

Addendum to StopTheInstitute.ca post “Meet Cassie Doyle, CEO of CIRDI”

Emails between UBC Alumnus and CIRDI’s CEO

Alumnus (08 July 2015, to Moura Quayle):

As chair of CIRDI’s board of directors, as its interim executive director, and as director of the LIGI (now CIRDI’s administrative host), I trust you are in a position to oversee the immediate release of information that many people have been requesting of CIIEID/CIRDI executive directors since its inception at UBC. Some people’s Kafkaesque narrative around ultimately unfruitful efforts to request this information from past-EDs Bern Klein and Daniel Dumas is touched on in the “legacy of silence” blog post on the StopTheInstitute website; surely that odyssey is behind us now.

As a career academic and as the incumbent director of the LIGI, I am sure you have a commitment to transparency and accountability to the university, the public, and the greater good, so you will certainly be unable to allow continued opacity around CIRDI. I and others are seeking answers to many questions, since no one has made official, genuine, transparent, good-faith response to this list of questions originally posed to the CIIEID’s executive board and its executive director almost two years ago. Before he was fired, Daniel Dumas published his “message from the executive director” riposte on CIRDI’s site; his pathetic avoidance of genuine response to the legitimate critiques is so shameful, it’s a wonder it’s still on the site after his dismissal!

I and others have had to make formal requests for information under BC’s ATIP legislation, and many people feel that it is absurd that so little transparency and accountability have existed around this Institute that we must resort to legal measures to obtain what should be public information. It is more affirming of community and our shared humanity if those leading CIRDI will just make the appropriate effort to respond to questions and concerns. (And note that the appropriate effort may in the end challenge CIRDI’s viability, may defend truth instead of the organization, may take considerable analysis and time to frankly and comprehensively address each question, and may mean voluntarily releasing reams of emails, budgets, iterations of project proposals, meeting minutes, trip itineraries, and anything else that demonstrates oversight, error in judgement, insensitivity, and failure, beyond just polished and vetted PR blurbs.)

So why don’t we start with only a handful of questions, and go from there? By making good-faith responses, you can begin to demonstrate that you’re genuinely committed to accountability and making vulnerable and honest response, and that you’re committed to distancing yourself from the inaction, arrogance, opacity, and impotence of past directors. Let’s start with these:

Advisory Council

Since January 2015 or so, an initial iteration of the advisory council has been convened, but its composition--listed both on CIRDI’s site and the Stop The Institute site--is surprisingly indicative of a heavy bias toward industry, business, and techno-managerial expertise.

Voices of Indigenous land defenders, mining-affected communities, and grass-roots civil society organizations acting in solidarity with those affected by Canadian companies mining projects abroad--with a consistent

message critical of the status quo resource extraction paradigm--are currently excluded from the advisory council.

Could you please provide concrete evidences of what “development,” “poverty reduction,” “solidarity,” or “emancipatory” experience each member of this advisory council brings to the institute? On what rubric of strengths, limitations, experience, agenda, conflict of interest, etc., does membership on CIRDI’s advisory council depend? And by exactly what transparent, open process are individuals nominated to the advisory council?

Obviously the same critiques and questions apply to CIRDI’s executive board, heavily biased toward mining, business, and techno-managerial interests, experience, and solutions, so I and others certainly would like all the details about this.

Invitations vs. Propositions

In original and more recently available information on CIRDI projects, there is mention (though nowhere more than a brief paragraph) of projects implemented in or associated with people from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Mongolia, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Mexico, “two Sub-Saharan African countries,” Indonesia, Guyana, and perhaps others.

So, exactly which foreign governments have actually invited CIRDI to help them with “capacity building,” “governance,” “legislation,” “equitable distribution of benefits,” or anything else, around their extractive sectors? By what measure were those individuals determined to represent their countries, such that the invitation for CIRDI’s involvement or intervention was not just at the request of an individual or small group? Please send copies of any documents making these invitations.

Similarly, exactly how have communities approached the institute with requests for technical- or governance-related assistance with respect to mining in their region? Such that nothing is left to the imagination or speculation, please send all documentation on how such invitations or requests were made to CIRDI.

Concerns have been voiced within and around CIRDI that at least some projects, initiatives, “summer institutes” are the creations and reflect the worldviews of CIRDI’s own people, rather than originating in on-the-ground needs as identified by people in the “developing countries” themselves. Will you please share details.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider the substance and intent of these questions, and to pull together the material you need from CIRDI’s shelves to provide thoughtful and fully-documented responses. And if you experience discomfort with some aspect of CIRDI’s make-up that these questions bring up, it’ll be much better to respond vulnerably and honestly about that, than to skirt any of the questions or respond with the same disingenuous lines that CIRDI’s and the university’s leadership have been repeating until now. You know, as much as everyone is looking for actual answers to these questions (that will either deepen or soften the many concerns), this is a pretty good opportunity to demonstrate that you will set a precedent for CIRDI

leadership with a level of humanity, transparency, public accountability, and sincerity that its previous directors have not demonstrated.

No answer; time passes...

CIRDI PR (10 Nov, to Alumnus):

As you may know CIRDI has a new leadership in CEO, Cassie Doyle, and director of international operations, Elaine Pura. They bring complementary skills and experience from the public service and NGO sectors. I am writing to invite you to come and meet Cassie and Elaine and to hear about recent developments at CIRDI. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet you as well.

Alumnus (12 Nov, to Cassie Doyle):

I hope you are well, and finding your sea-legs at CIRDI's rolling helm. You've taken on a challenging portfolio with a troubled mandate, but as CEO you may have a degree of agency to turn the gunboat back to shore.

Your colleague Gilian Dusting just sent me a note requesting that I meet with her, you, and Elaine Pura (all copied here), and suggested sometime in early December. Doing so might be a great idea – healthy and productive for us all – if the conditions are right for such a meeting.

You three are new in your positions, and, as Elizabeth May wisely reflected on Tuesday when speaking of what she expects of the Trudeau II government, it may be unproductive to be an early sceptic. So I want to trust that you've all joined CIRDI with every intention of either turning it completely from its originally-plotted course, or sinking it outright. And I want to give you the benefit of the doubt – like I have done for your predecessors Bern Klein, Daniel Dumas, and Moura Quayle – that you will bring a fresh take to leadership of the mining institute: voluntarily removing the barriers to transparency and accountability that we've seen since CIRDI's inception, and substantively overhauling its mandate, partner network, structure, etc. etc. etc. (Harper's regime is over – you can do it now!)

To each executive director, questions, requests for information, and substantive concerns have repeatedly been raised by NGOs, students, and faculty of the host universities. Please read the below letter that I had sent over four months ago to Moura Quayle. The letter ends with the offer that "this is a pretty good opportunity to demonstrate that you will set a precedent for CIRDI leadership with a level of humanity, transparency, public accountability, and sincerity that its previous directors have not demonstrated." Quayle didn't take that opportunity.

On my server and on CIRDI's, each email requesting information, raising concerns, or pleading for accountability is permanently registered. Likewise, the refusal of CIRDI's leadership to respond sincerely and transparently is itself a loud and clearly-transmitted communication of impunity and unaccountability that is registered on the permanent record.

Like her predecessors, Quayle refused opportunities to connect with stakeholders at her home university (while at the same time leading an organization that aims to engage with and seek social

license in communities abroad). She's still on the executive board, and running the administrative unit hosting CIRDI, but Cassie, Gilian, Elaine, I trust that you better understand what you are registering on the permanent record through your actions (and inaction), communications (and silence), and emancipatory directions (and those that might continue to bring suffering to those opposed to the projects of CIRDI's partners). I trust that each of you wish to permanently register a picture of your time with CIRDI that is distinctly different than that of your predecessors.

Trading notes during a rapid assessment of CIRDI records recently released by DFATD under federal Access to Information legislation, several of us found that a strategic communications consultant had been retained to help develop a "management strategy to address student activists" for the institute.

As you can imagine, this centralized strategy to manage activism (rather than genuinely responding to concerns) is being interpreted by many as another evidence of CIRDI's less than good-faith motives and methods. Is there a way to demonstrate that Gilian's requests for off-line, one-on-one meetings is not part of a strategy to neutralize critique, salvage the CIRDI brand, convert detractors, manage activists?

Cassie, I want you to take every opportunity to break the pattern of CIRDI's past leaders, to show that you're committed to correcting the twisted mandate given it by the Harper Conservative government. And I'll do everything I can to help you encourage Trudeau's Liberals to give you the freedom to re-imagine the institute from the ground up, pivoting it from its corporate and techno-managerial direction, making it responsive to those affected by Canadian extractivist activity and diplomacy.

One opportunity I can suggest is for you to respond fully to the email (below) that I had sent to Moura Quayle back in July.

Another opportunity is to send me all documents related to CIRDI's "management strategy to address student activists," its communications strategies, media management notes, etc. I and others will really appreciate receiving complete copies of all you have on this, draft versions, and emails from the PR consultant Patricia Leidl, and what CIRDI has accomplished to date with such scheming. I'm sure you'll be pleased to distance yourself from that mess.

There's a ton more that people want to know about CIRDI, but given past experience with the secretive institute, many have just given up trying to ask for it from the Institute's proponents. And to FOI requests, after illegally long delays, exorbitant fees, insulting excuses, and between overzealous redactions, little substantive information is actually released. This creates a further opportunity for you, Cassie, to bring some accountability to CIRDI. If you send me all records that have been requested under ATIP legislation, unredacted and in searchable formats, I'll be sure to distribute them widely. (All records related to the \$15.3M Ethiopia contract might be a really good place for your team to start.)

I'm sure you all have some great ideas for redirecting or outright sinking CIRDI, and I'm eager to hear what you've got in mind. So that we can meet in early December (I'm tentatively available), please take the proactive step toward accountability and trust by marshalling the team on the opportunities that I've suggested. It'll balance the power asymmetry and show the good-faith necessary for a constructive and healthy meeting.

CIRDI CEO (12 Nov):

I would welcome an opportunity to meet as Gilian mentioned. I'm very interested in hearing your views on CIRDI and also it would give us a chance to share some information on our programming. I'm reaching out to the broadest range of stakeholders in CIRDI's work in these early weeks. So I am hoping that you will accept this invitation without condition, as it reflects a sincere interest in meeting with you. A fresh start so to speak.

Alumnus (18 Nov):

Thank-you for your quick response. I'm a little surprised, though, that you're not jumping at the opportunities I had identified for you.

If CIRDI under your leadership is undergoing a "fresh start," I look forward to demonstrations of it, on the record, in good-faith response to what I and others have brought up, and an unambiguous realignment of the organization's mandate and accountability with those most affected and marginalized by the Canadian mining industry. (Evidences, not assertions or promises, right?)

So, to clear the air for meeting in December, do send me by email CIRDI's response to the questions I had asked of Moura, all documentation related to CIRDI's communications strategy, and direct, full release of the records responsive to FOI requests made of the institute, all opportunities I've previously outlined in greater detail.

Likewise, if there's specific information you feel you should share with me about CIRDI programming, for now email is also the best way to do so. I'm looking forward to seeing it!

CIRDI CEO (24 Nov):

I am sorry you feel this way. In this time of so many tensions among people around the world, I believe the best thing we can do is to come together to talk, to seek understanding and to discover what we have in common.

I am reaching out to many people in my first months at CIRDI and continue to extend and open invitation to meet with me.

Interview on UBC Insiders (25 Nov)

Cassie Doyle asserts that she's made two invitations to meet. Cute, but disingenuous.

Alumnus (04 Jan 2016)

Ms. Doyle,

As CEO of this troubled, publicly funded institute that's acutely under the microscope, I'm baffled that you've chosen to completely sidestep actually responding to my requests.

By refusing each of the opportunities to demonstrate good faith that I proposed in November, you assert a single-minded

commitment to CIRDI's problematic status quo. Both by email and in the [UBC Insiders interview](#), your canned responses show a rejection of all external critique, and a refusal to ever act on the terms of others. As if in lock-step with your predecessors, this disappointingly mimics the failed PR strategy of Klein, Dumas, and Quayle. Does the position demand intransigence, or does it attract it? Your note below responded neither to my previous letter nor to my repeated requests for information.

With this standoffish, antisocial attitude toward concerned peers in your own city and campus, it's no wonder Canadians don't want CIRDI to operate anywhere out of our sight, where even fewer mechanisms exist for those affected by its partners' projects to access information about the institute's motives, mechanisms, funding, etc. What credibility does CIRDI have, advising abroad of the "social license to operate," while its leadership simultaneously exhibits complete indifference to the questions and critiques of their peers at home?

You know, even from CIRDI's ex-associates there's agreement that not only is CIRDI tooled to be unresponsive to the terms and demands of those most affected by Canadian mining projects abroad, but in its projects and operations it is actively proposing and imposing extractivist ideology on influential actors in resource-rich countries already made vulnerable by decades of external intervention. CIRDI's once-supporters recognize that, uncloaked from its pretentious assertions of relevance, the institute is nothing more than a hegemonic implement of transnational mining interests abroad.

No longer with *emancipatory* expectations of you, I only repeat these *technical* requests of you to:

- 1) respond fully to the questions I had asked of Moura Quayle six months ago about the Advisory Council, the Executive Board, and due diligence regarding invitations vs. propositions in host countries;
- 2) send me all documentation related to CIRDI's management strategy to address student activists; and
- 3) assemble and release all records, unredacted and in searchable formats, responsive to FOI requests that have been made of CIRDI, including and especially that related to the \$15.3M Ethiopia project.

Additionally, please send me a copy of the revised Contribution Agreement that Moura Quayle, John Hepburn, and Arvind Gupta have all told me was being reviewed and re-written. If this has not yet been completed, then please send me draft versions and let me know how the Canadian public and civil society can contribute to the review and to the terms of any new agreement.

Please note that I am copying on this note a couple of colleagues in Canadian civil society who might benefit by being abreast of what I am asking of you.

No answer; time passes...