

**THE PEP**

# **GAZETTE**

**SEPTEMBER 2022**



## FOREWORD

Welcome back everyone! Whether you're a new or returning student, we at the MSVU PEPS hope you're looking forward to getting a good start on the 2022-2023 school year. Thank you to everyone who came out to our September Open House, it was nice getting to meet some new faces. If you are reading this issue the month it was published, we will be hosting our Semi-Annual General Meeting on the evening of October 25<sup>th</sup> so please check out our social media for details. All are welcome to join and help us to plan our activities for the year. Likewise, please remember all students and alumni are welcome to contribute to the PEP Gazette, so if you're interested in starting a discussion or just sharing a topic you're interested in definitely send your submissions to [msvupeps@gmail.com](mailto:msvupeps@gmail.com) to have your work added to next month's issue.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you,

*Scott Ripley, President of the MSVU PEPS*



## **POLITICS IS PERSONAL**

*Hon. Joanne Bernard, E.C.N.S.*

MSVU Alumni

I am a proud graduate of MSVU with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Political Science. I love politics. I have since the age of 8 when I wrote then Prime Minister Trudeau complaining about the seal hunt and someone from his office wrote me back on official Government of Canada stationery. I was hooked. From that day forth, I became political and made the decision that someday, somehow, I was going to run for public office. My time at MSVU immersed in political theory, conversations and on-campus activism further cemented by desire to become politically active.

During both my degrees (I went on to receive my Master of Arts in Poli Sci from Acadia) I had been a single mother on Social Assistance balancing the demands of motherhood and academia. After graduation, I worked briefly for the Nova Scotia New Democrats then moved into community work, founding the Marguerite Centre then leading Alice Housing. It wasn't until 2013, after I was approached by the NS Liberal Party, that my life was perfect, personally, professionally and politically to put my name on a ballot. Winning the constituency of Dartmouth North and being appointed to Cabinet as Minister of Community Services, Advisory Council to the Status of Women, Housing Nova Scotia, and the Disabled Persons Commission, I quickly embraced my role in bringing in progressive legislation on everything from accessibility to the prevention of sexual violence while updating antiquated paternalistic legislation centered on Child Welfare. I also was well aware of the abuse and responsibility that came with being the



first openly gay Member of the Legislative Assembly in the history of Nova Scotia. I can save the misogyny and homophobia stories for another time.

My time at MSVU laid the groundwork for my 4 years in government. I always marvel when people say they do not pay attention to politics because they view government as corrupt, ineffective, or whatever reason they feel they are disenfranchised. I remember knocking on my first doors on the campaign trail in 2013 when a man said to me “you seem like a nice lady, why do you want to be in politics?” I answered, “don’t you want nice ladies in politics?” I got his vote.

People seem to forget that politics (whether we like it or not) is part of governing. Governments make laws that affect your life everyday in ways you may overlook or provide great impact. For example, in 2005, the government of Canada under Prime Minister Jean Chretien, passed a law allowing same sex marriage. Without that law, I would not be celebrating my 14<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary soon with my spouse.

If I learned anything in government is that politics and government are very different. Politics is rife with partisanship. Government is about making policy and law which affect the lives of people hopefully in a positive way. My time at the Mount was the perfect space for me to find my voice. I did and I continue to use it well to this day.



## R. V. PARTISANSHIP


*Logan Oderkirk*

As children we are rightfully told that we are very lucky to live in a democratic nation. We are told this long before we are ever taught how our government works or even the concept of state. We are told that people have fought and died for the right to vote and that it is something we shouldn't take for granted. The idea of democracy is one that many in this world hold dearly and look upon fondly. But not all democracies are created equally. It's important that we understand what makes a democracy strong so we can preserve it for generations to come.

So, what makes a democracy a democracy? Well, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, “**democracy**, literally [means], rule by the people.” (n.d) Pretty simple but leaves some room to the imagination. Democracy, back then meant, only men could vote. Not just any men, noble men who owned land. Now a days we would not call that very democratic. So, we know the word and how it is open to interpretation but that doesn't answer the question. What makes a democracy a democracy and what makes a strong one? Democracy to me means that all people have a say in the running of their government. No matter their race, religion, creed, or sexuality, as long as you are a citizen and are of age, you deserve a say. What do I mean by a say? A vote to elect a representative or run as one yourself if you wish to. Okay that's pretty simple. But our governments are much more complex than that. We have branches of government and within those branches' different bodies. All of this adds complexity, and THIS nuance is where the strength of a democracy is determined.

In recent weeks the question of how Canada's government works have come back into the spotlight due to the recent passing of the Queen. It's no secret. To some this is the worst part of this country. To others, it's the best part of this country, to the rest, they simply don't care as it never interferes with their life. To me, a non-elected, non-partisan head of state is the reason Canada is a strong democracy. I'm not the only one who thinks that Canada is a strong democracy. Canada scores highly across a wide variety of democracy indexes alongside a disproportionate amount of other constitutional monarchies like, in no particular order, Norway, the Netherlands, The United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and the list goes on. Constitutional monarchy is NOT the most popular flavour of democracy and while not required to have a strong democracy, one does have to note the trend of a specific type of democracy consistently rating highly. This is the core foundation of my thought process.

I ask to those who wish to break open the constitution and throw out the monarchy, why to throw away a proven reliable system of governance? Why go through the immense challenge of opening the constitution of Canada to risk breaking a system that is proven to maintain stability and uphold democratic values? We can deliver on many of the issues that come from ties to the British monarchy through collaboration and reconciliation that don't require the theatrics of



costly, performative, and dangerous constitutional amendments that install a partisan or elected head of state.

What's so wrong with an elected or partisan head of state you ask? It's a good question. At face value, it seems like the most democratic option, but in practice we see that overtime it becomes a damaging factor to democracy. Its simple, Humans act in their own best interest. When you allow a partisan figure to be head of state, they can pass laws completely on their own with no oversight and pardon their friends when they get into trouble. This is not a technicality but a reality. One very famous case was when President Donald Trump pardoned a slew of his friends. (Kelly et al, 2020) While this is possible in Canada, the role of head of state is so strictly defined by protocol and precedent that the first action of selfishness would be met by immediate dismissal and a bloodbath brought on by the Canadian people.

This does not stop the role from having significance though. The sovereign still operates as a safeguard of the constitution and we have seen this happen abroad in the United Kingdom and in the Caribbean where the sovereign as intervened in the best interest of the people, like getting rid of apartheid in South Africa for example. (Mulroney, 2022)

That particular issue reminds us that sometimes the right thing isn't the popular thing. Partisan figures are all the time caught in between a rock and a hard place because they either tow the line OR do the right thing. They risk losing their job if they don't tow the line and will usually make sacrifice the people to preserve their political life. We see it all the time. Sometimes the intent is good, but it still results in a negative outcome for the people. If the head of state isn't elected and is non-partisan, they have no line to tow but that of the people and the constitution. One could say they are sober. They are only beholden to the people not ideology or vested interests.

That previous point leads me to this more "high in the sky" point but hear me out. No matter how you slice it partisan figures are innately controversial. It's just how politics works. My list of best Prime Ministers is different than yours most likely. It's just how it is. When your head of state is non-partisan and a-political, they are someone that everyone can rally behind. They are someone everyone can be proud of to represent their nation. Our current governor general, Mary Simon is a great example. She is the first indigenous person to represent the Crown in Canada and is a kind, hardworking, diligent person that no matter your politics, no matter your outlook, you can agree that she shows a positive image for Canada. In being non-partisan the monarchy and the office of the Governor General lends itself to the values of people and not ideology and I think that's very powerful and unifying in a world of division and cold partisanship.

So, what do you say? Do we need to cut ties with the monarchy? Or do you believe that we have it pretty good here with His Royal Highness King Charles III and Her Excellency Mary Simon? I'd love to hear your thoughts in a future article for the MSVU PEPS gazette.



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**THE QUIET WEIGHT OF THE CROWN:  
SOFT POWER AND THE PERPETUATION OF HEGEMONY**

*Scott Ripley*

This article is being written in the wake of the death of Canada's monarch Queen Elizabeth II. It is not, however, being published until after the official mourning period across the Commonwealth realms has ended. Often when events precipitate discussions of change those fond of the status quo will denounce such discussions as disrespectful or merely opportunistic political maneuvers seeking to capitalize off a tragedy. While I do not see it that way, I appreciate that those I am trying to convince might. However, I would ask those who do to acknowledge that issues of public concern should be openly discussed at times when the subject is in the forefront of public attention. I hope that it can be agreed that it is no longer too soon to be having this discussion.

I would also like to preempt a common argument for keeping the monarchy in Canada. Given the constitutional restraints placed on the sitting monarch, people often argue that there is no need to go through the hassle of replacing the monarchy. This was a position I once held. I believed that only if the monarch tried to use their position to do something against the interest of this country would their removal be warranted. What I failed to consider was that the monarchy does have power and influence over this country and others, despite constitutional restraints. As former Governor General Michaëlle Jean put it in the CBC's 2022 documentary [The Queen and Canada](#)





“it’s a very special position: no executive power, but a soft power”. It is the presence of this soft power that warrants the removal of the monarchy in Canada.

A common refrain during CBC’s extensive coverage of the death and funeral of the Queen was that she, both as sovereign and as a person, served as a sturdy and unifying figure for Canadians and those in the Commonwealth. While no one could argue that seventy years was anything short of sturdy, my issue is with the idea that she somehow united all Canadians. The foundations of the monarchy rest in two institutions that have divided rather than unified people in this country: Christianity and imperialism.

As per the [Royal Style and Titles Act](#), the Queen was titled “Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith” and presumably King Charles will be styled similarly. The foundational aspect of the Christian religion in the sovereign’s authority is clear, and to those who follow that faith that might be reason enough to accept that authority. However, to the increasing numbers of non-religious people and members of the multitude of non-Christian religions in this country, an appeal to the grace of one religion’s specific deity is hardly justification.

A less stated but perhaps more influential foundation of the monarchy comes from the economic role imperialism and colonization had for the settler population of British colonies. As European monarchies financed expeditions to claim land in the names of their various crowns, settler colonies like what would become this country allowed for the formation of a class of white landowners whose wealth has been passed down to many white Canadians alive today. We are taught in our high school history classes about the opening of the West and how European settlers were given free land from the government. But that land came at an enormous cost to Indigenous peoples when it was stolen by the Crown. Alongside land as a source of wealth, Canadians profited from our place within the British imperial trade network. While this was beneficial to settler populations within the empire, its costs were also paid by indigenous peoples on every continent whose land and labour were exploited to provide the imperial core its wealth.

Why does this all matter? Is this not all in the past? And is not the monarchy today merely symbolic of this past rather than representing any contemporary issues?

This all matters precisely because the symbology of the monarchy perpetuates the effects of this past into the modern day. Through its soft power the monarchy legitimizes the connections between wealth, Christianity, empire, and the right to rule. To those who have benefitted from the socio-economic order established through imperialism, the Crown might look like a neutral


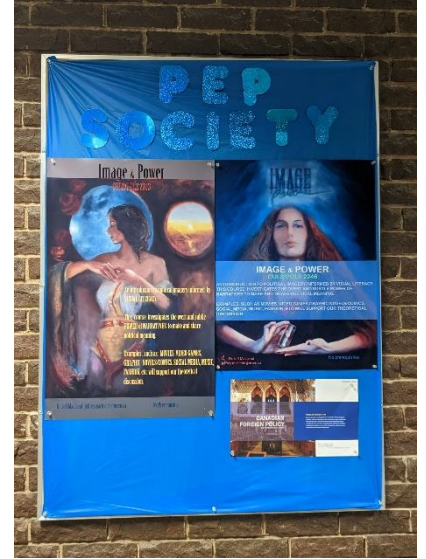
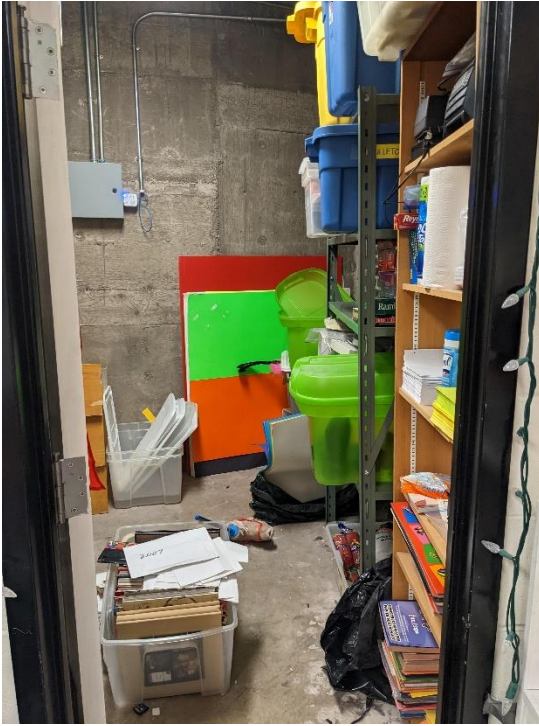


figure for us all to accept as representative and unifying us in a common identity. What I ask is for those who see it this way to try to see the water that we are swimming in. We are all surrounded by a sea of normalized imperial hegemony, but we often fail to see how many have drowned because of it.

If we are to have any hope of actually unifying people, to have true reconciliation, and to end cycles of exploitation we need to be willing to stop venerating symbols that uphold a status quo that has harmed so many.



## SEPTEMBER RECAP



In September we cleaned out the storage room and decorated some bulletin boards. We had our open house on the 28<sup>th</sup> to open Seton 504!



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Hon. Joanne Bernard for writing for us this month. Also, welcome to Logan who wrote his first piece for the Gazette.



Political, Economic, and  
Philosophical Society