



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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Hi,

Despite relentless cold and snow a week or so ago I discovered the 'last' flower of the year in my front yard a few days ago. I hope it's not an omen of what's to come, being there alone surrounded by some green but mainly fallen leaves and 'sleeping' neighbours. This flower brings to mind two things. The first one is that, despite whatever global and local efforts there are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the needed reduction is just not happening. Among the various big studies just published we learn that current levels of greenhouse gases are almost exactly the same as the 2020 levels projected ten years ago if we did nothing, just kept on with business-as-usual. <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/11/20/countries-fossil-fuel-production-plans-inconsistent-paris-agreement/>

Everyday, week after week, I read about climate change and environmental destruction and global health, and it sure doesn't read like business-as-usual. My continually developing conclusion is that we are in for immensely greater troubling times sooner than later, as above and per the first story this week. We're wasting precious time playing deceptive blinding. Simply put we're just not doing enough, not nearly enough, both at home and globally. Globally, there is seemingly no progress whatsoever. We really need urgent massive action now, not later. It seems to me that those who are propagating denial and delay in reducing fossil fuel production and use are committing crimes against humanity. What other conclusion can there be? We must turn attention to the 'big criminals,' globally, and work with them to reduce their growing and enormous impact on us all.

This, then, leads me to consideration of a statement last week by President Obama when addressing the Greenbuild Conference in Atlanta. He said that, in his opinion,

the greatest issue in the world today are the huge existing and growing economic inequalities, where so few have so much and so many have so little. His explanation is that, how can we expect the billions on the losing side of this gap to alter their demands for a better life, in spite of climate crises. He quoted a conversation he had had with India's Prime Minister Modi who rhetorically asked 'how can I tell 500 million people to go without electricity for the sake of the planet, for the sake of those who already have had so much and haven't come close to sharing enough?' Well said. We must focus seriously on economic justice and climate crisis at the same time.

In today's ***Planetary Health Weekly*** (#48 of 2019) there's more about where we are heading and why. Read about:

- how scientists have earlier been so wrong,
- the critical consequences of Amazon fires,
- whether to have children these days,
- hospitals targeting social determinants,
- measles deaths in Samoa,
- massive solar power in Seoul,
- new green building rules in British Columbia,
- B.C.'s new Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act,
- being serious about what we eat,
- satellite mapping of crops in Africa,
- Bayer's angst with Monsanto's Roundup,
- a free novel by Vancouver author Robyn Allan,
- student involvement (or lack thereof) in Indigenization,
- the year's last flower in Toronto **and more.**

I hope you'll take a read.

Best, david

David Zakus, Editor and Publisher

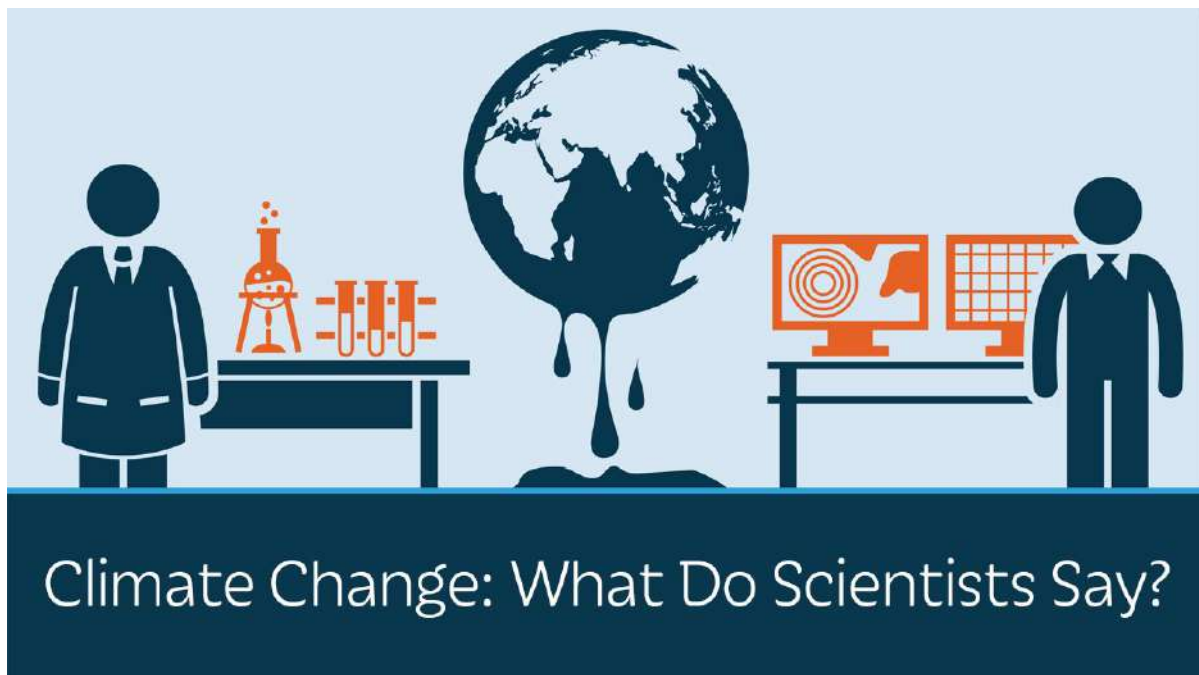


Credit: David Zakus

LAST FLOWER OF 2019

TORONTO BACKYARD - NOVEMBER 24, 2019

How Scientists Got Climate Change So Wrong



Credit: Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times

For decades, most scientists saw climate change as a distant prospect. We now know that thinking was wrong. As the seas rise, they are also warming at a pace unanticipated as recently as five years ago. This is very bad news. Even if scientists end up having lowballed their latest assessments of the consequences of the greenhouse gases we continue to emit into the atmosphere, their predictions are dire enough. But the Trump administration has made its posture toward climate change abundantly clear: Bring it on!

[Read More at The New York Times](#)

Three Critical Consequences Of The Amazon Fires: Biodiversity Loss, Climate Change and Health



Credits: Gabriel Uchida

The Amazonian fires that captured the world's attention in late August 2019 are a calamity of monumental proportions for our shared climate, biodiversity loss and health. While mass media attention has begun to shift its focus elsewhere, the fires have not abated and only risk worsening as the lower Amazon heads into mid-dry season. A study released September 11th by the Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project (MAAP) demonstrated that over 40,000 ha of forest were both cleared in early 2019 and then burnt at the beginning of the Amazon's dry season, as land owners claimed new land for agriculture and pasture using the slash-and-burn technique. This finding confirms that fires are happening on land that was previously forested, as opposed to being primarily part of an ongoing agricultural cycle, as some tried to claim. Though this article is a couple months old, it contains such good information.

[Read More at Amazon Fronlines](#)

Samoa Measles Death Toll Hits 20; Eleven Children Critical



Credit: RNZ Pacific / Jenny Meyer

The death toll from Samoa's measles epidemic has risen to 20, with 202 cases recorded last week. The government said 147 people were currently in hospital because of measles, including 11 children who were in a critical condition. The majority of them are at the main hospital in the capital, Apia. 1644 cases of measles have been recorded in the country since the outbreak started last month. The country is in a state of emergency, with schools closed, a mass vaccination campaign underway, and public gatherings restricted. Nearly 89% of the cases are on the main island, Upolu, and restrictions are in place on travel between the two islands, including a ban on children under the age of 19. All but one of the recorded deaths have been children; nine under the age of one, and 10 between the ages of one and four. [Read More at RNZ](#)

Educating Girls May Be Nigeria's Best Defense Against Climate Change



Credit: Etinosa Yvonne

The Center for Girls' Education (CGE) is located in a plain, single-story building in the northern Nigerian city of Zaria. The concrete walls are bare, save for sheets of paper scrawled with motivational messages like "Work Hard, Have Fun, Make a Difference." Over the past decade, CGE has helped thousands of impoverished adolescents in northern Nigeria stay in school or gain the skills they need to enrol. The centre operates seven projects made possible by funding from institutions including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Malala Fund. In 2016, its Pathways to Choice project expanded beyond Kaduna State into two other northern states. Operating in a religiously conservative area, CGE does not explicitly teach family planning. Nonetheless, the girls who take part in the safe spaces are more likely to use birth control than those who don't, partly because of the greater exposure to information they receive in school. Despite the efforts of CGE and other organizations working to advance girls' education, fewer than one in three girls in sub-Saharan Africa attends secondary school. Advocates say that if some climate-adaptation funds—which are often focused on expensive, highly technical solutions—were delivered to organizations that educate girls, this low-tech, equity-focused response to climate change could rapidly scale up.

"When a girl has an education, she will make a better person in her home, in the community, and everywhere she finds herself."

[Read More at Sierra Club](#)

To Have or Not to Have Children in the

Age of Climate Change



Credit: ELLICE WEAVER

"You can't be honest with yourself about what you want and think about the climate crisis at the same time—you might as well plant your feet in cement," therapist Ann Davidman tells me in her airy Oakland office. A sixty-something who bills herself as a baby-decision "clarity counselor," Davidman has made a career out of using writing prompts and guided visualizations to help people like me figure out whether they want to have kids. I'm on her couch this sunny summer afternoon because, like increasing numbers of millennials and Generation Zers, I'm worried that if I procreate, I will contribute to melting ice caps, rising seas, and extreme weather. [Read More at Sierra Club](#)

Fueled By Floods: Cambodian People's Food Security Is Threatened By Hydropower Demands



Credit: Trey Riel

“When I was 12, I caught a lot of fish, but now there are not as many. There may be no more fish in the future, depending on the current situation,” says Sen Mary’s son-in-law, Nan Sab Yi, who works as a fisherman to support the family. “We depend on fish and the river. If we don’t have that, we have nothing.” With a handful of new hydropower dams completed — and more than 135 either under construction or forthcoming — the Mekong’s waterways will soon be altered dramatically. For Cambodians, who consume the most freshwater fish in the world and get up to 70% of their daily calorie intake from rice, this change may be devastating. “Since the dams have been built, the amount of fish is decreasing,” says Nan Sab Yi. “Normally the river starts to rise up between June and July, and the fishing is good. Now the water is not high enough.” [Read More at University of Washington](#)

Seoul Is Putting Solar Panels On All Public Buildings And 1 Million Homes



Credit: REUTERS/Lee Jae-Won

Look up as you walk the streets of South Korea's capital and you'll see a renewable-energy revolution taking place. By 2022, every public building and 1 million homes in the city are set to be powered by solar. The Solar City Seoul project is part of a programme to wean Asia's fourth-largest economy off its dependence on coal, gas and nuclear for power generation. The country aims to generate 35% of its electricity from renewables by 2040. Seoul hopes that by creating solar power landmarks it can emulate the success of Europe's pioneering solar city – Freiburg, Germany – where the suburb of Vauban has become a tourist attraction thanks to its innovative solar-friendly architecture. [Read More at World Economic Forum](#)

14 U.S. Hospitals And Health Systems Commit \$700 Million To Social Determinants



Credit: Getty Images

A coalition of 14 hospitals and health systems, including Kaiser Permanente and Rush University Medical Center, is committing \$700 million to local investments addressing the social and economic determinants of health. Less than a week before he unexpectedly passed away, Kaiser Permanente Chairman and CEO Bernard Tyson, long a champion of more equitable, accessible and affordable healthcare, spoke to the importance of these efforts and why Kaiser had already committed \$200 million: "As a co-founder of the Healthcare Anchor Network, we hope this collective commitment by the 14 health systems will help encourage others to invest alongside us in support of healthier communities and making meaningful progress towards improving the future of health and health care in this country." [Read More at PWC](#)

OPINION

If We're Serious About Climate Change We Must Look At What We Eat



Credit: Needpix

According to a comprehensive 2018 study by Oxford University scientists, meat and dairy provide 18% of calories to the global population, but use 83% of all farmland. A quarter of all global greenhouse gas emissions comes from food production and forestry. And almost 60% of those food emissions come from animal products. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has said that a plant based diet can help tackle the climate crisis. And the Oxford study went further - it said that to have a chance of keeping global warming under a 2C rise the entire world needs to shift to a "flexitarian" diet. Because if the environmental footprint of meat and dairy is as large and destructive as is being suggested, and we can do something about it without asking individuals to make a huge sacrifice, then why aren't global governments making this a priority? [Read More at FPC Fresh Talk Daily](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

These Building Rules Could Be Our Climate Salvation



Credit: Cascadia Windows

The BC Energy Step Code and the City of Vancouver's Zero Emissions Building Plan are both building regulations introduced within the past two years or so by the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver, respectively. The Zero Emissions Building Plan is similar, but explicitly targets greenhouse gas emissions instead of energy use more broadly, and it only applies in the City of Vancouver. Yes, carbon pricing will be helpful. Of course. But in the end, arcane regulations like the BC Energy Step Code will do much of the heavy lifting on climate change. They will carry us into a prosperous low-carbon economy, in British Columbia and everywhere else. [Read More at National Observer](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

B.C.'s Declaration On The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples Act Explained



Credit: BC government

On Oct. 24, 2019, British Columbia introduced the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act to the world. It's the promised legislation on the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It has been applauded by a powerful mix of forces, including the First Nations Leadership Council, the Business Council of B.C., the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, the B.C. Federation of Labour and environmental groups. That's a potent coalition. At four pages long, but with the UN declaration attached, B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act is a short but powerful piece of legislation. Finally, a government in Canada is stepping forward and putting its words into law, creating a path forward for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples in our west coast part of the confederation. [Read More at National Observer](#)



Credit: SAN FRANCISCO'S 2019 PLANET HOME CONFERENCE

Quote Of The Week

“So my advice to businesses is, don’t change the trajectory of your business based on a year-and-a-half-left administration. And stop pretending you’re an eco-hero for some kind of incremental behavior—it’s *way* too late for incrementalism; the house is on fire.”

Ibrahim AlHusseini, the founder and CEO of the investment firm FullCycle, a Palestinian American businessman, who grew up as a refugee in Saudi Arabia.

From: [Yes, Reversing the Climate Crisis Can Be Profitable](#) at [SierraClub.org](#)

Upcoming Events

- February 19th - 20th, 2020: [2nd World Congress on Primary Healthcare and](#)

[Medicare Summit](#) (Paris, France)

- March 31 - April 2, 2020: [World Public Health Nutrition Congress 2020](#) (Brisbane, Australia)
- April 6th -7th, 2020: [17th World Congress on Paediatrics and Neonatology](#) (Tokyo, Japan)
- April 18th -20th, 2020: [CUGH Conference 2020: Global Health in a Time of Worldwide Political Change](#) (Washington, D.C., USA)
- April 24th - 26th, 2020: [PEGASUS IV Migration - Climate Change - Sustainable Development](#) (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada)

FYI#1 SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA:

Satellite Mapping Boosts Crop Yields In Africa



A new digital farming system has boosted crop yields across thousands of hectares of farmland in southern Africa, creating jobs locally and in the UK. AgSpace Agriculture's new GRID system gives farmers access to advanced agricultural satellite mapping and analysis, backed by independent agronomic advice. The information helps producers make better management decisions and allows them to offer evidence of their crops' performance to financial providers to gain access to credit and insurance. Launched earlier this year, the new system is now operational in nine African countries and further expansion is predicted to create up to 775 jobs between the UK and Africa by 2024. AgSpace Director, Vince Gillingham, said: "Some 80% of the African workforce makes a living from agriculture, but many are crippled by a lack of access to financial products to develop their businesses. Price fluctuations for inputs and products, along with crop failure, due to pests, diseases, temperature or variable rainfall, hold the entire agricultural ecosystem back.

[See More at The Scottish Farmer](#)

FYI #2

Bayer Reports Surge In Number Of Legal Cases Over Roundup



Credit: Bayer

Bayer's ever-mounting wave of lawsuits in the U.S. follows its takeover of seeds and pesticides maker Monsanto last year for \$63 billion, one of the largest foreign acquisitions in German corporate history. The third quarter was marked by Bayer's deal to sell its veterinary medicines unit to U.S.-based Elanco Animal Health for \$7.6 billion, while it will also hand two flagship over-the-counter medicines brands , Dr Scholl's and Coppertone to American and German buyers.

[Read More at the ET Healthworld](#)

FYI #3

Insect Decline More Extensive Than Suspected



Credit: Julia Gunther

Compared to a decade ago, today the number of insect species in many areas has decreased by about one third. This is the result of a survey of an international research team led by scientists from the Technical University of Munich (TUM), Germany. The loss of species mainly affects grasslands in the vicinity of intensively farmed land -- but also applies to forests and protected areas. "Current initiatives to address insect losses are overly concerned with the cultivation of individual plots of land and operate independently of one another for the most part," says Dr. Seibold. "To stop the decline, however, our results indicate that more coordination is needed at the regional and national levels."

[Read More at Science Daily](#)

FYI #4

Courts Deny Most First Nations Injunctions



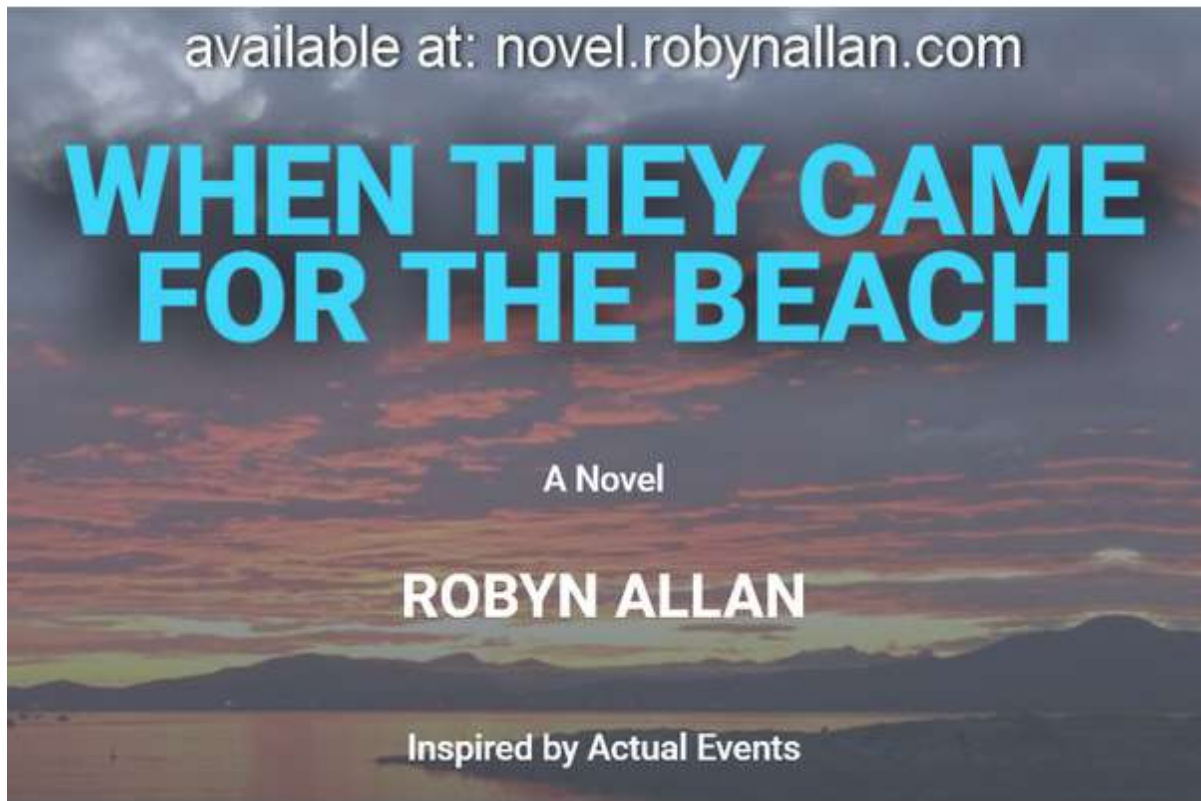
Credit: Michael Ruffolo

Shiri Pasternak suspected corporations likely won more injunctions than First Nations did in land disputes. The team at Yellowhead Institute, an Indigenous-led think tank, reviewed nearly 100 injunction cases. They found corporations succeeded in 76% of injunctions filed against First Nations, while First Nations were denied in 81% of injunctions against corporations. Merle Alexander, a member and hereditary chief of Kitasoo Xai'xais First Nation and a lawyer at Miller Titerle and Company said establishing this kind of regime hasn't been a priority — but now, B.C. has become the first province to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The declaration defends Indigenous Peoples' right to maintain and strengthen their legal institutions and have those legal systems recognized by the state, and the right to "own, use, develop and control" their traditional territories. The declaration also protects Indigenous Peoples' right to "just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes with states or other parties." "I think that will be key in the action plan to implement UNDRIP," he said.

[Read More at National Observer](#)

FYI #5: EARLY WINTER READING

When They Came For The Beach by Robyn Allan



Credit: Robyn Allan

A free novel by Vancouver author Robyn Allan about protest and pipelines

For more than eight years, independent economist Robyn Allan has amassed information about the economics and politics of pipeline expansion. She's appeared both as an expert witness at the Northern Gateway pipeline review and expert intervenor at the Trans Mountain expansion project review. Disappointed by the outcomes, she decided to do something completely different. "What do you do when reason and sanity no longer have currency ... What actions can people take when their government no longer protects their interests?" she asked hypothetically in our phone interview. Allan believes a lot of the responsibility now lies with the courts to see that due process is served. But it is also up to the people, like Trainer and her friends, to take action, "to make their voices heard." And that means feet on the ground. Allan's novel is there to help and you can read it for free.

[Read More at National Observer](#)

FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

Are Canada's Institutions Prioritizing Students As Partners In Indigenization?



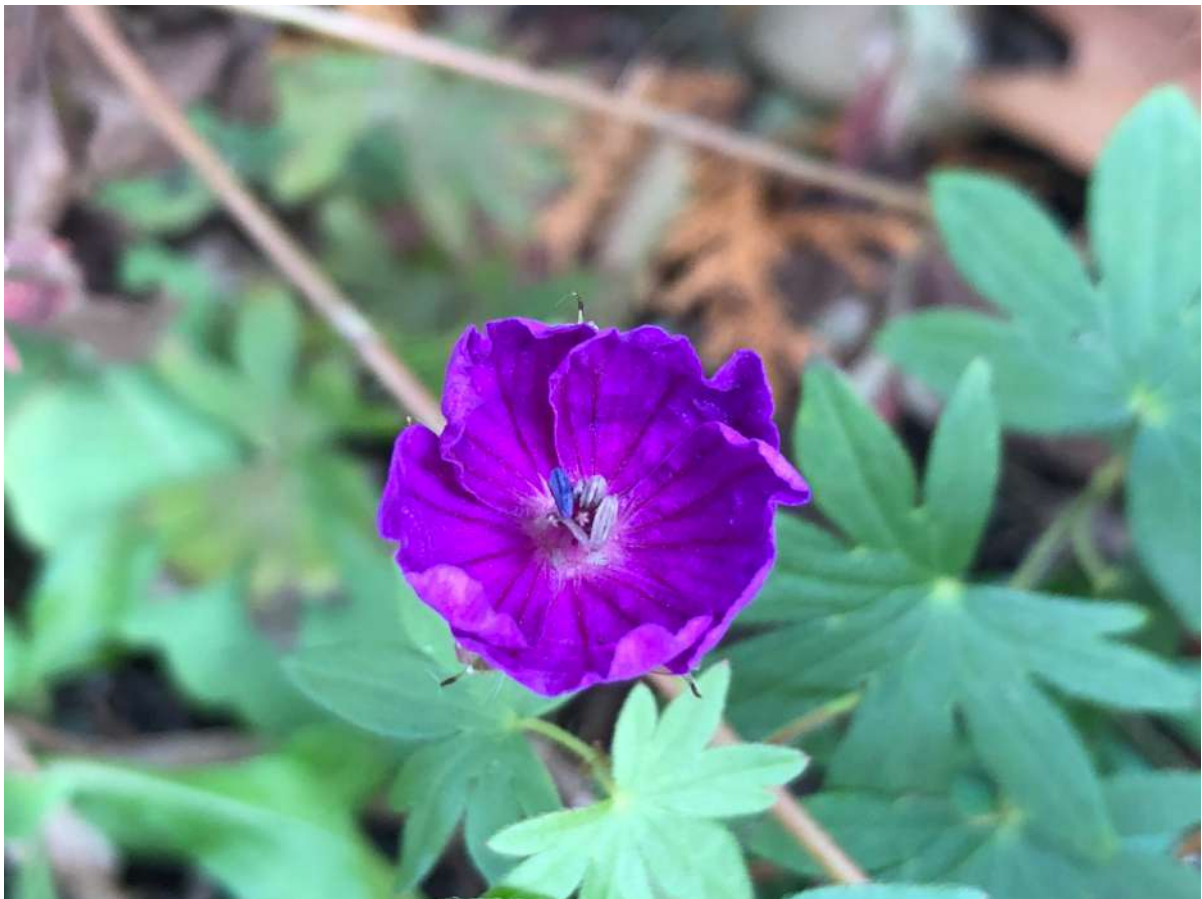
Credit: Brian Donogh/Winnipeg Sun/Postmedia Network

Since the release of the final report from Canada's Truth & Reconciliation Commission, the country's higher education landscape has seen a steady supply of press releases from universities, colleges and polytechnics announcing the new steps that they are taking to Indigenize their campuses and academic programming. These releases tend to be directed at media outlets and community stakeholders, but it is

less clear how much these same schools are doing to make their own students aware of the importance of Indigenization. When contrasted with the findings of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, along with the clear evidence demonstrating the negative social outcomes that disproportionately impact certain social groups, these opinions suggest that schools still have a way to go in educating students on why Indigenization is necessary. It also signals the continuing need for Canada and its institutions to address the lasting (and in many cases, still worsening) impacts of the country's colonial legacy.

[Read more at Academica Forum](#)

END SHOTS



LAST FLOWER OF 2019

BACKYARD TORONTO, ONTARIO

NOVEMBER 24, 2019



Credits: David Zakus



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