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Report on 2017 Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation Society Alumni Survey

Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation Society, Executive Committee

Introduction

In the weeks leading up to the 2017 Summer Retreat, the Trudeau Society's Executive Committee launched a brief survey to consult wider the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation community (including both former and current Scholars, Fellows and Mentors) on what should be the purposes and priorities of the Society, as well as to gauge general awareness of and interest in the Society.

The survey comprised 10 questions in both French and English versions. It was circulated via email on March 29th and April 14th to 445 community members. This report provides a summary of the survey's main findings and proposed follow-up actions.

Respondents

The response rate for the survey was 12% (N=445), of which 69% were Scholars, 19% Fellows and 13% Mentors. Of the 54 total respondents, 39 were alumni. Four out of five respondents self-identified as academics or researchers, while the rest included representatives from government, community leadership, business, and arts and media.

Three quarters of the sample currently reside in either British Columbia (26%), Ontario (26%) or Quebec (28%). Other provinces mentioned were Alberta, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, as well as six respondents from outside Canada (11%).

Roles and Activities

When asked to rank possible roles for the Society, the most popular response was to *assist alumni to bring their research to wider public audiences* (scoring 4.19 out of 6.0), such as helping to translate research work into more publicly accessible formats and organizing collective book launches. Given that 80% of respondents were academics, this would seem to be an important area of activity that could help Trudeau alumni and wider community.

A close second was the Society's role in facilitating communication and social networking among alumni, such as by coordinating a listserv, online directory and social gatherings (scoring 4.13). Among French respondents, this was the most important role for the Society.

The least important roles for the Society, according to respondents, were supporting Foundation activities and representing alumni in Foundation governance structures. However, it should be noted that this does not mean these activities were not important to respondents; it simply means that they were lower priority. Roles of assisting alumni to

access policy-makers and building professional networks were considered as of medium priority.

In response to open-ended questions *on roles and activities*, respondents proposed a wide range of types and possibilities. Among them were ideas around facilitating formal and informal dialogues around current issues, such as round tables, webinars, regional and thematic workshops; supporting research collaboration and professional networking, such as joint book launches and publication projects, grant writing and professional development workshops, liaison with media and government, arts-based events, and study tours; organizing informal social events, such as wine and cheese, 5-à-7 cocktails, alumni dinners, connecting old with new Trudeau communities; and direct attention to specific issues, such as direct assistance to the poor and indigenous land rights. It should be noted that the Foundation is already active in organizing similar activities, and so the Society would have to assess how its work can complement these existing activities.

Furthermore, respondents showed a high willingness to help organize Society activities. Some 72% of respondents indicated that they would be either “very likely” (30%) or “likely” (42%) to help organize the activities they proposed.

Communication and Visibility

Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge from the survey was the low response rate, a mere 12% of the Trudeau community.¹ While the survey was unable to determine the precise reasons for this (whether too busy or uninterested, for example), respondents also suggested that the Society’s communication and transparency could be improved significantly.

For example, some respondents suggested having very little knowledge or awareness of the Society:

I never hear from the society and I am not aware of any events.

I, for one, know almost nothing about this entity.

Je ne connaissais que très peu le travail de la société avant les derniers mois.

C'est seulement la deuxième fois que j'ai des contacts avec la Société. Cela m'indique que la Société n'est pas très présente ou n'a pas une stratégie de communication optimale.

¹ By the Foundations #####, it was found that only ### opened the email with the survey. Hence, among those whom we know to have at least seen the announcement for the survey, the response rate was slightly improved to a rate of 30%. Of those who actually clicked on the survey link, %% completed it. Again, the survey was unable to determine the reasons for why the 40% did not open the email or even whether that email reached them.

Among the possible media suggested for improving communication within the Society, respondents show a relatively even preference among them, namely ad hoc emails (30%), newsletter (20%), webpage (19%), annual meeting (17%) and a listserve (12%). More importantly perhaps, nobody selected “none” as an option, suggesting that the medium of communication was not so important as the plain need to improve communication.

Next Steps

To address the concerns raised in the survey, the Executive Committee has initiated some preliminary actions.

For one, the Executive Committee is currently looking into options for establishing a more regular contact with alumni through a listserve. While the listserve may have been the least popular choice among communication media (12%), it is a first step that can be set up relatively quickly and easily. Other options, such as a newsletter or a more interactive online database, will be explored later.

Second, the Executive Committee is looking to be more pro-active in updating and maintaining its webpage on the Foundation website. Actions have also been taken to create a separate URL for the website (which can be easily shared and circulated), as it currently takes the three well-informed clicks to get to the webpage from the Foundation website’s home page.

Third, what is clearly a key constraint to Society activities in the past and now is busy schedules and limited resources. To address this need, the Executive Committee is currently trying to re-establish Regional Committees, which would help with recruiting members and organizing Society activities.

Finally, it is important to note that because of the low response rate, the findings of this survey do not necessarily reflect the attitudes and opinions of the entire alumni or Trudeau community. However, as they are all we’ve got, they are what we have to work with for now!

Appendix 1: Data Tables

Response rate	English	French	Sample (=n)	Population (=N)	Response rate
	37	17	54	445	12%

Type	Total	Percent
Mentor	7	13%
Fellow	10	19%
Scholar	37	69%
TOTAL	54	100%

Province	Total	Percent
BC	14	26%
AB	1	2%
MB	2	4%
ON	14	26%
QC	15	28%
NS	2	4%
International	6	11%
TOTAL	54	100%

Work type	English	French	Total
Academic/researcher	31	12	43
Government	2	1	3
Community leadership	2	0	2
Business	0	1	1
Arts and media	1	0	1
Other	N/A	3	3
Non-response	1	0	1
TOTAL	37	17	54

Roles of Society	English	French	Total
Policy decision-makers	3.67	3.81	3.74
Wider public audiences	4.31	3.94	4.13
Professional networks	3.49	3.81	3.65
Social networking and communication	4.14	4.12	4.13
Represent TF alumni	2.97	2.88	2.93
Support TF activities	2.78	2.47	2.63

Willingness to help	English	French	Total	% Eng	% Frn	% Avg
Very likely	20	11	31	33%	26%	30%
Likely	23	19	42	38%	45%	42%
Maybe/Unsure	13	3	16	22%	7%	14%

Unlikely	4	9	13	7%	21%	14%
Very unlikely	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%
TOTAL	60	42	102	100%	100%	100%

Note: total responses exceeds sample size because respondents could answer question multiple times in relation to different activities.

Open-Ended Question: General Suggestions for Society

English survey	French survey
Co-ordinate Fellow, Scholar and Mentor Round Tables across the country on critical public policy issues, for the general public held at different campuses	One of the things I most appreciated during my time with the TF was to meet incredibly creative and interesting people that were unrelated to my line of research/work, and sometimes new ideas - research and otherwise- emerged. I see the society as a great vehicle in order to make these synergies happen after our TF tenure ends. I see three main points of entry 1) enable people to collaborate to create new research and collaborations, 2) create links beyond academia - to policy and the wider public and 3) enhance the regional hubs.
Help to organize processes that connect Scholars, Mentors and Fellows to explore issues of great public concern in Canada.	Promouvoir la FT lorsque les opportunités se présentent.
Create possibility for dialogue and debate, through conferences and seminars, issues of concerns to the public.	Utiliser les réseaux des anciens pour établir et entretenir des liens avec les acteurs internationaux (organisations intergouvernementales et régionales; dirigeants, parlementaires et hauts fonctionnaires étrangers; entreprises multinationales;...) sur des thématiques chères à la Fondation
Networking with associations with common interests.	Rencontres informelles qui pourront être jumelés à des lancement d'ouvrages collectives, ou d'autres moyens de diffusion des travaux des membres de la Fondation.
Helping connect Trudeau Scholar alumni with current scholars through informal mentoring relationships	Annuellement, souligner les accomplissements exceptionnels d'un ancien, en plus de signaler les réussites de 2 anciens (analogue à 3 mentions d'honneur
supporting incoming/ active members of the community - fellows, scholars, mentors - to better understand their roles, to "mentor" diagonally (i.e. with less regard to the category in which community members fall)	Impliquer une grande variété d'anciens dans les évènements de la Fondation Trudeau et non, toujours voir les mêmes visages.
Potentially to offer alumni additional training opportunities to further advance their skills	
Assisting the Foundation with its internal governance structure(s)	

Indigenous/Canadian Reconciliation
The TF will be stronger if it operates more like a community, rather than the sum of the parts. The society could fulfill a fundamental role in achieving this.
I'd love things like grant writing workshops, thematic networks, facilitating collaborative research, receptions at conferences.

Open-Ended Question: Suggested Activities

English survey	French survey
public conversations with Canadian public on current issues perhaps in synch with what the royal society is also thinking of doing or with local universities	working groups - thematically and regionally
Casual social events in various cities	Réseautage entre les anciens de la FT
Trip to New Zealand to see Indigenous Governance	établissement de réseaux thématiques susceptibles d'intervenir dans les débats publics ou sur les politiques publiques: recherche, santé, programmes sociaux, citoyenneté, fiscalité, migration,
Convening round tables	Soupers d'anciens
collective book launch in coordination with other big event (i.e., TF Conference; Congress)	Diffusion des travaux effectués par les membres de la Fondation
Policy-related conferences, seminars	Des activités dans le cadre du colloque annuel et de l'Institut d'été permettant aux ancien-ne-s de garder contact avec la communauté
I would like to continue to participate in TF summer institutes, but would need funding for this to happen. Would be good if the Society could work to have funding that Alumni could apply for to attend TF events.	Lancement de livres lors de la conférence de novembre
Research clusters & fora	Appuyer des projets de publication
Social and networking events	Lancement d'ouvrages
Indigenous - Western scholarly reconciliation	Créer un espace "Société" dans les activités Trudeau
Accessible and updated lists of all scholars, fellows and mentors with current research agendas and contact information	5 à 7
Events such as the recent "How Ottawa Works" gathering	Plus d'activités informelles, par région. Par exemple, 5 à 7.
Networking wine & cheese in my city with interesting speakers	regular social events to network and enable working groups to organically emerge
Thematic Workshops	Promotion de la FT
Book Launches	Rencontres régulières (annuelles?) de ces réseaux thématiques

Engage alumni in ongoing research projects - especially long-term ones - by current Scholars/Mentors/Fellows	Activités pour les anciens lors des évènements Trudeau
keep us in touch with the Trudeau Foundation events and with scholars	Rencontres informelles
On the land exercises	Disséminer de l'information sur les programmes de la FPET
Convening Trudeau Public policy panels	Organiser des rencontres thématiques (colloques, séminaires, activités, etc.)
webinars with policy-makers on pressing policy issues	Organisation de colloque
Seminars/conferences on issues specific to certain communities	Conférences
Book & other product launches	showcase the work of present and past TF people
public education on treaties & inter-societal conflict resolution	Appui aux initiatives de la FT
Professional development workshops (e.g. media training)	Colloque des anciens
Federal Budget Roundtables/Commentaries	Activités de financement
Publication Dissemination	Activités sociales
Assist alumni (\$ and logistics) to hold events or consultations that engage other alumni and current Mentors/Scholars/Fellows	Evenements sociaux en marge des evenements officiels de la Fondation
Greater contact with current scholars	Maybe an updated directory of who does what? (our own website)?
Facilitate alum attendance at TF events	Établissement de liens avec les responsables de politiques
Discussions/brainstorming related to the three themes - with a goal of creating networks	Activités de réseautage
Launches of Canadian policy relevant white papers	Direction d'ouvrages collectifs
Thematic networks	Liens avec les médias pour présenter travaux
some kind of networked research exchange among members	
create a published journal	
Arts based events	
Joint publications/commentary on issues on which we have expertise	
Research Aid and Development	
Help alumni engage policymakers, journalists, civil society, as per recent training event in Ottawa	
Opportunities for mentor roles	
Meet-ups or conferences/workshops for alum	
Gatherings/events/workshops with the local community members - to facilitate outreach and collaboration	

Linking old TF Scholars back into upcoming TF events (as speakers, as moderators)
Pedagogy workshops
directly feed the poor initiatives
Graduate Student Convening
Empower TF Society board to consult and engage with alumni
Helping with selection of scholars / fellows
Events/discussions at the bi-annual Trudeau meetings
Support events hosted by old TF members - e.g., as PIP events, when relevant
receptions at conferences
meet and greet with active politicians and chiefs
Indigenous Community Engagement
Online forum for contacts/discussions/networking/localization of different community members
workshops attached to widely-attended conferences (ie Congress)

Open-Ended Question: Suggestions for Improvement

English survey	French survey
I never hear from the society and I am not aware of any events.	Je ne connaissais que très peu le travail de la société avant les derniers mois.
I, for one, know almost nothing about this entity.	Peut-être suis-je trop accaparé par d'autres activités, mais je n'ai pas l'impression d'être vraiment au courant de ce que fait la Société
As a relatively new community member, I am still in observation mode.	Comme ancien, c'est plus difficile de se sentir comme faisant toujours partie de la communauté Trudeau parce que la participation aux activités (institut d'été, conférence annuelle) est moins fréquente. Il serait intéressant que la Fondation considère des moyens pour nous inclure plus activement dans ses activités.
As a new scholar, I am still not sure exactly what the benefits are or what the Society does exactly.	Organisation de deux ou trois activités par année, des rencontres informelles qui permettent en même temps la diffusion des travaux réalisés par les membres de la Fondation

<p>In 2012 in Victoria we discussed creating an online resource that would allow any alumni and current members to see where others and local chapters were on an interactive map. This would be an excellent resource. It would also be good to have a space where you can see: where local gatherings are happening; what research members are doing (including multimedia); calls for research collaboration; petites annonces, etc.</p>	<p>La communication est bonne, mais ne s'adresse que rarement aux anciens... il ne s'agit donc pas d'intérêt particulier des anciens, mais simplement de leur faire une place</p>
<p>Perhaps there is a website for the society? If so, I am unaware of it. But, having a central hub for communication - where we might be able to understand the main objectives of the society (what are they?) and where we might be able to follow activities of the society would be really useful. Again, I really believe that the society could be a strong conduit between the foundation and the community. Communities can operate more effectively when they are supported by strong networks.</p>	<p>Si la Fondation Trudeau est une communauté, les anciens devraient être consultés plus souvent, notamment en ce qui concerne les grands enjeux, la gouvernance et la direction que prend la Fondation.</p>
	<p>C'est seulement la deuxième fois que j'ai des contacts avec la Société. Cela m'indique que la Société n'est pas très présente ou n'a pas une stratégie de communication optimale.</p>