

*“For There is always light,
if only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we are brave enough to be it.”*

– Amanda Gorman (2021)

We are in a time of disjuncture, upheaval, unrest, and imbalance in all our social systems — education, health, economic, justice, and governance. Global challenges such as climate change, racial injustice, tottering democracies, pandemics, and wars seem even more intractable than before.

We all have a responsibility to future generations and to the future of our planet, and there are abundant opportunities where leadership can make a difference. Within our sectors and our communities, what can we do to develop and sustain leaders and leadership systems that contribute to thriving? Furthermore, how can we interrogate past leadership practices that have led us to this point and help to rehabilitate those practices?

Questions are a powerful learning tool for pausing, reflecting, and offering space for new ways of being. In her writing about the imperative of inquiry as fundamental for the flourishing of living systems, Margaret Wheatley observes: “Questions require discipline in asking them, a discipline we seldom practice. No matter how simple the questions, we most often rush past them. We feel compelled to act rather than inquire” (p. 98).

In that spirit of inquiry, we invite you to come and share your leadership experience and knowledge at ILA’s 25th Global Conference. We will gather together in Vancouver to collectively create powerful disruptions with our questions and inject new thinking into current leadership practices, policies, structures, research, and beliefs as we work to cultivate a thriving future. The conference will take place in person 12-15 October at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations and virtually 3-4 October.

ILA's 25th Global Conference will support our responsibilities as global citizens and as leaders and leadership professionals to use the hope — implicit in leadership — to *weave* together a collective vision, will, and agency for a thriving future. As Professor Chellie Spiller, a Māori leader and an ILA Fellow, illuminates: *Rangatira*, which is Māori for leader, is comprised of two words, *ranga* (to weave) and *tira* (the group). Being a leader, then, is the art of weaving people together to create a stronger, more resilient, collective whole.

What additional questions do we need to ask about how to lead toward a “rewoven” world?

While each of the streams within the conference (e.g., business leadership, followership, leadership education, leadership development, public leadership, leadership scholarship, and more) will post thoughts specific to their areas of interest, we begin with these questions:

What leadership paradigms and worldviews are needed to ensure that marginalized, excluded, and oppressed people experience the power of inclusive leadership?

How might Indigenous leadership narratives and ancestral knowledge and wisdom traditions from around the world reshape destructive mindsets related to leadership and followership and cultivate leadership for healthy and sustainable human and planetary systems?

How do we cultivate and connect leadership locally and globally that is committed to social justice and reconciliation, health for all, and a sustainable planet?

In *The Mishomis Book*, Anishinaabe Leader, Grand Chief Eddie Benton Banai ignites hope for a flourishing world by sharing the teaching of the seventh fire, or prophecy. This prophecy describes the present day when the people of the Earth face a crossroads. We can continue in a “headlong rush” toward a “damaged and seared earth,” or we can choose a “slower path” where “the Earth is not scorched,” and “the grass is still growing” (p. 93). It is

said that heeding the call to slow down, stop, and look within for answers, will light the eighth fire, a time of peace, prosperity, and flourishing for all life.

We look forward to seeing you in Vancouver and online as we all share our knowledge, ask our questions, and seek out new answers that cultivate leadership for a thriving future.

Theme Team

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CALL TO ACTION

1. **Commit:** Plan now to attend ILA's 2023 Global Conference 12-15 October in Vancouver, Canada and/or virtually 3-4 October.
2. **Submit:** Share your knowledge and experience by submitting a proposal that addresses the theme's questions, a stream's priorities or topics, or what you think is most important about leadership today. Read through [The Call for Proposals](#) document now and start preparing to submit your proposal. The Submission Portal for the Call for Proposals will open in January. Submit by 20 February 2023, 11:59 PM EST.
3. **Magnify:** Expand your potential impact by reaching out to colleagues and networks to connect and share your wisdom and hope, your projects and research.

4. **Grow:** Develop a personal learning plan to maximize your conference experience.
5. **Weave:** Challenge your assumptions and weave the opinions of individuals who may see the world differently into your construct of global leadership.
6. **Embrace:** Dedicate time to experience the Vancouver, British Columbia area, engage with locals and colleagues informally during the conference, and expand your friends in this dynamic leadership community.

References

Benton-Banai, E. (1988). *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway*. Red School House. Originally published in 1979, Indian Country Press.

Gorman, A. (2021). The Hill We Climb. An Inaugural Poem performed at the swearing in of U.S. President Joe Biden.

Wheatley, M.J. (2005). *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.