





Around the Coffee Table with Dale Jodoin

A Country Afraid to Talk

By Dale Jodoin
Columnist

There was a time when you could sit around a coffee table with friends, neighbours, or co-workers and talk about almost anything. You didn't always agree, but that was part of the conversation. You challenged each other. You laughed. Sometimes you change your mind. Most times you didn't. Then you poured another cup of coffee and carried on. Today, it often feels different.

Raise a question about immigration, crime, education, religion, the cost of living, or politics and, before long, someone reaches for a label instead of an answer. "Racist. Nazi. Bigot. Colonizer." Four words that can end a conversation before it even begins. Just like that, the conversation is over. I believe Canada loses something every time that happens. Before I go any further, let me be clear. Real racism exists. Real hatred exists. Hate crimes deserve to be investigated, and those responsible should face the full force of Canadian law. All Canadians, regardless of their race, religion or background, deserve equal protection. That's not my point. I fear the day when labels become more important than evidence.

Words like "racist," "Nazi," "bigot," and "colonizer" are heavy words. They describe serious ideas with painful histories. They should never be thrown at someone simply because they ask an uncomfortable question or hold a different opinion.

More than one million Canadians served during the Second World War, and tens of thousands never returned after fighting Nazi tyranny. That history deserves respect. Using these words carelessly weakens their meaning and can make genuine cases of hatred easier to dismiss.

If someone commits a hate crime, prosecute them.
If someone falsely accuses another person of hatred, challenge that accusation with the same commitment to fairness.
Justice only works when it belongs to everyone.

Canada earned its reputation by becoming a country where people from different backgrounds could live under the same laws while holding different beliefs. Agreement was never the goal. Respect was.

That is why I worry about what some young Canadians are learning
I am not talking about every teacher or professor. Many work tirelessly for their students. But education should teach people how to think, not what to think. Students need to learn to ask questions, examine evidence and back their ideas up with facts. If disagreement is met with a label instead of a discussion, we are teaching division instead of citizenship.

Canada has welcomed people from every corner of the world. Most came looking for safety, opportunity, and freedom. They have strengthened our communities in countless ways. They deserve our respect.

But becoming Canadian also means accepting a shared responsibility.
If you came here to escape conflict, don't recreate it here.
Our streets should never become battlefields for conflicts that began somewhere else. Peaceful protest is a Canadian right. Violence, intimidation, vandalism, and hate have no place in Canada.

Governments also have a responsibility to lower the temperature of public debate. I believe the federal Liberal government, often supported by the NDP on key votes, has spoken about unity while many Canadians feel more divided than before. Others will see that differently, and that is their right. What matters most is that Canadians believe the law is applied fairly and equally to everyone.

This isn't really about Left or Right.
It isn't about race.
It isn't about religion.

It's about whether Canadians can still disagree without treating one another as enemies. Here's the question I keep coming back to:
Are we really becoming a country that's afraid to talk?
Or have we become a country that's forgotten how to listen?

Listening doesn't require agreement. It requires enough respect to hear another person before deciding they're wrong.
Most Canadians aren't looking for another argument.
They're looking for fairness.
They're looking for honesty. They're looking for the confidence that they can ask a difficult question without immediately being branded by a label.

A free country isn't measured by how loudly people speak.
It's measured by whether people with different opinions can still sit around the same coffee table when the conversation is over. If we lose that, we won't lose Canada all at once. We'll lose it one conversation at a time.
Not because we stopped talking.
Because we stopped listening.

Maybe that's the real question each of us should ask the next time we sit down around a coffee table. Are we there to win an argument, or are we there to understand one another?

I still believe Canadians can find their way back to the coffee table.
I just hope we don't wait until there's no one left willing to pull up a chair.



I Don't Believe in Networking.

I believe in Getting to Know People

By Nick Kossovan

The word "networking" makes most people's stomachs turn. It conjures images of hotel conference rooms, aggressive business card swapping, and awkward, forced conversations in which everyone is subtly looking over their shoulder to see if there's someone more important they should be speaking to.

If that's your mental picture of networking, you can't be blamed for resisting it. Undoubtedly, active networking has its place in job searching, just not to the extent self-proclaimed career coaches want you to believe.

I don't believe in networking. I never have. I believe in something far more practical, rewarding, and effective: getting to know people. Shifting your focus from a process to a person changes everything.

When you shift your mindset to having no agenda other than simply learning about the person, fear of rejection evaporates. Networking treats people like stepping stones or checklist items; getting to know someone treats them like a destination. You aren't pitching; you're exploring. You aren't trying to extract an immediate favour or engineer a shortcut. Ironically, once you stop treating people like vending machines where you insert a conversation and expect a job lead to appear, your job search and career trajectory will start to flourish. However, you need to change your definition of success.

This approach rests on a fundamental human truth: showing interest in someone is a massive gesture. In a world where everyone seeks attention, giving someone your undivided attention is the ultimate differentiator. It's rare, flattering, and makes you incredibly memorable. Demonstrating genuine interest in someone's professional and personal journey is the ultimate compliment. People love to talk about themselves, and they remember the few who actually listen to them.

The show-interest approach centers on a fundamental human truth: showing interest in someone is a powerful gesture. In a world where everyone is seeking attention, giving someone your undivided attention is the ultimate differentiator. It's rare, it's flattering, and it makes you incredibly memorable. Demonstrating genuine interest in someone's professional and personal journey is an ultimate compliment. People love to talk about themselves, and they remember the few who actually listen.

In a 2024 UC Berkeley article, Why You Need to Expand Your Professional Network, Dr. Julia Schaletzky perfectly captured this dynamic: "A big part of networking is helping others; it lays the foundation for a reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationship. And it is ideal to develop a strong network in times when you can give to others, so people are ready to help when you need it—for example, in case of a sudden layoff or life change."

Dr. Schaletzky's insight hits the nail on the head. Relationship-building must happen before desperation sets in. It's your ego's sense of entitlement that leads you to expect a stranger to clear a path for your career, even though you haven't taken an interest in theirs. Strangers owe you nothing. Approaching someone you've just met, let alone someone you don't know, with an "I want something" attitude is likely to get you ghosted. You need a different conversational strategy, one that treats conversations as a discovery process, not an interrogation or a sales pitch.

When you meet someone for the first time, ask yourself the networking tip I often share: "How can I help this person?" Determining how you can be of help begins with asking open-ended discovery questions about their personal and professional realities.

Rare is a Saturday morning, weather permitting, when my longtime golf partner and I aren't teeing off at our local course. Most of the time, we're paired with another golfer or a twosome we'll be spending the next four hours with. To get to know them personally and professionally, I don't pitch myself; I ask low-pressure discovery questions.

First, I break the ice: "How long have you been golfing?" "Have you played this course before, or do you have other local favourites?" Next, I pivot to the personal: "Do you live nearby?" "Where are you from?" "What brought you to this city?" Finally, I transition into the professional arena: "What do you do for a living?" "What led you to your career?" "What's the most challenging aspect of your job right now?"

Notice that none of these questions asks for a job or an internal referral. Instead, they focus solely on the other person. By adopting this curiosity-driven approach—whether on the golf course, waiting in line to be served, or on a long flight—I've significantly broadened my professional network, received job offers, and gained numerous freelance opportunities. As I've noted in past columns, job opportunities are all around you; the caveat is that they're attached to people.

Making it a habit to get to know people leads to several profound outcomes:

- Trust replaces impersonal transactions.
- Career opportunities arise naturally.
- Job market intelligence is gained.
- Your professional reputation grows organically (you become known).
- You leave memorable, lasting impressions.

Write a new internal script about networking. Drop the transactional mindset. Consider being solely interested in getting to know your fellow human beings. My experience has proven one undeniable truth: staying open-minded, asking discovery questions, and actually listening open doors that no resume could ever unlock.



PROFESSIONAL GRADE NEWSPAPER



TIME TESTED



INDUSTRY RESPECTED



EXCEPTIONALLY WELL READ

YOUR **#1** REGIONAL NEWS SOURCE

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES CALL 905-432-2657