

**MARCH 27,  
2021**

# **CROSSING**

A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY STUDENT CONFERENCE



UNITED STATES | CANADA | BORDER ISSUES

# **BORDERS**

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## Liette Vasseur



Dr. Vasseur is a full professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Brock University where she is also a member of the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre. Since 2014, she holds the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Chair on Community Sustainability: From Local to Global at Brock. Her research program is highly interdisciplinary and links issues such as community-based ecosystem management, climate change adaptation and resilience, and sustainable agriculture. Her research program is not only in Canada, but

also in China, where she is a visiting scholar at Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, in Ecuador, and in West Africa, mainly in Burkina Faso and Senegal. She is also involved in women in Science (STEM) and former president of the Canadian Coalition for Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology. She is President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. She also is the vice-chair for North America Region of the Commission for Ecosystem Management at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and leads the thematic group on Ecosystem Governance.

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE - Saturday March 27, 2021

## Conference Welcome 9:00-9:15 a.m.

### Recognition of participating individuals and institutions

Shannon Risk, Niagara University

## Panel 1 9:15-10:15 a.m. Linking History and Media – Then and Now

Moderator: Heidi Madden, Brock University

Nathaniel Johnson (Niagara University)

*United States and Canadian Newspapers – The Impact of Colonial Times*

Beverly Marsden (Brock University)

*Burying the Hatchet: Addressing Disproportionate Media Representations of Indigenous Missing and Murdered Peoples*

## Panel 2 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tackling Discrimination in the Canadian and American Justice Systems

Moderator: Mike Durfee, Niagara University

Ayanna Armstrong (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)

*The U.S. and Canada” The Relationship of Race, Crime, and the Criminal Justice System*

Jeffrey Chen (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)

*On the Potential Reforms of National Policing View in the Context of the U.S. and Canada*

## Lunch Program 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

### Niagara University President’s Welcome

Father James J. Maher, C.M.

### Introduction of Keynote Speaker

Shannon Risk, Niagara University

### Keynote Speaker

Liette Vasseur, Professor of Biological Sciences, Brock University, and UNESCO Chair in Community Sustainability: from local to global

***“We All Share the Same Water”***

**Panel 3 1:00-2:15 p.m. Citizenship and Immigration in Canada and the U.S.**

Moderator: Ibrahim Berrada, Niagara University/Brock University

Therese Purcell (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)  
*What the United States can Learn from Canada's Immigration System*

Colin Cieslica (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)  
*Social Capital Decline and Disparities Foibles of Canada and the U.S.*

Matthew Beard (Brock University)  
*Citizens and Market Men: Civic Unity in the Twenty-first Century*

**Panel 4 2:30-3:45 p.m. Telling North American Minority Stories**

Moderator: Joseph Sankoh, Daemen College

Maya Richardson (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)  
*Affirmative Action and Employment Equity: Canada and the U.S.*

Rachel Lobo (York University)  
*A Wedding Cake without the Complications: Lake Erie's Black Mariners*

Connor Baetzhold (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)  
*Repenting for an Unforgivable Crime: Canadian and United States' Treatment of Indigenous Peoples*

**Panel 5 4:00-5:00 p.m. Canada-U.S. Comparative Politics**

Moderator: Collin Anderson, University at Buffalo, State University of New York

Adam Kiedrowski (Niagara University)  
*Cultural Decimation: Comparing U.S. and Canadian Policies Towards Native Peoples*

Sophie May (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)  
*A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Systems in Maine and New Brunswick*

Lauren Demers (University at Buffalo, State University of New York)  
*American and Canadian Political Parties, Elections, and Polarization*

**Conference Reflections 5:00-5:15 p.m.**

Heidi Madden, Brock University  
*A Reflection: How Crossing Borders Influenced Me and What Comes Next*

**Conference Wrap-Up 5:15-5:30 p.m.**

**Announcement of Best Student Paper**

Shannon Risk, Niagara University

**Crossing Borders Conference 2022**

Dan Malleck, Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University

# ABSTRACTS

**Ayanna Armstrong, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**

***The U.S. and Canada: The Relationship of Race, Crime, and the Criminal Justice System***

This paper will address the relationship of race, crime and the criminal justice system in Canada and the United States. The United States and Canada also share a common heritage, liberal democratic traditions and common law legal systems. As John F. Kennedy once said, "geography has made us neighbors, history made us friends, economics has made us partners and necessity has made us allies." Both countries are known for integrating race, ethnicity and culture, ultimately describing a melting pot. This paper will additionally demonstrate how each country's judicial system affects people of color, such as Black people, Aboriginal and indigenous people compared to its white citizens. The last part of the paper will explain how lesson-drawing in comparative politics will allow individuals, in this respect, both U.S. policymakers and their Canadian counterparts can learn from one another.

**Connor Baetzhold, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**

***Repenting for an Unforgivable Crime: Canadian and United States' Treatment of Indigenous Peoples***

The relationships between colonizer and indigenous societies are the base upon which all government and culture arises. Throughout Canada and the United States' history, laws regarding indigenous communities have shown painful similarities, and a number of differences. Elements of Canadian society have proven more willing to acknowledge previous wrong doings, while the United States frequently considers and recounts indigenous history in an ephemeral and rewritten manner. Through a study of both historical documents and quotations, as well as indigenous perspectives, one can note the oppressive trends of the past and analyze the different approaches of the Canadian and United States' governments. In today's modern and complex society, indigenous studies and rights have often paled in comparison to the countless sociological issues currently plaguing and resurfacing in these two nations. Yet, a more thorough analysis of history proves that treatment of indigenous communities is perhaps the most egregious action during the development of both countries. Understanding these genocides and developing a culture of solidarity and material contrition are vital to the societal fabric of both nations.

**Matthew Beard, Brock University**

***Citizens and Market Men: Civic Unity in the Twenty-first Century***

The roles of populism and polarization in liberal democracies are often discussed in the literature, but a deeper question is less frequently asked— what is citizenship? And how do competing conceptions of it influence political life? This article examines two philosophical ideals of citizenship and uses them to evaluate civic unity in The United States and Canada. In the first conception of citizenship, human beings are political animals who become citizens by transcending the private realm and deliberating about the common good in public. In the second conception, human beings are a bundle of passions who become citizens by securing equality under the law and the right to private autonomous lives. While both strands of citizenship are necessary, this essay argues that the health of liberal democracies depends on a reinvigoration of that first Aristotelian conception of citizenship. For decades, an individualistic and market-based view has turned the "citizen" into a taxpayer and consumer. This essay will examine how civic republican thought aimed at the common good presents a viable alternative.

**Jeffrey Chen, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**  
***On the Potential Reforms of National Policing View in the Context of the U.S. and Canada***

This paper will address the fundamental administrative differences between policing in the United States as opposed to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Canada and the resulting merits of a single unified policing organization under the auspices of a federal government as opposed to the multitudes of US policing services which are generally devolved down to lower levels of administration with essentially no major aspects of policing being delegated to a federal organization. In Canada, all territories and provinces are policed by the RCMP except for Ontario and Quebec. The United States lacks an equivalent, with all states possessing different state police forces. This paper argues that the adoption of a federally controlled policing organization similar to the RCMP in the United States would be beneficial in the United States, in particular due to ongoing controversy over police brutality. While the RCMP is hardly bereft of such incidents, it is argued that it is superior to have a single organization responsible so that overall reform and supervision may occur on the national level as opposed to the various state police organizations that exist in the United States.

**Colin Cieslica, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**  
***Social Capital Decline and Disparities Foibles of Canada and the U.S.***

In the United States and Canada, citizen engagement in our collective civil society in has and continues to be a contentious issue for many disciplines and current leaders. Throughout our embarking into the 21st century, our discrepancies in our society have been exacerbated. The decline of our collective social capital in the United States and Canada threatens our democratic ideals. However, through the study of the historical trends of our social capital and using new forms of technology and new mediums of social interaction, we are better able to address the pressing issues of the loss of our social capital in the United States and Canada. By strengthening the pillars of our democratic ideals of circumstances, centralization, and independence, free institutions, and associations, we can begin to rebuild our society in a more equitable fashion where we focus on the pillars of community and engagement that has thrived in Northeastern North America for the last three hundred years.

**Lauren Demers, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**  
***American and Canadian Political Parties, Elections, and Polarization***

This paper compares and contrasts the political systems existing in the United States and Canada, how these differences subsequently lead to varying levels of polarization, and what the United States could feasibly model after Canada's system to reduce the high polarization between parties, and the harm it can cause citizens. While both countries utilize bicameral governments modeled after the English parliamentary system, they differ greatly when it comes to their political parties and elections. The United States' two-party system leads to an attitude towards politics that is highly competitive, which can cause relationships between the two parties to become hostile. Furthermore, elections are strongly influenced by money, which leads to biased and unfounded beliefs, and it is also extremely difficult to remove government officials from office if they are not performing their duty. In Canada, the multi-party system and reliance on responsible government makes politics less of a game, and takes away the bitter edge. Canadian elections also have very strict rules and regulations when it comes to election donations and spending. While the United States could not feasibly introduce a new major party or add in votes of confidence, they can regulate spending. By regulating election donations and private broadcasting, the United States could possibly reform itself for the better.

**Nathaniel Johnson, Niagara University**

***United States and Canadian Newspapers – The Impact of Colonial Times***

This paper examines and analyzes the similarities and differences between Canadian and American newspapers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the measures that America took with their news reporting during these times were reflected in Canadian papers eventually, and vice versa. This is largely due to the differences in what each nation desired throughout these time periods. For instance, the American colonies' insistency on self-rule carried an aura of "free writing" that would later be observed by the journalistic styles of Canadian writing. They also encouraged free trade by acting as competitors amongst other newspapers, fully embodying the spirit of the American Dream. This is compared to the Canadian methodology of bringing newspapers to power, which largely centered itself around the support it gained from certain political parties or religious supporters. This was quite different from the style that American printers had adopted and changed drastically when Canada began its own revolution in 1837. Here, figures such as William Lyon Mackenzie, among several others, advocated for papers that were published, produced, and created by Canadian citizens for Canadian citizens. This is very similar to what American papers had been promoting prior to the Canadian Revolution. However, the initial Canadian papers brought a level of governmental support that American papers could not dream of at the time. As such, both Canadian and American newspapers are crucial to our understanding of modern newspapers, which continues to blend elements of big business, "high society" journalism with the work that is done from the ground up by people that we can relate to in our everyday lives.

**Adam Kiedrowski, Niagara University**

***Cultural Decimation: Comparing U.S. and Canadian Policies Towards Native Peoples***

Comparatively, within the borders of the United States and Canada, the native population underwent an experience that is both very similar in terms of the signing of formal treaties and colonial rhetoric and different in terms of a unified mixed-race identity and the institution of acculturation. Holistically, the identity and legacy of native peoples living on the continent can be best understood by reviewing it through the lens of comparative policies instituted by colonial and government authorities during the period spanning from 1608 to 1860. The notion of white cultural and racial superiority over the native peoples led the governments of the U.S. and Canada to institute policies aimed at promoting their ideals over those of the native peoples' traditional culture. For the United States, treaties such as the Jay Treaty exemplify an attempt to appease native tribes without the intention of contractually adhering to respecting their autonomy and legitimacy. In Canada, the government created living spaces for migrant native peoples and funded programs to impose Anglo-American culture on them. The core of the native identity lies in the ties and connection to not only a shared ancestry but a legacy of perseverance and preservation in the face of institutional and covert cultural decimation.

**Rachel Lobo, York University**

***A Wedding Cake without the Complications: Lake Erie's Black Mariners***

Drawing from the photographic archive of the Alvin D. McCurdy fonds at the Archives of Ontario, this paper explores Black lake-faring within the Great Lakes shipping channels during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Since the eighteenth century, free and enslaved Black mariners established a visible presence in every North Atlantic port. While this phenomenon has been the focus of scholarly attention for researchers in the United Kingdom and in the United States, in Canada there exists no focused account of the role of Black men in marine work outside of the Maritime provinces. Placing these workers in the broader rubric of Atlantic history, I argue that Black lake-farers generated wealth for their communities, shipping companies, and manufacturers while developing and sustaining cross border networks of kinship in the communities ringing Lake Erie.

This paper borrows its title from Mark Twain's description of the steamboats on the Mississippi: "as beautiful as a wedding cake, but without the complications." This title gestures to how lake-faring and the rise of steam technology became powerful and inspirational motifs of modernity. Situating lake-faring within a continental and transnational framework, this paper explores how issues of sovereignty, transportation, and racial formation are intimately entangled. Challenging the historiographical tendency to exclude the perspective of racialized workers in transnational economic exchanges and state-building processes, I explore how the steam powered lake freighter was utilized by Black subjects to fashion cultural and political identities.



**Heidi Madden, Brock University**

***A Reflection: How "Crossing Borders" Influenced Me and What Comes Next***

Heidi Madden is a six-time participant in the Crossing Borders Conference and winner of the "Best Paper" in 2015. She completed an Honours Bachelor of Arts in History and North American Studies with a minor in French in 2015 and a Joint Master of Arts of Canadian-American studies at Brock University and the State University of New York at Buffalo in 2016. Since graduating Heidi has worked in the International Office of the Goodman School of Business at Brock University. In this session Heidi will reflect on how living in the "Borderlands" of Canada and the US has shaped her life, studies, and professional experience and share some lessons and insights learned along the way.

**Beverly Marsden, Brock University**

***Burying the Hatchet: Addressing Disproportionate Media Representations of Indigenous Missing and Murdered Peoples***

My conference presentation will explore the power of media representations of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples. Television and newspapers possess a strong influence not only on the public perception of Indigenous marginalization, but also on the bi-directional relationship that the government possesses in regards to shaping the progress of government policies to address the factors which continue to contribute to inequity, racism, and stereotyping of Indigenous groups in Canada.

This presentation will argue that the foundations of oppressive action are established via the creation of social hierarchies that seek to label marginalized populations such as Indigenous peoples as "others". The othering of Indigenous groups in Canada has been shown to lead to the continued perpetuation of structuralized racism and discrimination as an extension of underlying settler-colonialist ideologies.

Further, this presentation will draw upon the concept of media framing as used to interpret representations of Indigenous peoples on the national stage as it helps to explore the media's justification when deciding the content incorporated into news-stories and how Indigenous peoples involved in these reports have been presented to the public.

Finally, this presentation will explore how these constructions have negatively skewed the perception of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples as they ignore or minimize Indigenous male victimization. This has led to their devaluation within mainstream media discourses. As members of families, men and boys play a pivotal role in the maintenance of family structures, and thus, investigating the causes for MMIMB will offer greater insight into not only the framing of Indigenous issues in mainstream media but also, the ever-increasing incidence of MMIWG.

**Sophie May, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**

***A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Systems in Maine and New Brunswick***

This paper will discuss the current electoral systems used by the American state of Maine and the Canadian province of New Brunswick. Since 2018, Maine has used a system of ranked choice voting in its state and federal primary elections. New Brunswick, however, retains a first-past-the-post system, despite a plea from electoral reformers to switch to a more democratic system, such as ranked choice voting (RCV) or proportional representation (PR). There are several factors that explain why New Brunswick has been unable to produce significant electoral reform in the way that Maine has. Firstly, parliamentary style governments tend to perform better under the framework of a FPTP system, as a system of PR would have a much more difficult time delivering majority governments. Another significant factor contributing to the absence of RCV/ PR systems in Canada is the manner in which elections are administered in the two countries. The Canadian electoral system is much more centralized than its American counterpart. Finally, the absence of ballot initiatives in Canada makes it difficult for substantial electoral reform to materialize. The paper then advocates for electoral reform in New Brunswick on the basis that the province's population would be better served if its government were to transition to a similar system as observed in Maine. Although past efforts have failed, advocates for electoral reform in the province remain strong in their pursuit.

**Therese Purcell, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**  
***What the United States Can learn from Canada's Immigration System***

This paper addresses how the United States can learn from Canada's experience with Immigration. Immigration reform is a hot button issue in the United States, and this paper proposes that the United States can learn from Canada's Federal Skilled Worker Program and Canada's Provincial Nominee Program. Canada's Federal Skilled Worker Program is a point system that allots points for language skills, education, work experience, age, arranged employment in Canada, and adaptability. The Provincial Nominee Program allows provinces to have input in the immigration process. If the United States adopted a streamlined immigration process like Canada's Federal Skilled Worker Program and the Provincial Nominee Program, wait times for visas would go down, states would have input on immigration, and the United States would benefit economically. Adopting a point system would also allow the United States to combine the current family-based approach to immigration with Canada's human capital economic approach. This paper demonstrates that there are benefits to both kinds of systems, so a point system which would allot points for family connections as well as human capital would allow the United States to benefit from both systems. Since Canada and the United States have many similarities and are both societies built on immigration, the United States ought to look at Canada's experience with immigration when it comes to immigration reform.

**Maya Richardson, University at Buffalo, State University of New York**  
***Affirmative Action and Employment Equity: Canada and U.S.***

This paper will address the Affirmative Action and Employment Equity between the United States and Canada. It is divided by the history, theoretical development, and the court cases associated with them. Racism and discrimination is heavily prevalent in the United States and Canada because of systemic institutions that are put in place. However, Canada has seen an increase in inclusivity and equality. The method used to was analyzing Supreme Court Cases, *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* and *R v Kapp* . Learning the effect of these cases, there was a conclusion of having a policy change in the United States. To ensure equality and inclusion there was an investigation and assessment of the history of Canada and the United States.

# CROSSING BORDERS

## BEST STUDENT PAPER JUDGES

Ibrahim Berrada, Niagara University/ Brock University

Heidi Madden, Brock University

## WE THANK THE FOLLOWING

Liette Vasseur, Professor Biological Sciences, Brock University

Father James Maher, C.M., President, Niagara University

Rachael Homewood, Senior Advisor, Consulate General of Canada

Jill Shuey, Assistant Director, Office of Sponsored Programs and Foundation Relations, Niagara University

Elaine Aldridge-Low, Administrative Assistant, Centre for Canadian Studies, Brock University

Eileen Klein, Administrative Assistant, Department of History, Niagara University

Information Technology, Niagara University

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