

MEDIA RELEASE

UVic honoured for dialogue on democracy

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(no placeline - Sept. 14, 2021) -- A project to engage students in dialogue, which the Lieutenant-Governor of BC plans to use to further constructive participation in democracy, has earned the University of Victoria (UVic) national recognition from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Canada.

The Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement received the IAP2 Canada Core Values Award for Extending the Practice through Creativity, Contribution and Innovation in the Field, presented at a virtual celebration Monday.

UVic students and faculty set out to learn how to increase youth engagement in democracy and create more meaningful engagement practices that are truly inclusive, eventually leading to students becoming more engaged and informed citizens. The process used "deliberative mini-publics": virtual forums and a civic lottery to bring together as many points of view as possible.

IAP2 Canada judges noted that, "While [this was] not a typical decision-making process with a finite actionable outcome, this engagement process was all about capacity building, which is likely to be a big part of the future of public engagement in Canada and globally." Another judge compared the idea of "mini-publics" to the coffee houses—"penny universities" of the 17th to 19th centuries—where ideas were freely exchanged.

"It was important to us to bring together students from all backgrounds and perspectives," says Simon Pek, assistant professor at the Gustavson School of Business and project lead, "so that they could learn from each other and devise potential solutions that would benefit everyone. Our goal of engaging students in civil discourse was so well embraced by our students. We're hopeful that these methods can be used more frequently within our broader UVic community."

Jennifer Ramirez-Betancur, one of the participants, adds, "Participating in the Students' Dialogue on Democratic Engagement was an inclusive and inviting way to engage in political discourse. We had such a broad range of voices at the table and I learned so much from our discussions as did my fellow students. I'm looking forward to practicing my newfound civic engagement skills in my community."

The report on the process and its findings can be read here:

<https://www.uvic.ca/external/community/students-dialogue/index.php>

All of the 2021 IAP2 Canada Core Values Award winners can be viewed online, at <https://www.iap2canada.ca/cva-2021>.

-30-

About the University of Victoria: UVic is one of Canada's leading research-intensive universities, offering life-changing, hands-on learning experiences to more than 21,000 students on the edge of the spectacular BC coast. As a hub of transformational research, UVic faculty, staff and students make a critical difference on issues that matter to people, places and the planet. UVic consistently publishes a higher proportion of research based on international collaborations than any other university in North America, and our community and organizational partnerships play a key role in generating vital impact, from scientific and business breakthroughs to achievements in culture and creativity. Find out more at uvic.ca.
Territory acknowledgement

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About IAP2 Canada: IAP2 Canada is the country's preeminent organization dedicated to promoting, supporting and improving the practice of Public Participation. Its nearly 1100 members in all thirteen provinces and territories, working in all levels of government as well as industries and academia, seek to ensure that people affected by a decision are consulted in the making of that decision and are informed of the way their input affected the outcome. IAP2 Canada is part of a worldwide organization, with regional affiliates in Australasia, Indonesia, the USA, Southern Africa, and individual members in Italy and Latin America.