

One winter challenge for warm-blooded animals, or [endotherms](#), as they're scientifically known, is to maintain their internal body temperature in cold conditions. Unfortunately, torpor is not a perfect solution to surviving frigid conditions since it comes with trade-offs, such as a higher risk of becoming another animal's lunch. Migration can be an option – though it's expensive in terms of energetic costs for wildlife, and financially for people who want to head closer to the equator.

[Read More at The Conversation.](#)



## THE RATE OF ASTEROIDS STRIKING EARTH HAS ACTUALLY INCREASED SINCE THE AGE OF THE DINOSAURS



Credit: Mopic/Alamy

According to a study by U.S., Canadian and U.K. astronomers and published in *Science*, the Earth is receiving more than two times as many impacts as it did in the deep past. That's something of an unexpected result. It was a collision between the Earth and a Mars-sized planet in a similar orbit that created the Moon and reshaped Earth into the planet we know around 4.5 billion years ago.

The results of the study show that impacts have increased during the last 500 million years. While it's hard to find craters older than 300 million years on Earth because of all that weather, drift, etc. that's not true of the Moon. So the combined Earth-Moon study should give a pretty clear picture of space rock collisions over the long term.

[Read More at Daily Kos.](#)



## DRINKING WATER SALINITY AND RAISED BLOOD PRESSURE: EVIDENCE FROM COASTAL BANGLADESH



Credit: Stock/ csp\_huertas19

Millions of coastal inhabitants in Southeast Asia have been experiencing increasing sodium concentrations in their drinking-water sources, likely partially due to climate change. High (dietary) sodium intake has convincingly been proven to increase risk of hypertension; it remains unknown, however, whether consumption of sodium in drinking water could have similar effects on health. Researchers present the results of a cohort study which assessed the effects of drinking-water sodium (DWS) on blood pressure (BP) in coastal populations in Bangladesh. DWS, BP, and information on personal, lifestyle, and environmental factors were collected from 581 participants. DWS concentrations were highly associated with BP after adjustments for confounding factors. DWS is an important source of daily sodium intake in salinity-affected areas and is a risk factor for hypertension. Considering the likely increasing trend in coastal salinity, prompt action is required. Alternative technologies for providing reliable, safe, low-sodium fresh water should be developed and evaluated in "real-life" salinity-affected settings.

[Read More at National Center for Biotechnology Information](#)





## WHERE YOU CAN HIKE TO THE END OF THE WORLD — IN A WHEELCHAIR



Credit: PEDRO PAREDES HAZ

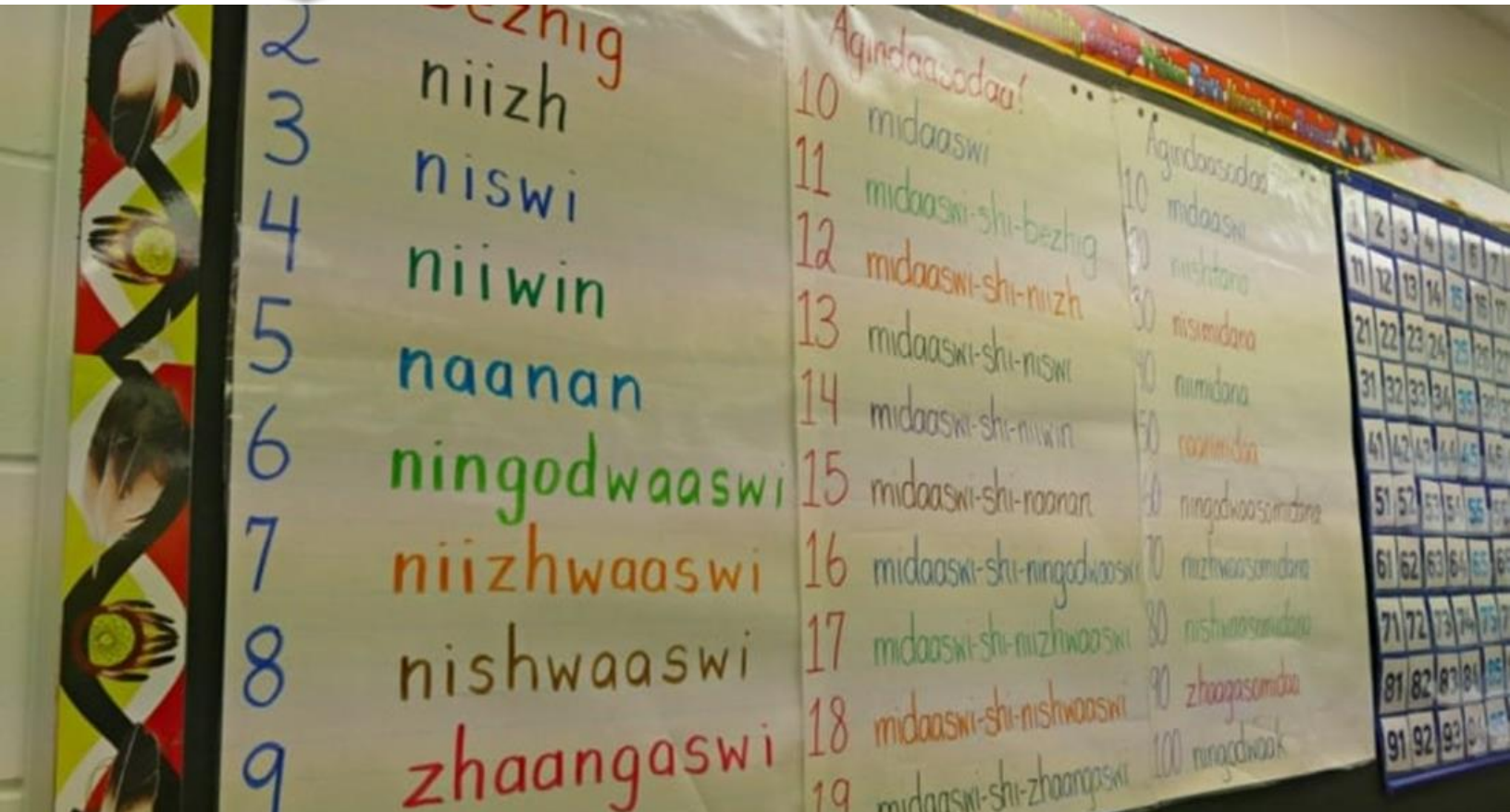
Torres del Paine, in southernmost Patagonia, is one of the most striking, Instagram-worthy sites in Chile, if not on Earth. A people's vote in 2013 picked the 1,127-square-mile park as the eighth wonder of the world from among 329 locations. And while people come here from all over the globe to hike these challenging trails at the end of the world, some come here to trek them — by wheelchair. There's even been a short film made about accessible hiking in the park, which won top prize in a 2018 contest.

EcoCamp Patagonia, a cluster of sustainable geodesic domes, is located near the start of the Base de las Torres trail, one of the legs of the W trek, a five-day hike that covers the main routes in the park. It supported Álvaro Silberstein in 2016, when he became the first person to take on the W trek in a wheelchair. Despite its accessibility and beauty, Torres del Paine is not always an easy place to stay — or to keep pristine. The park has had several serious fires in the past two decades, which resulted from careless visitor behavior.

[Read More at OZY](#)



## SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION: 'THERE'S NO QUICK FIX': ADVICE FOR TEACHERS STRUGGLING TO PROPERLY INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS CONTENT INTO CLASSES



Credit: CBC

When the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released their Calls to Action in 2015, many of them addressed education. More than three years later, school boards, divisions and administrators are still trying to implement more Indigenous outcomes within their curricula. But the majority of work falls on the teachers themselves — many of whom have little connection, knowledge or a clear framework to teach the material properly.

Another complication, of course, is that education is under provincial or territorial oversight, which means application of this varies greatly across the country. What that says is how big the task is, but also how teachers vary in their training of young people and empowering them to change the world.

[Read More at CBC](#)



**Rising Sun  
Whitefish Lake  
Seguin, Ontario  
January 31, 2019**



**Credit: David Zakus**

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