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The guiding question for this session was:

Each participant in our opening panel addressed this question based on their own expertise:

- \_\_\_\_\_, Professor Emeritus, University of Victoria  
⇒ shared with us Canada's minimal historical engagement with security issues in Asia, and its current observer role in the growing international efforts to improve human security in the region;
- \_\_\_\_\_, Co-founder and Executive Director, Vancouver International Centre of Contemporary Asian Art  
⇒ argued that cultural diversity is as important as biodiversity and that public support to artistic community links between Asia and Canada may be the first step to strengthen our country's political engagement with Asia;
- \_\_\_\_\_, Executive Director & CEO, The Minerva Foundation for BC Women  
⇒ spoke of the tendency for ethnic communities to disengage from mainstream Canada and the need for these communities to champion Canada's involvement in Asia by engaging Canadian values and society;
- \_\_\_\_\_, Manager of Diversity Initiatives, CBC Television  
⇒ questioned who in Canada does not have Asia on their mental map, showed how the contemporary Canadian reality is inherently linked to Asia, and highlighted how media representations may help to alleviate fear and anxiety in understanding Canada's Asian component;
- \_\_\_\_\_, Researcher & Urban Planner, BTAworks  
⇒ traced Canada's outward look through geographical maps (attached) to better understand how challenging it may be to conceptualize Canada as the centre of our mental map, caught between representations of its Euro-centric past and its Asian-centric future;
- \_\_\_\_\_, President and CEO, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada  
⇒ addressed the inadequacies of our tools in Canada to represent and understand our engagement with Asia, notably by looking at the lack of virtual representation of Canada-Asia relations in contrast to Canada's relations to other regions of the world.

The case study panel discussion was moderated by Professor \_\_\_\_\_, Director of the Institute of Asian Research at UBC. Facilitators were Jean Michel Montsion and Hanna Cho from the Asia Pacific

It is hard to believe that Asia is missing from the mental map of Canadians, as Asia is a visible and integral part of our contemporary Canadian reality. However, as much as Asia may exist on our mental map, this does not mean that Canadians productively engage with Asia in ways that best serve Canada's position on the world stage, nor that the mechanisms and processes in place speak adequately to Canada's past and current interconnectedness with Asia.

Even if one acknowledges Asia as an integral part of Canada, our country remains a distant interested observer of Asian countries, with little to no support and engagement with their own realities and challenges. Justification for this detachment is usually supported by arguments pointing to the various ways in which Canada and Asia are different, even if those same kinds of differences with other parts of the world have been used to justify increased Canadian interest and involvement. For example, where the Great Lakes are used to symbolize the connectedness and cooperation between Canada and the US for example, the Pacific Ocean is often symbolized as a dividing obstacle between Canada and Asia.

A key challenge for Canada is the need to reconfigure the documenting of its European past and Euro-centric sense of history in order to better recognize and include Asia as part of its past and present. In other words, w



Asian countries, through immigration agencies, to speak of what it is to live in Canada, balancing views of both pros and cons. Another area where a knowledge deficit exists is in the sphere of Canadian politics and bureaucracy. Canada's political leaders must strive to maintain meaningful and diverse connections with communities in Canada who have direct contact with Asia. In particular, community-based mechanisms for input, regarding government policy and action, must be fostered. This would help address the existing knowledge deficits about Asia in Canada, and co,(f)3(o)-4(s)13()3(o)-singsing Tut Aulnu

Above all, putting Asia on the mental map of Canadians involves a simple task: making the connection to people's daily lives, and personal experiences. That is, any initiatives and strategies aiming to improve Canada's engagement with Asia must be contextualized in a way that resonates with their real-life concerns and experiences. Moreover, we must not forget that Canada's relationship with Asia, begins right here in Canada. Drawing on common concerns and targets, sharing knowledge and interests and exchanging passions about Canada's place in Asia will need to be framed through specific and concrete matters. Abstract discussions about Canada's engagement with Asia are not only less productive but may bring us away from what contemporary Asia is and the various ways in which Canada is connected to it.

Figure 1: Atlantic Centered Image of Canada

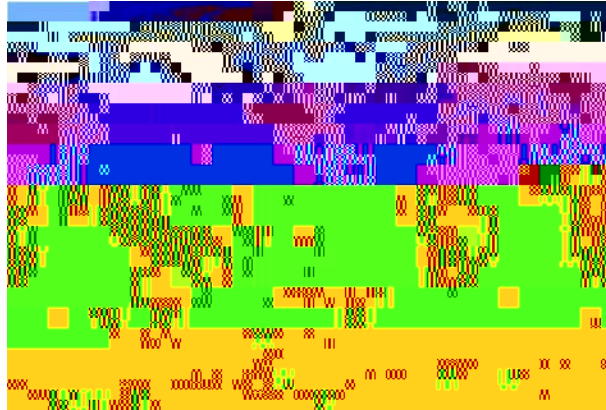


Figure 2: Pacific-Centered Image of Canada

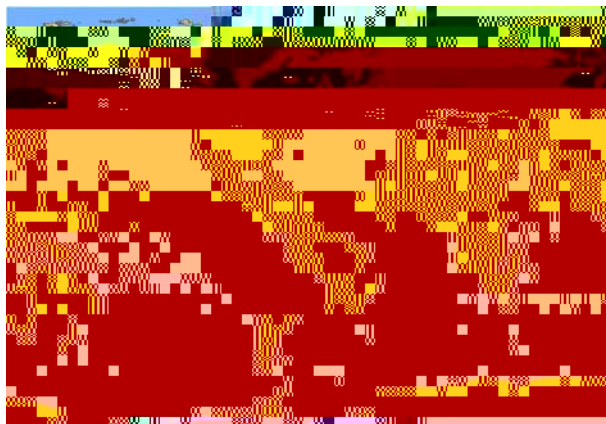
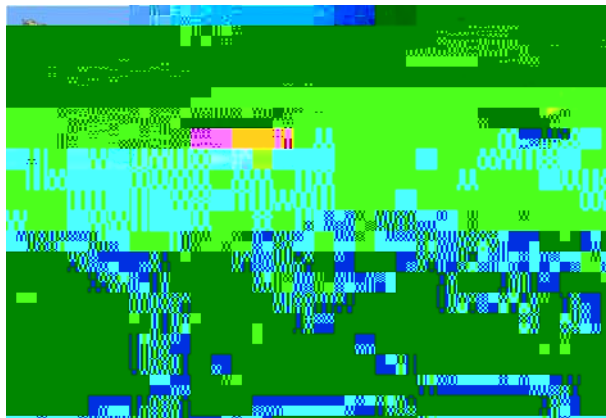


Figure 3: Putting Canada in the Middle



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<sup>1</sup> All three maps have been reproduced with the authorization of their author, Andrew Yan, researcher & urban planner, BTAworks, Vancouver, Canada.