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## Laurier and Balsillie School of International Affairs host Indigenous Visions of the Global Extinction Crisis workshop

WATERLOO – Western scientists studying patterns of extinction warn that in just a few centuries, more than 75 per cent of life forms may be eliminated from the planet. Scientists claim that this may be evidence that the Earth could be heading into its sixth mass extinction event. Yet what is not taken into account are the diverse ways of understanding and responding to extinction that Indigenous communities have developed over thousands of years.

The Indigenous Visions of the Global Extinction Crisis (IVGEC) workshop, to be held June 1 at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, is an opportunity for scholars from Wilfrid Laurier University, along with other Canadian and international scholars, to examine extinction from diverse perspectives.

Workshop organizer [Audra Mitchell](#), Laurier’s Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) chair in global governance and ethics, engages with local and global Indigenous communities to learn from their philosophies and cosmologies and generate new visions for responding to the global extinction crisis. The research produced by Mitchell and her colleagues will develop new concepts and frameworks for understanding what ‘extinction’ is and is not.

“The term ‘extinction’ is loaded because of its colonial history,” said Mitchell. “Indigenous peoples are often told that their people and cultures are ‘going extinct.’ On the contrary, our research group wants to explore the new thinking emerging from vibrant Indigenous communities who are experts in survivance in the face of global threat.”

Mitchell’s work explores the ethical and governance implications of the global extinction crisis, drawing from plural perspectives including Western secular science, Indigenous cosmologies and ecological ethics.

The IVGEC conference brings together leading Indigenous scholars, scholars of Indigenous studies and scholars of extinction and ecological ethics from around the world to explore the radically different approaches to the global extinction crisis that can be developed from the basis of contemporary Indigenous thought.

“I am honoured to host some of the most fascinating scholars working at the intersection of Indigenous philosophy and ecological crisis, both here in Canada and around the world,” said Mitchell. [“This event marks the beginning of an ongoing, collaborative project to address extinction from diverse perspectives.”](#)

Academic partners and visitors from Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Waterloo, Rutgers, Carleton University, the University of Alberta, Oklahoma University, McMaster University, Oxford University and Newcastle University in Australia will attend.

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## Event responds to global extinction crisis /Page 2

**Cara Loft**, Aboriginal students recruitment and outreach officer in Laurier's [Office of Aboriginal Initiatives](#), will present her photography series Cultural Projections as part of the conference. Additional events include a Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving address and condolence ceremony, a sharing circle and performances by the Waterloo Aboriginal Students' Association.

Indigenous Visions of the Global Extinction Crisis takes place in the Balsillie School of International Affairs' auditorium from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on June 1.

The workshop is funded by Laurier's Office of Research Services knowledge mobilization internal grant, as well as a major workshops grant from the Balsillie School of International Affairs and additional support from the Independent Social Research Foundation and the Wilfrid Laurier University Office of Aboriginal Initiatives.

The event is free and open to the public. [Visit the website to register](#). For details, contact Audra Mitchell [amitchell@balsillieschool.ca](mailto:amitchell@balsillieschool.ca)) or Tahnee Prior ([tprior@balsillieschool.ca](mailto:tprior@balsillieschool.ca)).

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