

The background of the poster features several red maple leaves, some partially overlapping the red text box. The leaves are vibrant red with some yellow and orange tones, set against a white background.

CANADA: DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, EQUITY

**The 21st International Baltic Conference on
Canadian Studies**

OCTOBER 8, 2021

Latvian Association for Canadian Studies
Centre for Applied Linguistics
Faculty of Humanities
at the University of Latvia

The 21st International Baltic Conference on Canadian Studies

CANADA: DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, EQUITY

ABSTRACTS

PLENARY SESSION

KEYNOTE

Kris Demeanor (Canada)

Kris Demeanor is a songwriter, poet, theatre and film artist who has taken his work across Canada and around the world.

He has released seven recordings of original songs and was the inaugural Poet Laureate of Calgary (2012-14).

In 2015 he was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award as best supporting actor for his role in the film *The Valley Below*.

Recent work includes *Making Treaty 7*, a multi-disciplinary show featuring First Nations and non-aboriginal artists illuminating Alberta's history; writing songs for CBC's *The Irrelevant Show*; collaborating with Ian Tyson on two songs for his latest record; and *Shelter From the Storm*- a songwriting project with clients of Calgary's Drop in Centre.

2020 saw Kris perform his one person show *Russell: Straight Up* at Calgary's High Performance Rodeo, and release his latest collection of music *Songs for My Father to Fall Asleep To*.

Fool of the New West

An address from Kris Demeanor, in Calgary, Canada

The official welcoming sign at the Calgary city limits was, for thirty years, 'Heart of the New West'- when I became Calgary's first poet laureate in 2012 and was inaugurated in the City Council chambers, my parting remark was "I promise to be the best court jester I can".

Fool of the New West.

As poet laureate, I was beholden to the commission, poetry and music written for a specific group of people at a specific event- the 100th anniversary of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, the Firefighter's Union Christmas party, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the benefit concert for those affected by the Great Flood of 2013.

But outside of this most overt example of singing for one's supper, I realize that much of my career

has grappled with that great conundrum of the Fool- how does one serve their community as an artist and entertainer while pushing them to change? How does an artist gain the trust of their audience to the point where they can criticize them with relative impunity? How does one adhere to Brecht's credo: 'Art is not a mirror to reflect society but a hammer with which to shape it', while still celebrating the people and culture of a city, a country?

And of course, greater, perhaps more profound questions arise out of the previous- Who is my society? How is it changing? Who should I be trying to reach?

My talk and our discussion will explore these questions through stories and examples of my career as a touring songwriter, theatre and film artist, and poet.

I have worked with the homeless, the hearing impaired, children, the elderly, people with special needs, recent immigrant communities, and most deeply with the First Nations communities of southern Alberta. In a somewhat improvised fashion, I became an ally of many marginalized groups in my city, and discovered new communities to serve with the same sense of duty and honesty I employed as Calgary's poet laureate. I've also played the Pizza Cowboy in a big budget television commercial and written songs with country legend Ian Tyson. I've played all sides on all fields.

My artist self has always been in crisis- self conscious about my intimate relationship with this undeniably unhip city that wants so badly to be an international cultural centre but more often than not exports their talent, or imports it.

Is the best way to serve a community not to create universal art that defies location? It seems I cannot get away from the need to find meaning in and connect with the environment in which I was born.

I hope my presentation will inspire conversation about the meaning of place, the power of the entertainer to mold society, and give a glimpse into the unique challenges of being a working artist in the Canadian prairies.

MORNING SESSION

Edgars Ošiņš (Latvia) Embracing Global Diversity: Stories from Canada

Best Canadian stories 2020 offers truly global perspectives on contemporary human concerns. Stories of this collection reach beyond the familiar Canadian and North American environment to places and historical cultural spaces in Europe, Caucasus, the Balkans and Korea, crossing borders both physical and metaphysical. Exploring the complexities of race, ethnic and gender identities, the many authors together offer a full, uninhibited expression of the joy, pain and confusion of the human life in the 21st century.

Ene-Reet Soovik (Estonia) Margaret Atwood's mushroom entanglements

The British nature writer Robert McFarlane starts off an interview with biologist Merlin Sheldrake with discussing the world 'Entanglement' that he considers a favourite trope of Anthropocene ecology. The latter, who has recently used the stem in the title of his book *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make our Worlds, Change Our Lives and Shape Our Futures*, points out its reference to knotting and re-knotting and also mentions that it has originally been used to denote human involvement in complex affairs. While recent years has seen a number of books published in the English-speaking world on the

entanglement of the realms of fungi and humans, their appearance in literature is still less common than the traditional poetic pedigree of life forms such as “Birds, beasts and flowers“.

The presentation takes a look at the treatment of fungi in samples of Margaret Atwood’s poetry and fiction, asking questions about the interconnectivity manifest within ecosystems, and the scope of inclusivity of the poetic tradition with the utilitarian and the symbolic dimensions as specific foci.

Milda Danyte (Lithuania) The Creative Process in Jon Klassen’s Picture Books

The Canadian scholarly journal Quill and Quire, in a very positive review, refers to Jon Klassen as an “international kidlit star”, which is true but sounds derogatory. He is one of Canada’s latest cultural superstars; he does create picture books for children; and children’s literature, even when, like Klassen’s first two books, stays on the New York Times Bestsellers’ List for over 40 weeks, is still not really accepted as ‘serious’ literature. Yet some walls are breaking down even in the very conservative world of academic literary criticism. Klassen’s *I Want My Hat Back* (2011), *This Is Not My Hat* (2012) and *The Rock From the Sky* (2021) are examined in ways that go beyond the usual attention paid to picture books. It helps that this kind of narrative is multimedial, a very popular category among literary critics at the present time, and that Klassen himself is very open and articulate about the process of creating such works. This presentation is interested in the process he reveals, as well as the ambiguities and paradoxes of his books – for example, the importance of violent feelings and acts in a kind of literature directed at very young children – listeners rather than readers.

PLENARY SESSION

KEYNOTE

Christophe Premat (Sweden)

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Teaching reconciliation by educating non-Indigenous communities

How is it possible to teach Canadian pupils about their history by repairing the cultural erasure of the indigenous populations? This was the question that Deni Élis Béchard and the Innu writer Natasha Kanapé Fontaine raised in their conversation about structural racism in *Kuei my friend*. This pedagogical dialogue followed the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada which was established as a result of the Statement of Reconciliation of the 7th of January 1998 to collect evidence about the situation of residential for Indigenous children (TRS, 2009-2015). This commission illustrated the institutionalization of memory as an attempt of analysing the consequences of such an official violence against First Nations communities (MacDonald, 2017: 168). The

presentation focuses on the analysis of this dialogue between a famous reporter in Québec and an Innu writer. What are the main topics of this conversation? This dialogue on reconciliation will be analysed with the help of two approaches, on the one hand non-violent communication that produces empathy to rebuild links with discriminated communities and on the other hand the mediation (Faget 2010). Empathy differs from sympathy; it implies a discrete connection between people from antagonistic backgrounds. A specific focus will be devoted to the proposed exercises of the dialogue between Béchard and Fontaine at the end of the book. The challenge of the presentation is to explore the possibilities of restoring a dialogue between communities in Canada.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Britta Olinder (Sweden) A Colonial Library in a Scandalous Novel: Nature and Culture, First and Later Nations in Marian Engel's BEAR

Canadian writer Marian Engel is best known for her 1976 novel *Bear*, which attracted attention because of the close relationship that it describes between Lou, the lonely main character, and the bear with which she finds herself coming into contact. The main reason why she stays on an island far north of Toronto, her hometown, is due to her job, consisting in cataloguing and studying the library collected by the first owner of the place in the early nineteenth century. Her everyday life is thus interfoliated by cultural and literary references to her interesting finds on the bookshelves, her comments and historical observations. This library is accordingly a very special place – also in light of its architectural structure – capable of bearing witness to the Canadian process of colonisation. It is full of surprising discoveries, but it is also an invaluable source of information about historical trends as well as the predilections of its previous owner.

Neha Jain (India) Transcultural resilience in Asian voices of the Contemporary Extreme: Chinese and Vietnamese migrant writings in Canada and France

While there have been numerous studies about migrant experiences exploring the theme of exile in francophone literature published in France and Canada, it remains essential to observe how these writings are influenced by the host society. Michel Chaillou first mentioned the term *extrême contemporain* for texts published after 1980s. The concept was elaborated in Alain-Philippe Durand and Naomi Mandel's work on novels of the contemporary extreme. Within this frame, we compare authors of Vietnamese (Kim Thuy/Linda Lê) and Chinese origin (Ying Chen/ Dai Sijie), forced to leave in the wake of the Vietnam War and the Cultural revolution. They sought refuge in Canada and France respectively within the same decade. This work retraces how the notions of interculturalism and multiculturalism are distinct from transculturalism. This comparative study observes this transformation between the texts of authors publishing in France as we move towards those publishing in Canada- from Dai Sijie to Ying Chen, both emerging from the Cultural Revolution in China. Further, it demonstrates the development of distinct, opposing transcultural resilience in the texts of Kim Thuy and Linda Lê. This study invites reflections on how writings sourced from the same historical conflict and displacement trace diverging facets of resilience.

Eva Rein (Estonia) Poetics and Politics of Narrating Historical Trauma in K.Linda Kivi's Letter from Lubumbashi

The Estonian-Canadian writer K.Linda Kivi's second novel continues to explore immigrant experience of refugees who have found a safe haven and a second lease on life in Canada. While her 1995 novel *If Home is a Place* focuses on refugee experience from a female perspective, her second novel, *Letter from Lubumbashi*, published in 2009, provides a male perspective on it. In both novels, the refugees escape a war, totalitarian regime, and human rights violations – the Soviet occupation during WWII and the Congo Crisis, respectively. In terms of the poetics and politics of storytelling, Kivi's novel can be seen as to have affinities with such works in early 21st century Canadian multicultural writing as Rawi Hage's *DeNiro's Game* (2008) dealing with the Lebanese Civil War and the Lebanese refugee experience, and Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011), following the refugee journey of a survivor of the Cambodian genocide. In its theoretical underpinnings, the presentation combines the notions of the belatedness of trauma, and the forgotten genocide of Congo to analyse the poetic aspects of the narrative rendering the experience of the novel's protagonist Joseph as well as the political implications of the novel.

EVENING SESSION

Kristina Minkova (Russia) Canada's Home Trade: Prospects and Challenges

Interprovincial trade in Canada is still significantly affected by internal trade barriers. The Canadian Constitution (both the 1867 Act and the 1982 Act) has practically no legal force in this matter due to too vague interpretations of its articles. In 1994, all provinces signed the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT). It extended to 11 spheres of the Canadian economy and was aimed at removing the internal barriers. However, the Agreement did not actually oblige the provinces to remove these barriers and until 2007 had not imposed any fines for their violation. Hence, even after its entry into force, the provinces did not lose the opportunity to conduct protectionist policies. It resulted in conclusion of trade agreements at the provincial level (TILMA, TCA, APA, PARE, NWPT). Each of these agreements has its own shortcomings, but many of them have proved to be much more effective in combating internal barriers than agreements adopted at the national level.

With the signing of the Canada Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) in 2017, Canadian provincial governments began to pay significantly more attention to the issue of internal barriers. CFTA is based on the so-called "negative list approach", i.e. the agreement automatically applies to all areas of the Canadian economy except those listed on the exclusion list. This makes CFTA more effective in removing internal barriers. Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba are the most active provinces in this area. They are actively promoting the provisions of the CFTA and removing trade barriers in their provinces unilaterally. The COVID-19 pandemic is, in part, helping provinces to strengthen the development of interprovincial trade relations to speed up economic recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

Tatjana Muravska (Latvia), Denis Dyomkin (Canada) Proof positive? Testing the universal basic income as a post-COVID new normal: the cases of the Baltic and Canada

The global response to the coronavirus has highlighted gaping holes in the social security net. Resultantly, the unconditional basic income (UBI) idea has gained traction worldwide throughout 2020, both among the public and politicians looking for solutions to address poverty and stimulate economic recovery. The shift from viewing the UBI as a utopia towards recognizing it as an internationally acceptable policy requires further exploration. By comparing the pandemic-sparked interventionist policies on both sides of the Atlantic, the paper analyses the de facto introduction of the UBI in socially progressive countries, taking Canada and the Baltics as test cases. The authors conclude that the global crisis, exposing the alarming state of affairs of social security, has reopened an intense debate over the role of government interventions and the scope of the welfare state and paved the way for reforms that would embrace better state funding, with an emphasis on social solidarity.

Yury Akimov (Russia) In search of a third way: Quebec politics after 2018

The paper deals with main trends in Quebec politics after 2018 Provincial elections. These elections put an end to the 48 years struggle between LPQ and PQ (these two parties had been ruling the Province since 1970). In 2018, the majority of québécois for the first time voted for Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) – a new right wing populist party which offered a third way between federalism of PLQ and separatism of PQ.

It analyses the following questions:

- decline of the separatist project popularity;
- factors contributing to the desire of Quebecers to find a third way between the federalist approaches of the provincial liberals and separatism of the péquistes.
- 2018–2021 discussions of québécois identity and ‘Quebec values’.

Ekaterina Isaeva (Russia) Thèmes récurrents des légendes québécoises: analyse historique et Culturelle

Les légendes du Québec, province francophone du Canada, apparues sous forme orale aux XVII-XVIII siècles, ont été largement publiées à la fois sur les pages de magazines et de journaux ainsi que dans des ouvrages distincts au XIXe siècle. Le matériel textuel présente un intérêt constant du point de vue de l'étude de la culture, du folklore et de la langue française du Québec. Les légendes contiennent une variété de personnages qui relatent du bagage culturel mondial, y compris européen, celui du patrimoine de contes de fées, ainsi que de nouveaux personnages apparus sur le territoire du continent nord-américain. Il s'agit principalement du diable et de sa suite, des fantômes, des brownies, des loup-garou, mais également de nombreux esprits qui habitent l'environnement naturel, issus du folklore indien.

Recurrent Themes of French-Canadian Legends: Historical and Cultural Analysis

The legends of the French-speaking province of Canada, which appeared in oral form in the XVII-XVIII centuries, were widely published both on the pages of magazines and newspapers, and in separate publications in the XIX century, are of constant interest from the point of view of studying the culture, folklore, and French language of Quebec. The legends contain a variety of characters who came from the cultural baggage of the world, including European, heritage of fairy tales, as well as new characters who have already appeared on the territory of the North American continent. This is primarily the devil and his retinue, ghosts, brownies, werewolves, but also numerous spirits that inhabit the natural environment, which came from Indian folklore.