



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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<https://planetaryhealthweekly.com>

June 11, 2020

Hi,

A few days ago I heard former president Obama state that the current times are the biggest change he has ever witnessed in his life. That really made me think, How so? Yes, for sure there is a deadly pandemic virus sweeping the world. Yes, there is huge push back against blatant and systematic racism and the daylight murder of a Black person again in the USA. And yes, there are huge protests against police action all across the USA, Canada and around the world. But, are they the 'change' he might be referring to. To me that change will only be when we see action, with new laws, new workplace policies, sustained individual and community action, and some kind of consequent big change in attitudes. We hear that the murderer's city administrators have decided to defund the police force, get rid of it, believing it's rotten to the core. At first I thought, wow, how can they do that, how do you get rid of a police department? But upon further reflection and listening I now understand that there are various ways to maintain civil order without a system infiltrated with racism. For with that stain pervading so many parts of our societies how can needed change ever occur, how can justice be served, how will Black Lives Matter? I recall that in 1948 Costa Rica abolished its military force and implemented a new type of national security. Maybe we're heading in that direction too, though with permutations, likely a (highly?) revised status quo. But will it happen? Will Obama's 'biggest change' come to fruition? Will such a deadly and harmful threat to the public's health be eliminated or at least greatly diminished? The activism must be sustained.

Covid-19, too, continues to play out with ups and downs. It's now up in parts of Latin America and south Asia and going down in most earlier hit western nations, including Canada. But, here in Ontario it's still not going well, with an average of 53 health-care workers testing positive each day, 359 in the last week, but we are slowly emerging from 'lock down' (see Endshots). We must, though, continue to be as careful as we can to protect those on the 'front' and all other fellow citizens. Equally so, we must promote a collective activist mentality to rid our countries of their ills, whether a virus, systematic racism, environmental abuse or climate change. In the words of Desmond Tutu, a South African hero, *"If you are neutral in times of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."*

Today's ***Planetary Health Weekly*** (#24 of 2020) is again full of Covid-19 info (860,000 new cases in the last week), stories of environmental emergency and even some upbeat developments...including:

- Coronavirus updates:
 - What we've learned after six months,
 - Will Covid leave a legacy of authoritarianism?
 - For those already vulnerable the pandemic presents another crisis,
 - South Africa's high court rules lockdown restrictions 'irrational',
 - A young inventor in Ethiopia working against Covid-19,
 - How the new epicentre in Latin America could be the worst yet,
 - Asia's hidden deaths - a cover up in India and Pakistan,
 - Covid-19 and the social determinants of health,
 - Inside China's early days,
 - Spain reports no deaths,
 - Remdesivir's small benefit,
 - Additional risks from vaping, and
 - Characteristics of Covid-19 patients hospitalized in California; then
- Huge tropical forest loss continues,
- Climate justice means justice for black lives,
- Life and death under the heat dome in Montreal,
- Dangerous levels of lead in Canadian drinking water,
- Ford motor company's commitment to electric despite low gas prices,
- Climate-adaptive fisheries management can yield higher catches and profits,
- Americans cannot lecture Africans on human rights,
- Vaping shown to help smokers quit, saves lives,

- How Alberta kept First Nation in the dark about a toxic oilsands cloud,
- A traditional healing approach to addiction,
- Promiscuous treatment of nature will lead to more pandemics,
- UToronto's new executive course on global health diplomacy,
- The 2019 Canadian Association of Journalists awards,
- A call for action to protect journalists,
- The new Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,
- Poor countries face a giant debt crisis,
- Nobel prize winner Tu Youyou's book on her search for artemisinin to fight malaria,
- An Indian girl's suicide sparks protest over access to online classes, and
- Endshots (Kelso Conservation Area, Ontario).

I hope you'll take a look.

Best, david

David Zakus, Editor and Publisher



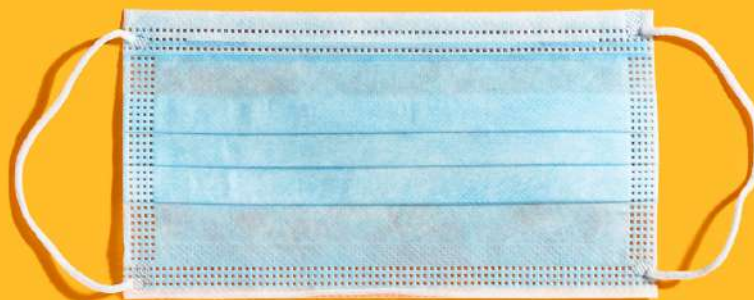
HAPPY SPRING POPPY

SARS-CoV-2 & COVID-19 UPDATES



**860,519 New Cases & 30,445 Deaths
in the Last 7 Days**

**Six Months Of Coronavirus: Here's Some
Of What We've Learned**



Credits: Pinterest

Much remains unknown and mysterious, but these are some of the things we're pretty sure of after half a year of this pandemic. Here are some things we think we know about coronavirus:

- We'll have to live with this for a long time.
- You should be wearing a mask.
- American public health infrastructure needs an update.
- Responding to the virus is extraordinarily expensive.
- We have a long way to go to fix virus testing.
- We can't count on herd immunity to keep us healthy.
- The virus produces more symptoms than expected.
- We can worry a bit less about infection from surfaces.
- We can also worry less about a mutating virus.

We can't count on warm weather to defeat the virus.

SEE ALSO:

At Transparency: [Will The Legacy Of COVID-19 Include Increased Authoritarianism?](#)

At Barilla Center: [For The Most Vulnerable Communities, The Pandemic Is "A Crisis Within A Crisis"](#)

At BBC: [South African Court Rules Lockdown Restrictions 'Irrational'](#)

At DW: [Young Inventor Helps Ethiopia's COVID-19 Crisis](#)

At CNN: [The World's New COVID-19 Epicenter \(Latin America\) Could Be The Worst Yet](#)

At Telegraph: [Asia's Hidden Deaths: Coronavirus Fatalities Are Being Covered Up And Undercounted In India And Pakistan](#)

At Toronto: [COVID-19 And The Social Determinants Of Health](#)

At DW: [COVID-19: Tests On 'Miracle Cure' Herb Artemisia Begin](#)

At Wired: [Inside the Early Days of China's Coronavirus Epidemic](#)

At AP News: [Spain Reports No Virus Deaths For First Time Since March](#)

At Bloomberg: [Remdesivir Has Only Small Benefit in Large Trial](#)

At Wired: [Does Vaping Raise Your Risk of Covid-19 Symptoms?](#)

At JAMA Network: [Characteristics Of Hospitalized Adults With COVID-19 In An Integrated Health Care System In California](#)

'Going In The Wrong Direction': More Tropical Forest Loss In 2019



Credits: Hotli Simanjuntak/EPA, via Shutterstock

Destruction of tropical forests worldwide increased last year, led again by Brazil, which was responsible for more than a third of the total, and where deforestation of the Amazon through clear-cutting appears to be on the rise under the pro-development policies of the country's president. The worldwide total loss of old-growth, or primary, tropical forest — 9.3 million acres, an area nearly the size of Switzerland — was about 3% higher than 2018 and the third largest since 2002. Only 2016 and 2017 were worse, when heat and drought led to record fires and deforestation, again especially in Brazil. In neighbouring Bolivia, fires were a major cause of what was a significant increase in deforestation last year too. The country's primary forest loss of 720,000 acres was nearly double the total from 2018. Bolivia now ranks fourth in deforestation globally behind Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Indonesia. Deforestation has been spurred by increasing cocoa production for world markets. But kudos to Indonesia, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire for very much slowing down their primary forest destruction last year. [Read More at New York Times](#)

Climate Justice Means Justice For Black

Lives



Credit: Getty via Toronto Star

As we watch people across North America rise up to confront racist police violence and white supremacy, we must grapple with Canada's long history of state-sanctioned violence against Black and Indigenous people. We, at 350 Canada, share the grief and outrage over the police-state violence that claimed the lives of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Their lives were tragically cut short because of entrenched white supremacy in our society that over-polices, criminalizes and systematically murders Black and Indigenous people. Around the world, Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities are the ones hardest hit by the climate crisis. We see this from the Inuit communities on the frontlines of climate change in the Arctic, to the millions losing their lives to drought in East Africa. We also know that the fossil fuel companies responsible for the vast majority of emissions driving the climate crisis are the same ones pillaging the ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent. These industries also disproportionately displace and compromise the health of Black and poor communities.

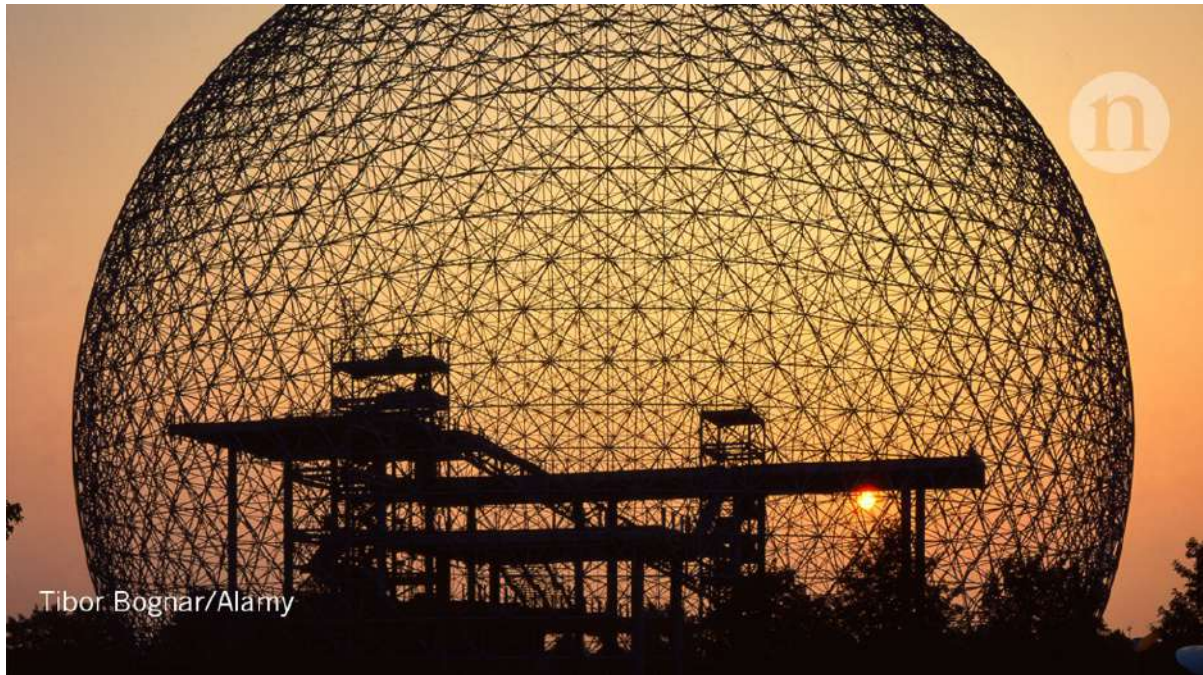
Last week, an alliance of hundreds of grassroots groups, organizations, and unions across the country released the [6 Principles of a Just Recovery](#):

1. Put people's health and wellbeing first. No exceptions.
2. Strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people.
3. Prioritize the needs of workers and communities.

4. Build resilience to prevent future crises.
5. Build solidarity and equity across communities, generations, and borders.
6. Uphold Indigenous Rights and work in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

[Read More at Medium](#)

Life And Death Under The Dome in Montreal

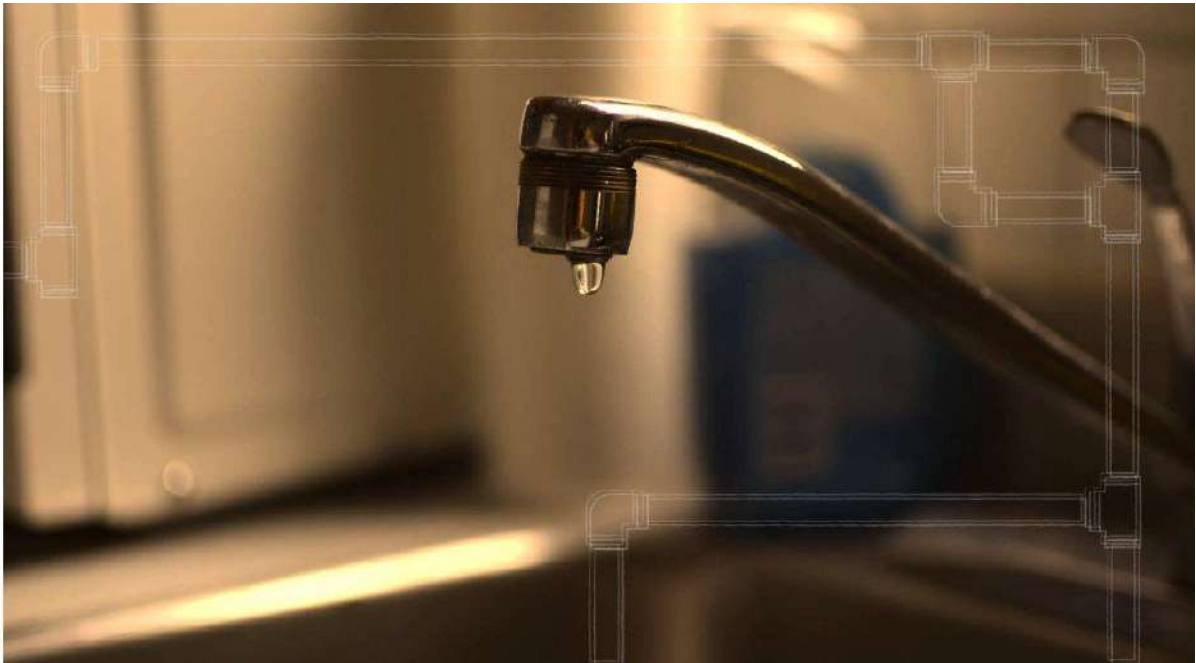


Credit: Tibor Bognar/Alamy

As June turned into July last year, temperatures in eastern Ontario and western Quebec rose to between 33C and 35C each day. The humidity, which hit 94% that week, made that heat feel far more suffocating. On the humidex, Montreal peaked at 44C— just below the threshold for conditions Environment Canada calls “dangerous” to human health. Last summer, the month of July was the hottest Montreal had experienced in 97 years. How could it be that so many died in Quebec, while there was not one heat-related death in Ontario? It’s a question that risks exacerbating the divide between Canada’s two solitudes, but also one that will become vital for people from coast to coast to coast in the years to come. Environment Canada’s comprehensive climate change report, published this spring, predicts that climate change will cause heat waves in Canada to “become more frequent and more intense” in the near future. Depending on how quickly we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, extreme heat that now occurs once every 20 years could happen once every five, or even every other year, by 2050, the report says.

This article is the 2019 Canadian Association of Journalists’ recipient in the

Is There Lead In Your Tap Water? Canada-Wide Investigation Exposes Dangerous Levels Of Toxic Metal



Credit: MCKENNA DEIGHTON

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are consuming tap water laced with high levels of lead leaching from aging and deteriorating infrastructure. A year-long investigation by more than 120 journalists from nine universities and 10 media organizations, including the Toronto Star and the Institute for Investigative Journalism, collected test results that properly measured exposure to lead in 11 cities across Canada. Out of 12,000 tests since 2014, one third — 33% — exceeded the national safety guideline of 5 parts per billion. Reporters also fanned out to 32 cities and towns across the country — from Victoria, B.C., to Grand Pre, N.S. — to knock on doors in neighbourhoods with older homes. With the help of residents who volunteered to take part, the teams conducted 260 water tests using accepted standards and submitted samples to accredited labs. The results showed 39% of samples exceeded the current federal guideline. Test results from samples taken in cities including Prince Rupert, B.C., Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon and Montreal showed lead levels comparable to — and in some cases beyond — those of U.S. cities that have made international headlines for their tainted water.

“(Lead) has been linked with not only IQ deficits in children, but spontaneous abortion and miscarriage in women, pre-term birth in women, hypertension in adults, and

premature deaths from cardiovascular disease in adults...It's clearly a major public health problem, even if it's an insidious one," according to consultant Bruce Lamphear. The federal government can provide infrastructure funding and Health Canada can set national guidelines, but they don't have jurisdiction to enforce. The management, treatment and distribution of drinking water fall to the provinces while the day-to-day, hands-on operation of water systems fall to the municipalities. In Canada, there are no federally mandated lead pipe removal requirements. [Read More at The Star](#)

Ford Isn't Worried About Low Gas Prices Fueling Electric Vehicle Avoidance



Credit:2021 Ford Mustang Mach-E

Ford could be seen as giving mixed signals about its dedication to fully electric vehicles in the next decade. On one hand, it's definitely invested. Ford was among just a few automakers to side with California and 22 other states to oppose U.S. federal efforts to quash the Golden State's right to set its own emissions rules. And it's frequently trumpeted its investment of more than \$11 billion on 40 electrified vehicles—including 16 EVs—to arrive globally by 2022. Ford's global director of electrification, Mark Kaufman, addressed some of these concerns and gave what might be the closest outward insight to the company's EV targets. "You can imagine we're having a lot of those conversations internally to say any time you're looking at an S-curve or an early adoption curve for technology; trying to get that slope of the curve right gets to be very challenging," Kaufman said about EV adoption. Normal analytic approaches don't help, he said, as there really is no historical data to draw

from, and so it's modelling in various ways. The bottom line: Ford is now expecting that by 2030 up to a third of all vehicles sold globally could be EVs. [Read More at Green Car Reports](#)

GOOD NEWS

The World's Oceans Could Recover From Human Threat By 2050, Says New Study



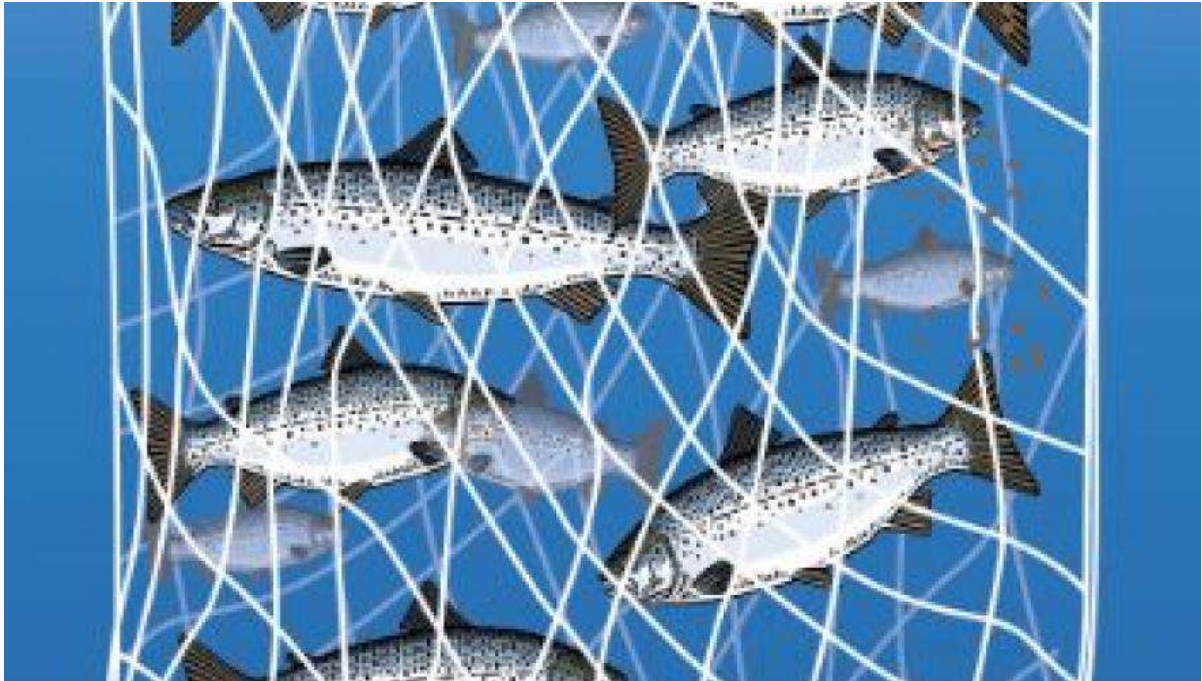
Credit: The Associated Press

Marine life that's been ravaged by years of fishing activity, nuclear tests and chemical pollution could see a "substantial recovery" by 2050 if world governments invest billions a year in restoration, according to a new study. The paper was published in the scientific journal *Nature* and co-authored by two researchers from Dalhousie University in Halifax, including marine ecologist Boris Worm. He told CBC's *Mainstreet* the findings counter previous concerns that some ocean ecosystems might have been irreparably damaged by human activity. They issued 45 recommendations, including a call for governments to continue the recovery trend by protecting vulnerable habitats and species, adopting sustainable fishing practices and taking action against climate change. Researchers put the price tag for such efforts at \$10 billion to \$20 billion US a year, but Worm said the initiatives would spark a renaissance in the global seafood and ecotourism industries. "So for example, if we were to keep rebuilding fisheries the way we're attempting here in Canada ... globally the benefits from it

would be north of \$50 billion a year to the fishing industry, sustainably, year after year.” [Read More at CBC](#)

MORE GOOD NEWS

Climate-Adaptive Fisheries Management Can Yield Higher Catches And Profits For Fishers



Credits: Oceana

When it comes to the relationship between climate change and fisheries, there's good news and there's bad news. The bad news is that climate change is expected to reduce the amount of fish that can be responsibly removed from the ocean – a cut-off point known as the maximum sustainable yield, or MSY. Some parts of the world are already suffering the consequences. East Asia has seen MSY declines of up to 34%, and West Africa is expected to be hit the hardest in the future, with projected MSY reductions of 50 to 100%. The good news is that climate-adaptive fisheries management can both mitigate these harmful effects and help restore oceans to their former abundance. According to a recent study led by Christopher Free at the University of California, Santa Barbara, management reforms can increase cumulative catches and profits in nearly all of the 156 countries that were evaluated. By mitigating threats and ensuring the long-term viability of important fisheries, we can provide a nutritious seafood meal to an additional [425 million](#) people per day. On the other hand, if the world continues to operate under a “business as usual” scenario, countries will continue to see their catches and profits plummet. The options are

clearly laid out for us: It is now up to us to decide which one to choose. [Read More at Oceana](#)

OPINION

America Cannot Lecture Africans On Human Rights



Credit: AP/John Minchillo

Seated in the unenviable squalor of my modest, sparsely furnished living room, deep in the southern end of "shithole" Africa, as American President Donald Trump casually described it in January 2018, I have come to the firm conclusion that America is not qualified to lecture my continent on human rights and democracy. I have watched the video of the tragic, untimely death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota and have remained appalled at the brazen inhumanity demonstrated by the police in a "first world" democracy. Each post has been inundated with an obvious abundance of silent, peaceful rage and despondency at the violent racism permeating every aspect of life in the world's leading democracy. Utterly shocked at what I have been seeing, I have had to repeatedly remind myself that this is America. This is the same country that reacts with immediate moral outrage whenever something goes terribly amiss and somebody dies at the hands of the police and in full view of the public in Africa. Yet as disappointed as I am with America's dubious modus operandi and deplorable human rights record, I have found Africa's strong and unequivocal condemnation of Floyd's agonising death a truly welcome and positive development. Without a shadow of doubt, Africans are increasingly convinced that the way forward for their countries does not uphold the American system as a model but as a

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

Evidence Is Clear: Vaping Helps Smokers Quit, Saves Lives



Source: Economic Times India

Nicotine is a habit-forming stimulant along with alcohol, which means withdrawing from its use is difficult. We want to be addiction-free in an ideal world, but if we must choose between our addictions, we will always prefer the less harmful option. In tobacco products too, there are varying levels of risk, with vaping at the lower end of the harm spectrum. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated in 2018 that one million Indians die from tobacco use each year. Meanwhile, the success of tobacco cessation in India is abysmally low; in 2017 the government reported the rate was just 7%. “Despite strong evidence that quitting both smoked and smokeless tobacco helps to immediately reduce the risk, few tobacco users are quitting, requiring more programmatic effort” according to the 2018 Global Adult tobacco survey. The intention is not to promote vaping or e-cigarette use to everyone, it must be restricted to smokers. However, banning and demonizing vaping is a net loss for public health. Smokers in India need more options to quit as clearly the current cessation therapies are not very effective. In e-cigarettes there is no combustion and thus there is no tar. The two major constituents in vaping liquid – propylene glycol and glycerin – are considered ‘safe’ by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Public Health England continues to maintain that e-cigarettes are 95% safer than smoking. Public health policy should be framed in such a way that underage use is banned and enforced, while allowing adult smokers who are struggling to quit to use e-cigarettes or any other effective harm-reduced alternative. Multiple replacement choices mean a healthier population and more work hours contributed to the economy. [Read More at HealthWire](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

How Alberta Kept Fort Mckay First Nation In The Dark About A Toxic Cloud From The Oilsands



Credit: Codie McLachlan/StarMetro Edmonton

Just before 2 a.m. on June 20, 2016, a foul-smelling cloud of toxic chemicals from a Syncrude oilsands plant began slowly drifting north towards the hamlet of Fort McKay, 10 kilometres away. Six weeks earlier, devastating wildfires ripped through Fort McMurray, forcing a massive evacuation of the oil town and an emergency shutdown of the company's Mildred Lake plant. By late June, workers were trying to restart the operation. An estimated 10,400 barrels of untreated petrochemicals were released into a waste pond. It created a plume of toxic air that could cause headaches and possibly long-term health risks for anyone on its path. "This is an unprecedented event," wrote an Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) scientist in an email obtained through

freedom-of-information legislation. The provincial regulator and the Alberta government have now come under fire in recent months after a *National Observer*/Global News/Star investigation revealed the cost of cleaning up the province's oilpatch could reach an estimated \$260 billion. It's also faced criticism for allowing oilsands companies to pursue an unproven technology to deal with their toxic waste, also the subject of a *Star/National Observer* investigation, and for leaving legal loopholes that allow companies to abandon old wells without cleaning them up. No injuries were reported. Jean L'Hommecourt, a Fort McKay resident, said not a week goes by where you don't smell anything and doesn't see how anything short of establishing new limits on chemical emissions will help. [Read More at National Observer](#)

See Also: [Traditional healing approach to addiction called for by Stoney Nakoda \(Alberta\) residents](#)





Credit: Paul Hilton/EPA

Quote Of The Week

South America is a key area of concern due to the rapid clearance of the Amazon and

other forests. Scientists in [Brazil](#) have found viral prevalence was 9.3% among bats near deforested sites, compared to 3.7% in pristine woodland. **“With deforestation and land-use change, you open a door,”** said [Alessandra Nava](#), of the Manaus-based Biobank research centre.

She said diseases were naturally diluted in the wild, but this broke down when humans rapidly disrupted the ecological balance. As a local example, she pointed to Lyme disease, which has spread to humans through capybaras. Some municipalities are culling the giant rodents to prevent contagion, but Nava said this was not necessary in pristine forests that still had jaguars as they keep the capybara numbers in check.

“The problem is when you put different species that aren’t naturally close to one another in the same environment. That allows virus mutations to jump to other species,” she said. **“We have to think about how we treat wild animals and nature. Right now we deal with them far too promiscuously.”**

Her conclusions were echoed by [Tierra Smiley Evans](#), an epidemiologist at the [University of California](#) who studies virus distributions in the rapidly degrading forests of Myanmar. She has found that endangered or threatened species are more likely to have viruses than animals at lower risk of habitat loss and hunting. She said the connection between environmental stress and human health had been made more apparent by Covid-19 pandemic.

“I’m hopeful that one of the most positive things to come out of horrible tragedy will be the realization that there is a link between how we treat the forest and our wellbeing,” she said. **“It really impacts our health. It is not just a wildlife issue or an environmental issue.”**

[Read More at The Guardian](#)

Upcoming Events

- June 16th - 18th: [Cities In A Changing World: Questions Of Culture, Climate And Design](#) (Virtual/ New York City, USA)
- September 22nd - 23rd: U.N. [Summit on Biodiversity](#) (New

York City, USA)

- November 9th-19th: [2020 UN Climate Change Conference](#) (UNFCCC COP26) (Glasgow, Scotland) - **Postponed until later 2021**
- June 7th-9th 2021: [Executive Course: Global Health Diplomacy](#) (University of Toronto, Canada)

AND

[**REFLECTIONS on the 2020 Unite For Sight Virtual Global Health & Innovation Conference \(April 11-13, 2020\)**](#)

FYI#1 SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA:

**Congratulations To The 2019
Canadian Association Of
Journalists Awards Recipients!**



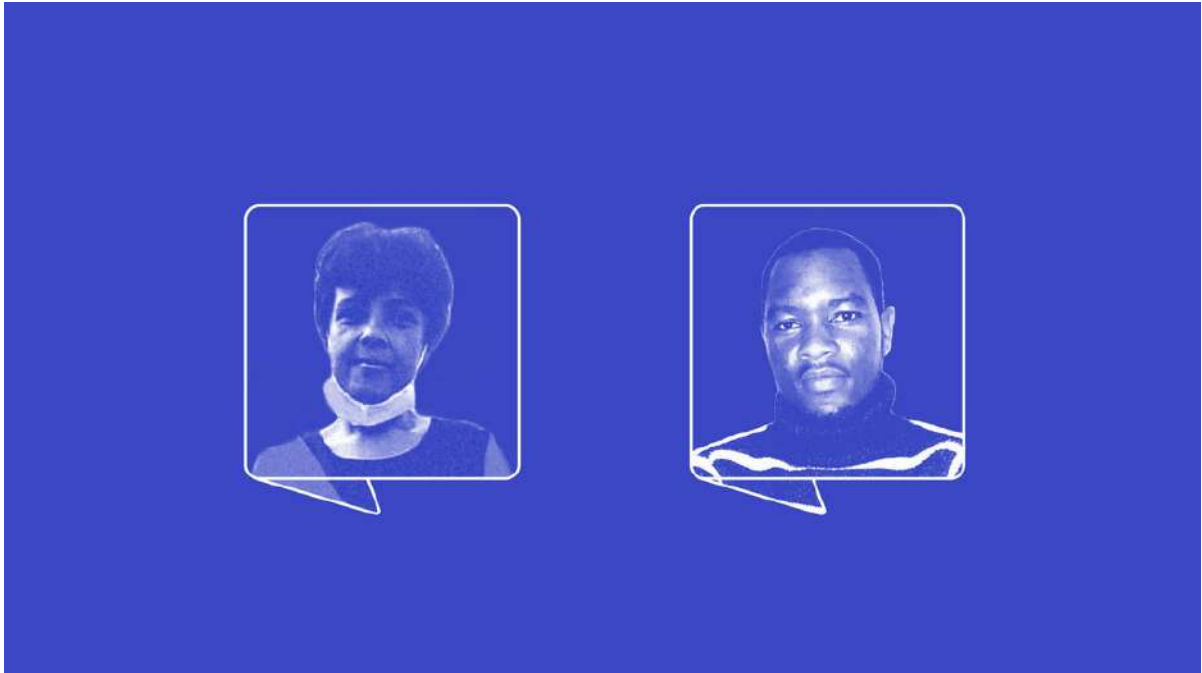
Credit: CAJ

The Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) just announced its recipients of the 2019 CAJ Awards for outstanding investigative journalism. This included presenting the McGillivray Award to Craig Silverman of BuzzFeed News, for his multi-part look at how one company successfully used Facebook, and fake news posts, to lure people into subscription-based services that only ended up ripping them off. BuzzFeed's work showed how the company even used Canadian celebrities to bait people in this country, and led to Facebook taking some action. Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CAJ Awards were presented online this year, with finalists invited to participate in a video conference that was also live streamed on the CAJ's Facebook page. Journalists continue to produce striking, important and meaningful work that educates, informs, exposes, uncovers, affects change, and makes our communities better places to live. Two winning articles (on heat waves in Quebec and lead in drinking water) are featured earlier in this Newsletter.

[Read More Newswire](#)

FYI #2

One Free Press Coalition Spotlights Journalists Under Attack



Credit: .ILLUSTRATION by WIRED STAFF

WIRED joined the One Free Press Coalition, a united group of preeminent editors and publishers using their global reach and social platforms to spotlight journalists under attack worldwide. Today, the coalition is issuing its eighth monthly “10 Most Urgent” list of journalists whose press freedoms are being suppressed or whose cases demand justice. Here’s June’s list, ranked in order of urgency:

1. [Abdulkhaleq Amran, Akram al-Waleedi, Hareth Hameed, and Tawfiq al-Mansouri](#) ([Yemen](#))

Yemeni journalists held five years and sentenced to death.

2. [Azimjon Askarov](#) ([Kyrgyzstan](#))

Life sentence upheld in case of journalist jailed 10 years in worsening health.

3. [Ibraimo Abú Mbaruco](#) ([Mozambique](#))

Reporter missing for nearly two months.

4. [Nariman Memedeminov](#) (Russia)

Journalist punished for writing about human rights violations against indigenous Crimeans.

5. [Nouf Abdulaziz](#) ([Saudi Arabia](#))

Writer imprisoned two years for writing on women's rights.

6. [Wawa Jackson Nfor](#) ([Cameroon](#))

Court date set for journalist held in pretrial detention two years.

7. [Arphine Helisoa](#) ([Madagascar](#))

Trial threatens imprisonment and revocation of journalist's rights.

8. [Masrat Zahra](#) ([India](#))

Police investigate, harass, and intimidate photojournalist for images posted to Facebook.

9. [Jamal Khashoggi](#) ([Saudi Arabia](#))

Calls persist for investigation into journalist's high-profile, brazen murder.

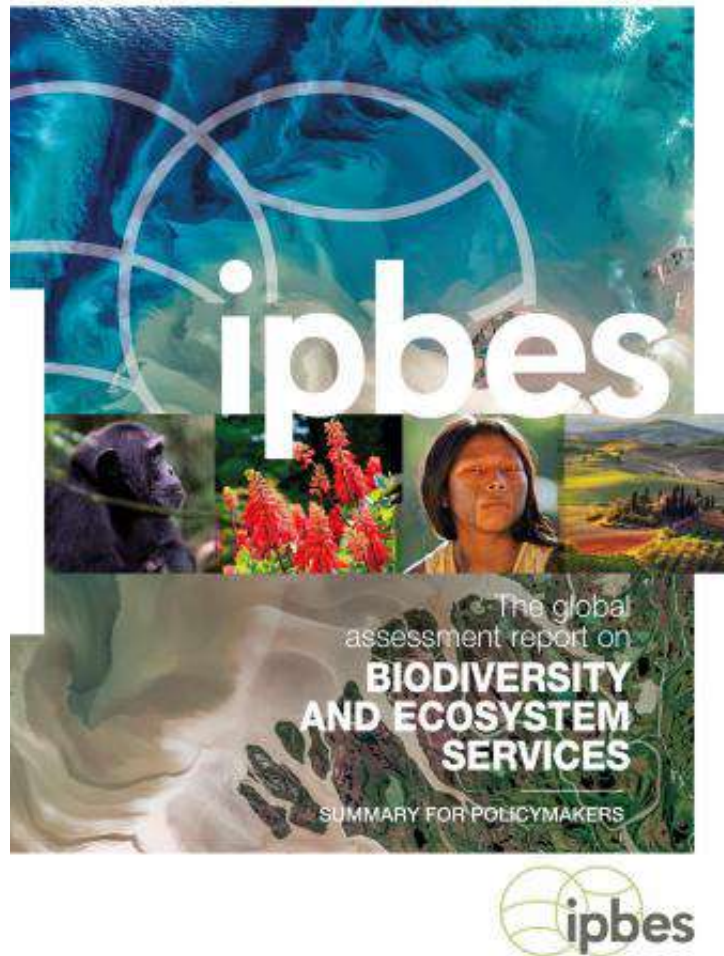
10. [Óscar Parra and the Rutas del Conflicto team](#) ([Colombia](#))

Government obtained personal information from dozens of national and international journalists.

[Read More at Wired](#)

FYI #3

Global Assessment Report On Biodiversity And Ecosystem Services



Credit:IPBES

The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) performs regular and timely assessments of knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem services and their interlinkages at the global level. Also addressing an invitation by the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to prepare a global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services building, inter alia, on its own and other relevant assessments and national reports. The overall scope of this report assesses the status and trends with regard to biodiversity and ecosystem services, the impact of biodiversity and ecosystem services on human well-being and the effectiveness of responses, including the Strategic Plan and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

[Read more at IPBES](#)

FYI #4

Poor Countries Face A Debt Crisis 'Unlike Anything We Have Seen'



Credit: Natacha Pisarenko/ Associated Press

From Angola to Jamaica to Ecuador to Zambia, the world's poor countries have had their finances shredded by the global pandemic. The president of Tanzania has called on "our rich brothers" to cancel his country's debt. Belarus veered toward a default when a promised \$600 million loan from Russia fell through. Russia couldn't spare the money because the ruble had taken a nose-dive, along with oil and gas prices. Lebanon, troubled even before the pandemic, has embarked on its first debt restructuring. And Argentina has defaulted again — for the ninth time in its history.

The low interest rates of the past decade led to an unlikely alliance between poor countries and international investors. Governments, state-owned companies and other businesses were able to raise money relatively cheaply to finance their growth, while investors searching for better returns than they were getting at home gobbled up that debt. Now, the pandemic is fraying that alliance. Christian Kopf, head of fixed income at Union Investment Group, a large German asset manager with funds that own emerging market debt, said the approach that official institutions like the World

Bank and International Monetary Fund were taking wouldn't work for many investors. That's because suspending payments on bonds results in a default. Decisions by the I.M.F., World Bank and G20 to let the countries skip payments will certainly free up cash, he said. But that doesn't mean the countries will put it toward the costs of the public health crisis. If the private investors don't get on board, the money could move into their pockets instead.

[Read more at New York Times](#)

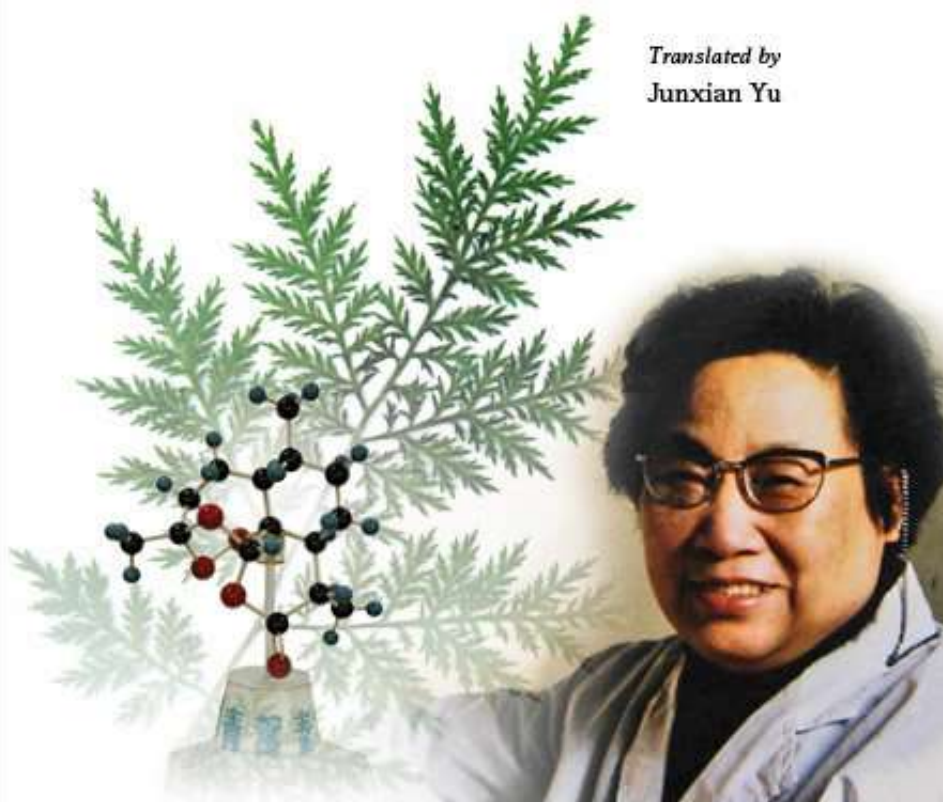
FYI #5: LATE SPRING READING

Tu Youyou's Journey In The Search For Artemisinin

TU YOUYOU'S JOURNEY IN THE SEARCH FOR ARTEMISININ

Wenhu Zhang
Yiran Shao
Dan Li
Manyuan Wang

Translated by
Junxian Yu



Chemical Industry Press



World Scientific

Credit: World Scientific

Tu Youyou's Journey in the Search for Artemisinin is an autobiographical science book chronicling in detail the great experiences of Tu Youyou from her childhood to winning the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. As Tu Youyou is the first female scientist from China to win the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, this win created a sudden wave of interest in medicine, resulting in numerous autobiographical books about Tu Youyou appearing on the market. Contrary to these mass market titles, this book is uniquely different as it is fully authorized by the Nobel laureate herself. Her once-confidential experimental data and Artemisinin research reports are now revealed in this book for all to learn and comprehend. In addition, one of the book authors, Dr Wang Manyuan, is the only PhD student supervised by Professor

Tu. Pharmaceutical researchers can use the book's valuable contents to reference, quote and analyse while searching for their own scientific inspirations. It also successfully serves as a guide for budding scientists and future Nobel Prize winners as it provides the proper guidance and methods of scientific research.

See Also: [Amnesia Nation: Why China Has Forgotten Its Coronavirus Outbreak](#) about Chan Koonchung, author of the 2009 dystopian novel "The Fat Years" and his take on Covid-19.

Read More at World Scientific

FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

Indian Girl's Suicide Sparks Protest Over Access To Online Classes



Credit: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Students recently protested in southern India after the suicide of a teenage girl who

was unable to attend online classes because she did not have a television or smartphone. Schools have been shut across India since the country locked down its 1.3 billion people on March 25 to curb the spread of the coronavirus, leaving millions of children whose families cannot afford expensive devices with no access to education. Among them was Devika Balakrishnan, the 14-year-old daughter of a daily wage labourer in the southern state of Kerala who was found dead near the family home on the first day of the new school term, having apparently taken her own life.

Student activists in Kerala took to the streets to protest her death, which has highlighted the inequalities of the lockdown, with pupils in poor, rural areas far less likely to be able to learn online. "The government action has put the poor students under stress and pressure," said Abhijith K.M., who heads the Kerala Students Union and was among the protesters. "It should enable the poor students to obtain computers at interest-free loans to avoid similar cases in future," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Kozhikode district. Kerala's education minister expressed grief over the teenager's death and ordered an investigation. He said online classes were being conducted on a trial basis and that students who missed them would be given opportunities to attend again.

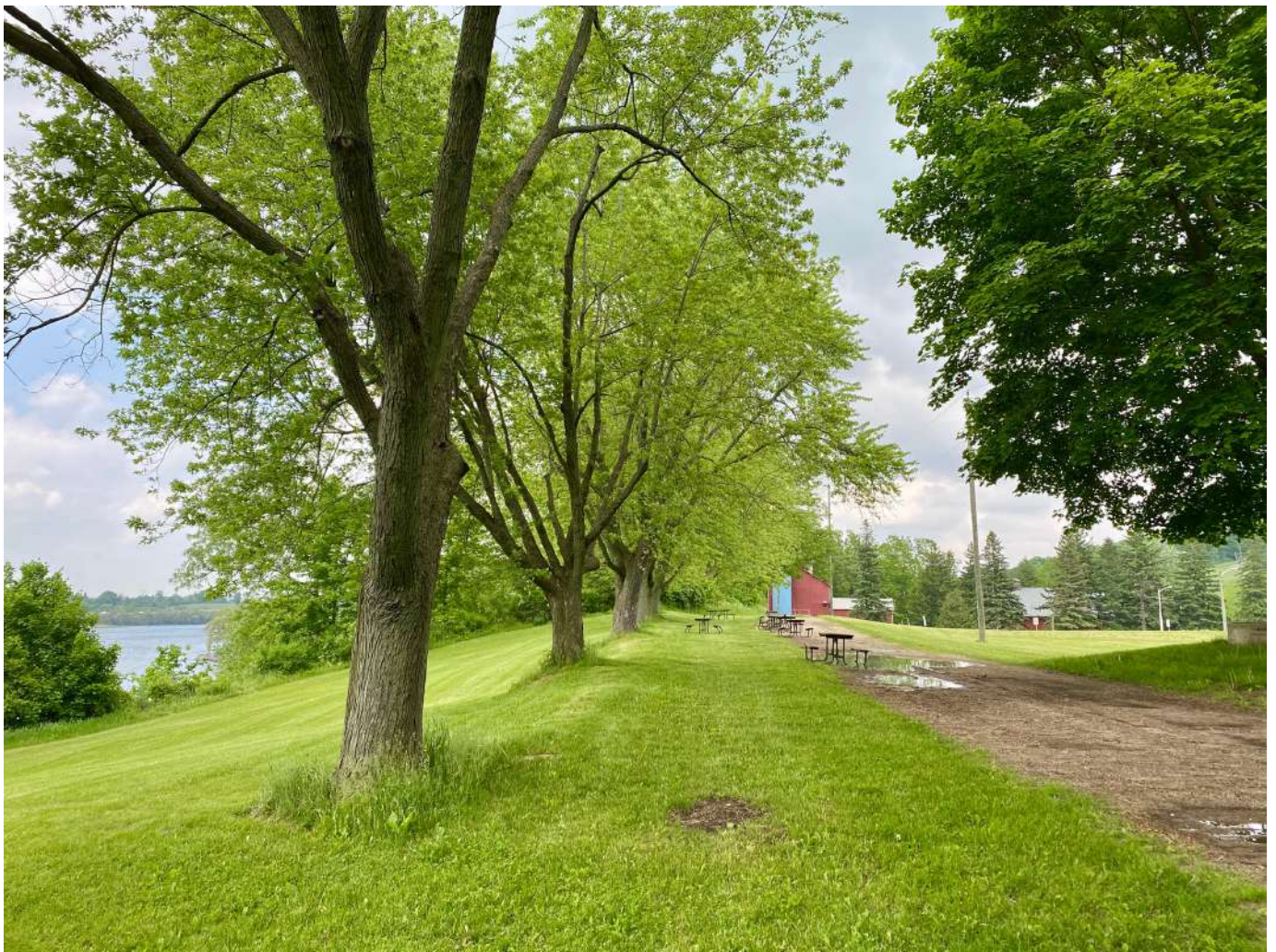
[Read more at Reuters](#)

ENDSHOTS

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