Summary of Results from the PCH-OCADU Futures-Thinking Project: “The Futures of Canadian Identities”

This foresight exercise revealed the following two critically uncertain drivers of change:

1) Decolonization – the process of dismantling colonialist power in all its forms, including direct and indirect economic control and the primacy of colonial languages.

2) The concentration of wealth and power.

Content Insights (the ‘what’):

- A singular, grand-Canadian narrative (based on 2 founding identities) is incorrect and out-of-date. How do we ensure that more inclusive narratives inform government programs and policies?

- Developing a vision of a decolonized Canada has benefits for all Canadians not only for Indigenous people and could help evolve the traditional conception of Canadian identities.

- The stewardship of the environment may provide key elements of convergence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, not only towards reconciliation, but also as a common foundation for a renewed national identity that can build bridges among minority groups.

- The speed of social and familial change is creating tensions that could reinforce homogenous sub-groups who remain isolated from one another. As people cope with rapid changes, there is an increased risk of retreating to niches.

- Diversity and inclusion policies should not only be outward-looking (i.e. serving Canadians), but also shift internal culture within the federal government. How do we do this in a way that acknowledges the voices of Canadians who have traditionally not had access to mainstream media and other platforms or those who are marginalized in the workplace?

- All scenarios pointed to radical changes in the future of work. The erosion of identity that coincides with the loss or change of work may present opportunities to reimagine Canadian identities based on creative, artistic, and athletic pursuits.

Process Insights (‘the how’):

- The process of foresight highlighted that inclusion happens when diversity is intentionally designed from the outset.

- Regularly practicing foresight builds organizational resilience (i.e. better preparedness for surprises): signals collection and trends detection is a feedback mechanism that increases an organization’s ability to adapt to change.

- Changing a culture to become more resilient takes time and requires uncomfortable conversations about sensitive issues. The discomfort with some of the findings demonstrates that the process was successful at revealing organizational blind spots.

- This OCADU-PCH project is a beginning of an iterative process - PCH can further explore and develop implications from the repository of signals, trends, and drivers identified, and maintain relationships developed to ensure ongoing diversity of views.