



Letters from the LCC President

by Shauna Van Praagh

Letter # 31

30 April 2026

One year ago, in my letter of April 2025, I shared a poem entitled *The Masks of Love* by Canadian poet Alden Nowlan. It served as an introduction to a reflection on the intensity of the month of April, with a specific nod to the fact that this is annual report preparation season at the Law Commission of Canada. Indeed, the LCC team is immersed again this spring in the project of creating and sharing a comprehensive portrait of twelve months of our activities for the people of Canada.

With this in mind, I went back to a collection of Alden Nowlan's poems for my April 2026 letter. His poem entitled *The Nation's Capital* seemed particularly promising. After all, Ottawa is home to the office in which LCC team members are devoting their time and energy to the work of reviewing, gathering, consolidating, and demonstrating what we have done over this past year.



Here are the opening lines of the poem:

*The first thing you learn here
is that the country
bears the same relationship
to the government
that outer space
bears to the earth.*

*The second thing you learn
is that nothing is unimportant.*

Readers will rightly suspect that the poem continues in a somewhat critical and even cynical vein, offering compelling insight into the perspective of a New Brunswick poet writing in the 1960's. The message, communicated in the initial lines and developed through what follows, reminds people working for the federal government - and we could include independent commissions based in Ottawa - of the risks of disengaged distance and exaggerated self-importance. That isn't a bad message to pay attention to, even if it can be hard to hear.



Reading these lines this year, however, invites a different and unexpected connection. The poet clearly intends to underscore the complete lack of closeness and exchange that characterizes the relationship between outer space and the earth. But the Integrity mission undertaken by Artemis II this month provided all of us as human beings an extraordinary opportunity to renew and reimagine that relationship. Readers of the poem in April 2026, as observers of the Artemis II flight, might reflect instead on the inspiring proximity between the earth and deep space, and between all of us on our planet and the dark side of the moon.



The remarkable accomplishments of the Artemis II mission, and the awe-producing lessons it offers for human potential, were part of a recent conversation around the Law Commission’s boardroom table. No doubt similar conversations were happening at gatherings in workplaces, classrooms, and kitchens across the country as we followed our

Canadian astronaut, Jeremy Hansen, and his fellow crew members on their incredible flight. The mission necessarily pushed us out of any “business as usual” mode of doing things; it redefined time and commitment and ability in striking and breathtaking ways. The crew travelled over a million kilometres in their ten days together on board a tiny capsule the size of two minivans. As they flew behind the moon, they lost all radio contact with earth for 40 minutes, making them the first human beings to let go of their connection to our home planet. As they re-entered our atmosphere at 40,000 km/h, they were travelling at a speed that could have taken them from Ottawa to Vancouver in under six minutes.

Upon their return, the members of the Artemis II crew demonstrated the joy and friendship that supported their collaboration throughout the mission. Together they had solved problems, taken risks, and pushed limits. The flight’s success relied on curiosity, energy, and substantial investment in generation after generation of people and projects. It offered proof of human capacity to follow our imagination along truly incredible and unexplored paths.



That kind of energy and excitement, albeit less universal and subject to front page coverage, drives the young researchers in law supported by the Law Commission of Canada’s Emerging Scholars

program. They too are taking risks and envisaging new frontiers in knowledge and practice. Over the past months, our most recent cohort of doctoral candidates has succeeded in sharing their research-based ideas through innovative outreach and engagement activities. They may not operate as a team in close quarters on a flight through space, but the LCC is proud to gather them together to celebrate and disseminate their paths and projects.

José Saldaña Cuba is writing on mining projects in Indigenous territories, with comparative insights for Canada drawn from a study in Peru. In organizing a panel discussion focused on revitalization of Indigenous Justice in the Americas, he contributed to ongoing dialogue on environmental governance, Indigenous ecological frameworks and Indigenous-industry agreements. Sébastien Meeùs is examining rights protection within regulatory frameworks governing access to personal data. Through short accessible video interviews, he integrates accounts of personal experience and knowledge into his analysis of compliance with data protection guidelines. Andrea Menard delves into consultation directives and practice in legal profession governance, with a focus on informed consent by and within Indigenous organizations. The insights from her experience designing a survey to gather feedback from Indigenous clients and communities on modes of constructive interaction and consent-based engagement will shape her ongoing research and writing.



José Saldaña Cuba
McGill University



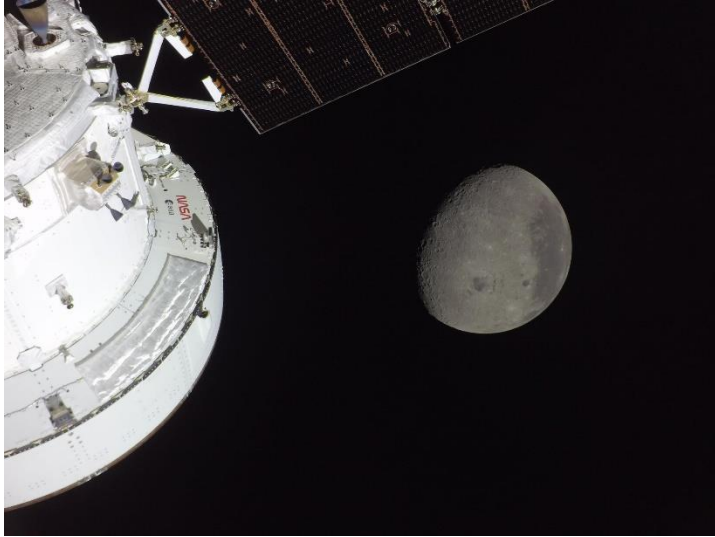
Sébastien Meeùs
Université de Montréal



Andrea Menard
Royal Roads University

The Commission's support for all three Emerging Scholars over the 2025-2026 academic year operates as an expression of faith in their potential. We acknowledge the ways in which they search for inspiration in the questions they ask and the people with whom they interact. The program, although extremely modest in comparison to the one that led to the launch of Artemis II, represents solid investment grounded in the trust that next generations should and will take risks and explore new possibilities.





If Artemis II on its Integrity mission offers a rewrite of the relationship of outer space to earth, then perhaps – as suggested by the poem that opened this letter – it also shines a light on the relationship between the people of Canada and the work done at a federal agency based in the Nation’s Capital. Roderick Macdonald, president of the Law Commission of Canada in its first stage of existence from 1997 to 2006, used to repeat, “If it’s not impossible, it’s not worth doing.” He meant it about

teaching students, about designing research projects, about building and changing law and Canadian society. The message would come as no surprise to an astronaut. As this April winds down and we look up and ahead, Artemis II challenges us to explore the unknown and aim for the impossible.