

**international**  
 **Week**  
for a better world.



**Join the conversation on global  
challenges and solutions**

**for a better world.**

**FEBRUARY 3 - 7, 2025**



**UNIVERSITY  
OF ALBERTA**

Open to the U of A and local community, International Week's free events offer a variety of ways to learn about the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, how to effectively engage with them, and how to work together **for a better world.**



# Future Energy Generation

Amit Kumar, PhD, PEng



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3 | NOON – 12:50 P.M. | **ONLINE**



Progress and prospects in decentralized energy generation as the world undergoes energy transition. This is a lunchtime online talk.

## BIOGRAPHY



Since September 2012, Amit Kumar has held the NSERC/Cenovus/Alberta Innovates Associate Industrial Research Chair in Energy and Environmental Systems Engineering. He is the Cenovus Energy Endowed Chair in Environmental Engineering in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the U of A. His research group works on integrated energy and environmental modelling, life cycle assessment and techno-economic assessment of conventional and non-conventional energy systems.

## SDGSA WORKSHOP: Crafting a Better World



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3 | 4 – 6 P.M. | **TELUS 134**



Craft SDG-inspired sustainable jewelry, one bead at a time!

This event is presented in partnership with the U of A SDG Student Alliance.



WHY SHOULD WE TALK:

# The power of uncomfortable conversations

Meredith Preston McGhie - Centre for Pluralism



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3 | 7 - 9 P.M. | TELUS 150

We live in a time when our differences and divisions feel more stark. Scarcity, anxiety, division and conflict can feel like reasons to contract, to narrow how we define our communities and who we engage with. In fact, in these moments, leaning into dialogue, mutual curiosity and understanding, and finding ways to collaboratively and deliberately build spaces for belonging are ever more important.

## BIOGRAPHY



**Meredith Preston McGhie** is the Secretary-General for the Global Centre for Pluralism. Previously, Ms. Preston McGhie mediated and advised a range of mediation processes as the Regional Director for Africa with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and, before that, with the UN. She served as an advisor to H.E. Kofi Annan during the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation. Through more than 20 years in Africa, she helped to establish and facilitate peace processes in Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan and elsewhere. She contributes to policy discussions on peacemaking globally, including teaching on inclusion and peace process design. Ms. Preston McGhie began her career working with the Naga in North East India and Indigenous minorities in Myanmar.

This event is presented in partnership with the University of Alberta Office of the Vice-Provost, Access, Community and Belonging and the Office of the Dean, College of Social Sciences and the Humanities.



**ART EXHIBIT:**

# Flying to the Sun

**Illustrator Narges Noori**



**RECEPTION | TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 | 3 - 5 P.M. | FAB GALLERY**  
**EXHIBIT | FEBRUARY 4 - 8 | FAB GALLERY**



Artist Narges Noori writes, “Having grown up in a society that frequently limits girls, I understand how these constraints affect their self-esteem and aspirations. By amplifying this message through evocative artwork, my aim is to challenge societal norms that have historically limited girls’ potential and to emphasize the importance of investing in children, particularly girls, for a better tomorrow. Through this exhibition, I hope to empower young girls to believe in themselves and challenge outdated norms, offering hope and a reminder that the future belongs to those who dare to dream.”

This event is presented in partnership with the U of A Department of Arts & Design.

**BIOGRAPHY**



**Narges Noori** is an author and illustrator of picture books. She entered the art world when she was 12 and gained experience in drawing, painting and sculpting. Narges studied Art at Ferdowsi University in Iran and graduated in 2012. Moving back to Afghanistan to work for the Ministry of Urban Development, she worked as a professor in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University for over eight years. Besides teaching, she is passionate about making Afghanistan better and believes it should start with educating children. Noori has written and illustrated two books about women’s empowerment.

Narges was awarded an IIE Artist Protection Fund Fellowship and is in residence at the U of A.

Explore the untapped potential of young girls through illustrations by Narges Noori. There will be a catered reception to open the exhibit, with the artist in attendance.

Flying to the Sun features 18 original illustrations by artist and illustrator Narges Noori. The exhibition illustrates a young girl’s journey of discovering her strength, challenging societal expectations and taking ownership of her future. Each illustration depicts key moments of her life, highlighting both her struggles and triumphs as she recognizes her own power.





# Safety: The Foundation of Sustainable Transportation Systems

Dr. Karim El-Basyouny and Marina Aziz

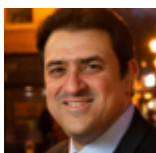


TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4 | NOON – 12:50 P.M. | ONLINE

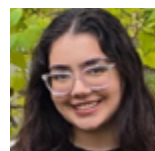


This conversation features Dr. El-Basyouny in conversation with student Marina Aziz about the role of sustainable transport and the role of road safety in achieving it.

## BIOGRAPHIES



**Dr. Karim El-Basyouny** is a leading expert in transportation engineering, specializing in safety, Intelligent Transportation Systems and infrastructure management to address future mobility challenges. Over the years, he has collaborated with industry and policymakers to implement innovative, efficient transportation solutions. His impactful work has advanced transportation safety research and influenced policies to enhance urban livability. A prolific researcher and mentor, Dr. El-Basyouny has numerous publications and a strong commitment to interdisciplinary collaborations, driving his vision for safer, more inclusive transportation systems.



**Marina Aziz** is a graduate transportation engineering student at the U of A, driven by research-focused innovation and sustainable engineering solutions. Her research explores traffic safety, including correlations between pavement conditions and collisions using GIS and LiDAR, and the intersection of curbside management with pedestrian and vehicular safety to develop equitable solutions.

As a leader in the U of A's EcoCar Fuel Cell Team, she managed a multidisciplinary team and helped secure funding for green transportation projects. She represented the team at the 2023 Shell Eco-Marathon, earning recognition through interviews with Shell Eco-Marathon and WISEST for her technical and outreach contributions.



TRUTH SEEKERS & STORYTELLERS:

# How news works around the world

Panelists Makhabbat Aitekenova, Ntibinyane Alvin Ntibinyane, and Hiba Kamal-Choufi with Moderator Karen Unland



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4 | 7 - 9 P.M. | CKUA PERFORMANCE SPACE, 9804 JASER AVE



## BIOGRAPHIES



**Karen Unland** is the co-founder and COO of Taproot Edmonton, the most reliable source of intelligence on what's happening in the Edmonton region. She started the Alberta Podcast Network, which existed from 2017 to 2023, and co-hosted an award-winning podcast with her daughter called That's a Thing?! Before pursuing entrepreneurial journalism, she spent 14 years at the Edmonton Journal.



**Makhabbat Aitekenova** is a communications professional with over five years of experience spanning journalism and media relations. She began her career in radio and television before transitioning to public relations in the corporate sector. Currently, Makhabbat serves as a communications specialist at Homeward Trust Edmonton, the city's leading housing non-profit.



**Ntibinyane Alvin Ntibinyane** is an assistant professor at MacEwan University and an investigative journalist who has worked for news organizations in Botswana and South Africa. He co-founded the INK Centre for Investigative Journalism in 2015, a notable non-profit organization. Ntibinyane, collaborating with over 300 journalists worldwide, contributed to the Panama Papers, earning the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting. In 2018, he was a fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, where he studied the impact of non-profit investigative journalism in Africa.



**Hiba Kamal-Choufi** is an Edmonton-based journalist. She's been working as a video journalist with CityNews since 2021. She started her career as a news editor in Beirut, covering stories that involved a range of topics, including the Arab uprisings in 2010. After moving to Edmonton, she joined Shaw TV and has since held a number of communications positions. She has a master's degree in communications and technology (MACT) from the U of A and holds an MA in international relations and BA in journalism from Beirut, Lebanon.

Consider the nuance that country and culture play on how we digest the news in all of its many forms. Join us for an evening of conversation with three panellists who started their journalism careers in Botswana, Lebanon, and Kazakhstan and now work in Canada.

What's similar? What's different? And what should responsible news consumers anywhere in the world consider about those who try to find out what's going on and then tell us about it? Ntibinyane Alvin Ntibinyane, Hiba Kamal-Choufi and Makhabbat Aitekenova will share their stories with Karen Unland of Taproot Edmonton; then you'll have a chance to interact with the guests and each other in a modern version of the coffeehouse, one of the birthplaces of journalism as we know it today.



This event is presented in partnership with [Taproot Edmonton](https://www.taproot.ca).

### MODERATOR

Karen Unland, co-founder and COO of Taproot Edmonton



THE LAND USE PODCAST LIVE:

# Soil health, biochar and the changing climate

Yuge Bai, Postdoctoral Fellow, Faculty of Science - Earth & Atmospheric Sciences  
University of Alberta



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 | NOON - 12:50 P.M. | ONLINE



Studies have revealed that our changing climate is altering soil and its complex systems. This, in turn, affects our ability to grow crops and provide food security for our growing populations. Fortunately, research into sustainable agricultural practices is paving a path towards a more sustainable future.

Listen to the Alberta Land Institute's Land Use podcast, in which postdoctoral researcher Yuge Bai discusses how biochar may be able to improve soil health in Alberta under future climate conditions.

[Listen to the Land Use Podcast](#)

## BIOGRAPHY



**Yuge Bai** is a postdoctoral earth and atmospheric sciences researcher at the University of Alberta. Bai has been working in the field of soil science for almost ten years. Currently, she is researching the use of biochars made from sewage sludge in wastewater treatment plants as a soil amendment to enhance soil fertility and promote crop growth in Alberta under future climate conditions.





## FILM SCREENING WITH EXPERT COMMENTARY: 2040



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 | 6:45 - 9 P.M. | METRO CINEMA, 8712 109 ST.



Award-winning director Damon Gameau embarks on a journey to explore what the future could look like by the year 2040 if we simply embraced the best solutions already available to us to improve our planet and shifted them rapidly into the mainstream.

After the screening, join a panel of U of A experts for an update and a discussion about the solutions proposed.



This event is presented in partnership with [NorthwestFest](#).

## Global Health Fair

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6 | 9 - 5 P.M. | ECHA 4-036



The 9th annual Global Health Fair provides an opportunity for researchers, clinicians and educators to share their medical knowledge and scholarship on various topics related to global health, as well as provide an opportunity for networking and bridge-building across disciplines.

The Global Health Fair is presented in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry



# UNSCRIPTED CONNECTIONS: Building Global Communities Through Improv



Julian Faid and Chris Borger of Rapid Fire Theatre

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6 | 5:30 - 7 P.M. | TELUS ATRIUM



## BIOGRAPHIES



**Julian Faid** is a facilitator, host and performer with over twenty-four years of professional improvisational theatre experience. He has performed at festivals worldwide and has taught improv skills to C-suite executives, non-profit organizations and high-performance teams.

He holds a BA in Sociology, a Graduate Diploma in Marketing and Communications, and an MSc in Environmental Sociology. Julian is a Doctoral Student completing his PhD at the University of Alberta, Alberta School of Business in the Department of Strategy, Entrepreneurship and Management.



**Chris Borger** is an Edmonton-based comedian and educator. He is the current Director of Rapid Fire Theatre's Touring Company, and also regularly performs and teaches with Atomic Improv and the Grindstone Theatre. Borger has also worked as an educational consultant working with post-secondary instructors from the University of Alberta, NAIT and Pixel Blue College. He has produced video content for the CBC, Oilersnation and the University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning.

When not performing or instructing improvised theatre, Borger can be found lending his voice announcing games for the Edmonton Riverhawks, NAIT Oaks, and Edmonton Oil Kings.



This presentation is in partnership with [Rapid Fire Theatre](#)

In an increasingly connected world, becoming a global citizen means fostering relationships that transcend borders, cultures and backgrounds. Improv makes this process approachable, exciting and fun.

This engaging keynote invites you to explore the art of making meaningful connections through the transformative power of improv. Led by two dynamic members of Rapid Fire Theatre's Touring Company (Julian Faid and Chris Borger), the session features interactive group exercises that break down barriers, spark creativity and build trust. Whether you're a natural extrovert or hesitant to step into the spotlight, you'll leave with practical tools to communicate effectively, empathize deeply and collaborate across diverse communities—empowering you to thrive as a global citizen.



# Global Goals Talks

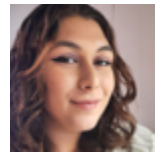


Hear from U of A students sharing short talks based on their research. A lively interactive discussion follows each talk.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7 | 1 - 3 P.M. | EDUCATION NORTH 6-138

## Silent sacrifice: The human price of defending nature in Mexico's mining zones

Explore the environmental and human rights impacts of Canadian mining companies operating in Mexico. Research supported by Global Witness and the National Autonomous University of Mexico reveals how systemic corruption and weak regulatory frameworks allow these corporations to exploit natural resources with little accountability. Marginalized communities, particularly Indigenous groups, face violence and intimidation when opposing these operations, often with deadly consequences. This talk highlights the critical role of Indigenous leaders and environmental defenders in advocating for their rights and protecting natural resources. The talk concludes with a call for stronger legislative and policy measures from the Mexican and Canadian governments to ensure corporate accountability, safeguard vulnerable communities and promote sustainable, responsible resource extraction.



**Mariana Castillo Arce**, born in Mexico, grew up witnessing and engaging with some of the country's most pressing social issues — gender violence, environmental protection, unemployment and education. Driven by a belief in “knowledge as solution,” she is dedicated to helping communities make the most of available resources to build stronger, self-sustaining lives. Volunteering at women’s shelters in Morelia broadened her perspective on the struggles of women facing violence. She later began a project alongside lawyers, psychologists and social workers, bringing education on gender violence to young students in elementary and junior high schools. This experience fueled Mariana’s desire to contribute more widely, and in 2019, she joined friends from UNAM to protect the monarch butterfly sanctuary near her hometown. They faced threats from illegal loggers linked to organized crime, and after their leader, Homero Gómez González, was tragically murdered, they had to step back to protect their own safety. When the pandemic hit in 2020, Mariana used her digital skills to create free online courses for low-income job seekers in Microsoft Office. Later, she helped students return to school after long closures, organized mental health support and tutored to bridge educational gaps. In 2022, Mariana moved to study at the U of A. This experience expanded her perspective, deepened her commitment to understanding social issues across North America and inspired her to pursue research that uplifts her communities.

## Students spin old clothes into synthetic spider silk — and gold



Hear from the interdisciplinary undergrad team that won gold among 400 other teams from around the world at the iGEM Grand Jamboree in Paris in October about how they came up with an innovative solution to the rampant waste caused by the fast fashion industry. Using genetically modified E. coli bacteria, they found a way to break down waste fabric into feedstock to make spider silk, which is highly valued by industry.

This event is presented in partnership with the [English Language School](#).