

# Virus Under the Microscope

## Act Three

A play-within-a-play for teachers, parents and students  
about the COVID -19 virus with the introduction and naming of more viruses.

An educational story (a play) that concludes with hope by Robert Hicks

Act Two was completed June 21, 2020. Act Three was completed August 05, 2020. Lab Tech #1 and Lab Tech #2 had been assigned to different labs. Over 6 weeks have passed since they have worked together.

According to the Worldometer.info website, as at August 05, 2020, 23:34 Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) worldwide there has been 18,954,433 cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and 710,022 deaths and 12,139,005 recovered. In the US there has been 4,971,644 cases and 161,571 deaths and 2,527,220 recovered. In Canada there has been 118,140 cases and 8,962 deaths and 102,773 recovered.

Fear of a second wave of infections as bad as or worse than the first wave is making everyone appropriately cautious. Canadians are increasingly wearing protective face masks as they emerge from months of isolating at home to curb the spread of COVID-19.



The pandemic's continuation is highlighting the need for people everywhere to take action to crush the curve of cases. Regrettably, many are not taking the required action. People are failing to understand that inaction anywhere threatens people everywhere.

All Lab Tech's in Canada have been working very hard. We are thankful for their service in our fight with COVID-19.

As the Lab Techs enter the lab they both tap their hearts with 4 fingers, 4 times (the new greeting relays a wish for goodwill, compassion, respect and justice). They hope this greeting is shared around the world.

*The Viruses also enter the lab. At the end of Act Two they heard and felt the bombs of goodwill, compassion, respect and justice exploding around them. They are weaker but they survived. They want to hear what the Lab Techs will say next.*

Tech #1 says, ““The COVID-19 Virus has kept us busy and working overtime. Today is another busy day. Let’s have lunch together, I want to show you another virus under the microscope.”

Tech #2 says, “Sure, I look forward to seeing you at lunchtime. Your slides are very educational. They are scary but important. As always, I will be counting on you to give me a reason for hope after viewing the slide.”

Tech #1 says, “I will do my best to relieve your worries.”

The Lab Techs return to their individual work stations and focus on the fight against the COVID-19 Virus. At lunchtime, they reunite.

Tech #2 says, “Okay, I’m ready to see the new Virus.”

Tech #1 says, “Look at Slide Ten - The Virus of Inaction”.

*All Viruses run to the microscope. They take a quick look before Tech #2 gets his eye on it. They haven’t seen this Virus before and wonder what will be said about it.*

# Virus

## Microscope Slide 10 The Virus of Inaction

I am the virus of Inaction. I am idle. I lead nowhere. I am unused talents. I do not seek assistance.

I am the opposite of individual and organizational “*commitment ability*”:

*(the capability to achieve results through appropriate follow-up and control to make things happen within a reasonable or agreed upon time.)*

I am the opposite of individual and organizational “*communications credibility*”:

*(the reliability to communicate when complications arise to provide time for people to change priorities or find alternative courses of action that will keep goals on schedule.)*

I come in 3 sizes; small, medium and large:

- Small: When a single person does not act when it is wise to do so, when they have been asked to do so, or simply when it is responsible for them to do so.
- Medium: When a group of people fail to ask this series of questions;
  - **Who** is doing it, why is that person doing it, who else might do it and who should do it, to ensure that the problem or objective is addressed responsibly with the appropriate focus and skill.
  - **What** is being done, what else might be done and what should be done, to address the problem or objective as effectively as possible.
  - **Where** is it being done, why is it being done there, where else might it be done.
  - **When** is it being done, why does it need to take that long, when should it be done and when will it be complete.

- *How it is being done, why is it done that way, how else might it be done and how should it be done to ensure the problem is resolved, or the improvement is achieved, in the shortest time possible.*

After these questions have been asked, nothing is achieved as planned because some people in the group lacked the required commitment ability and/or communications credibility to be trusted with the work.

- Large: When government leaders lack the political will or the commitment to do what is right and what is required, when it is required, and the people they lead allow them to get away with it because they do not have the courage to speaking up. When people have the courage to speak up, they create opportunities for change. The keyword is *choose*. Do nothing and nothing will change.

I am the virus of Inaction. I can harm the world!

Inaction stands in the way of progress. It welcomes the spread of all viruses. It embraces climate change wreaking havoc on our world; increasing temperatures, rising waters, causing storms, floods, forest fires. As a result, crops will die, people will starve, and millions of climate refugees will require food and shelter. My inaction creates a path for mass destruction.

The Virus of Societal Indifference stands beside me, supports me, strengthens me. I will destroy the environment. It will not be habitable. Billions of people fear me but I breed doubt that prevents people from taking the necessary steps to mitigate the scientific evidence of climate destruction and associated suffering.

The famous soliloquy, “to be or not to be”, is about action versus inaction. “To be” is action, “not to be” is me. “To be or not to be, that is the question”. To this I respond; “No. I am the not to be. Why I am allowed to be should be the question!”

---

Tech #2 says, “Wow! Once again, your virus slide is very detailed and educational. It is clear, this is a serious problem. The Virus of Inaction is another very destructive virus.”

Tech #1 says, “Yes! People not wearing masks and not social distancing is just one good example of when a single person does not act when it is wise to do so, when they have been asked to do so, or simply when it is responsible for them to do so.

I also have an example of this virus doing it's terrible work on a large scale that I want to tell you about.”

Tech #2 says; “I’ll get my lunch. You have my attention.”

Tech #1 continues, “In 2015, 195 nations agreed with the United Nations (UN) that they can change the world for the better. They said this will be accomplished by bringing together their respective governments, businesses, media, institutions of higher education, and local Non Government Organizations (NGO) to improve the lives of the people in their country by the year 2030. They set 17 Sustainable Development Goals to accomplish this. Each goal is to be taken seriously.

The example I want to share with you refers to Sustainable Development Goal 6.



Sustainable Development Goal 6 is about clean water and sanitation. World Water Day 2020 is about water and climate change. They have an important link. The campaign shows how our use of water can help reduce floods, droughts, scarcity and pollution, and can help fight climate change itself.

To accelerate efforts towards meeting water-related challenges, the UN had proclaimed the period from 2018 to 2028 the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, to commence on World Water Day, 22 March 2018, and terminate on World Water Day, 22 March 2028.

Unfortunately, just weeks ago (July 7, 2020), and two years into this International Decade for Action, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres said;

*“Today, Sustainable Development Goal 6 is badly off track. This is hindering progress on the 2030 Agenda, the realization of human rights and the achievement of peace and security around the world.”*

He added that;

*“Water globally is threatened by the twin threats of increasing demand and withdrawals and the degradation of water sources and associated ecosystems due to climate change, pollution and other threats. The water and sanitation crisis demands a holistic, systemic and multilateral response. The water and sanitation crisis is getting worse and lack of progress on SDG 6 undermines progress on all of the other SDGs, particularly on global health, education, food, gender equality, energy and climate change.”*

Then, adding to this dire warning, Mr. Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs said;

*“Only if we raise the ambition through strong political will and commitment at the highest level, will we be able to achieve SDG 6 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”*

Therefore, the UN is sounding a very ominous warning.

Unless we act dramatically and quickly, science tells us our climate and our way of life are literally in jeopardy. Now is the time we should view the denial of the associated science as malpractice, and we should view inaction as malpractice. The cost of inaction will be catastrophic. The Virus of Inaction must be confronted. To act or not to act NOW is the question.

When this International Decade for Action begins with two years of inaction, clearly it is time for everyone to “warrior up”.

I use the phrase “warrior up” because on March 22, 2018, 13 year old Autumn Peltier, an internationally recognized advocate for clean water from Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island in Northern Ontario, used this term while giving a speech to the United Nations General Assembly. She had been invited to speak as the “representative of civil society.” In her speech, Autumn said,

*“Mr. President, we need to work together. Now is the time to “warrior up” and empower each other to stand for our planet. We need to sustain in the little we have now and develop ways not to pollute the environment and sustain the relationship with Mother Earth and save what we have left,”*

Autumn was clear with her words. She told the UN that they must “warrior up”. Warriors are people who have experience and skill in fighting, and sometimes they are referred to as combatants, champions or heroes. She was saying as skilled fighters and champions they have to empower each other and work together to save what we have left. For the UN to say “Today, Sustainable Development Goal 6 is badly off track.”, means they did not do what Amber Peltier said had to be done. Not only have they let Autumn down, they let the entire world down by their inaction during their proclaimed decade of action.

Now is the time for Autumn, as the new strong and resilient Indigenous Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner, to make an important difference. The world must listen to what she has to say. Autumn is currently 15 years old. She speaks for the next generation.”



On January 21, 2020 Autumn Peltier, spoke at a forum hosted by Time Magazine, alongside other young activists, including the well-known Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg. When interviewed by Time magazine after the forum Autumn said;

*“Honestly, I would say they’re (politicians) all focused on just money. We need to be more focused on the actual things going on; they’re not thinking about the impacts and things that are happening. It’s almost like they don’t even believe that climate change is real.”*

*“To see change, I think what we need to do is start getting more people and youth, not only from Canada but from all over the world, and empowering other kids to stand up. What we’re doing right now is empowering them because being at the World Economic Forum we’re on a global stage and everyone’s going to be watching this. What we say right now is going to make an impact on everyone watching.”*

*"I don't want your awards. If you're going to award me, award me with helping me find solutions. Award me with helping me make change. I feel that's what I would want to see, is more people trying to help us with what we're trying to achieve."*



The World Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.  
Greta Thunberg, Climate Activist  
Amber Peltier, Indigenous Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner

Tech #1 continues; "What is extremely disturbing, is the fact that the 2018 to 2028 International Decade for Action – for Water – is the UN's second proclaimed Decade of Action. It is a continuation from the first Decade of Action that failed to meet its goals. 2005 to 2015 was declared the United Nations International Decade for Action, "Water for Life". Did the Virus of Inaction and the Virus of Societal Indifference prevent the actions required during those ten years? How can a decade of action fail so miserably that it required another decade of action to follow?

Can we have confidence this time will be different? Will the Virus of Inaction, the Virus of Societal Indifference, and the "lack" of political commitment at the highest levels continue their damage? What will make a difference this time? Who will "warrrior up" this time? Will it be Autumn Peltier and Greta Thunberg? Will they work together, supported by millions of protesters throughout the world? The likely answer is yes.

Without such protests, inaction will cripple the ability to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The UN will continue to promote the need for action while giving the excuse the action is difficult and requires additional time and more money. Discussions about action - is not action. We will never know the extent to which the Virus of Inaction and the Virus of Societal Indifference live within the halls of the United Nations."

After looking closely at the Virus of Inaction slide and hearing this dreadful example of how this Virus of Inaction is significantly harming our world, Tech #2 says; "This is dreadful news! Why is this not breaking news on every TV channel? Why isn't everyone talking about this? How can we raise awareness, ambition and political commitment at the highest levels? We must respond!"

Tech #1 says, "I agree! Inaction and the absence of political will are monumental issues. We are at a time in history that urgently requires an abundance of political commitment and the abatement of destructive climate change! A strong voice and urgent action is required – NOW!

I have written another poem. This one is to highlight an opportunity.”

### A Whole New Day

When the power of our voice  
mingles with the power of action  
the result will spotlight for us  
a whole new day.

When the protests of people  
bring justice in life  
the result will deliver for us  
a whole new day.

When the engines of freedom  
instill strength and a choice  
the result will liberate for us  
a whole new day.

When the compassion of mankind  
is allowed to run free  
the result will secure for us  
a whole new day.

When the viruses that plague us  
are weakened and destroyed  
the result will celebrate with us  
a whole new day.

*Upon hearing this, all viruses panic and run in circles again. They shrink with fear. They feel sick. They do not like Tech #1. He says too many things that jeopardize their future. Their degree of worry escalates every time he speaks. His words engulf them faster than a streak of lightening. They are afraid of what he will say next. They know that when the power of his voice mingles with the power of action the result will deliver to them a very bad day!*

Lab Tech #2 says, “I like it. I hope the “Whole New Day” your poem talks about is on the horizon. We need one. I admit I am feeling frightened about the future. I have decided to join the Friday’s For Future Movement (FFF). Thank you for sharing your optimism. My life requires more optimism and our discussions have made me feel better.”

Tech #1 says, “We must be optimistic. I also decided to join the FFF movement, Other environmental and peace groups throughout the world are fed up with racism, prejudice, discrimination, bullying and bigotry. To them, the Virus of Police Brutality and the Virus of Societal Indifference are unacceptable. They will no longer accept any of the viruses we observed under the microscope. They must “warrior up.” They want to destroy them. They know what they deserve. They have hope. They wish everyone goodwill, compassion, respect and justice.

As Autumn Peltier said to young people everywhere, it is time to “warrior up”! Every country is responding. This is the Decade of Action through peaceful protests. It is happening! Everyone can see it’s happening!”

*Now the viruses feel like screaming, but they cannot scream – they do not have vocal cords. They feel hot. They start to sweat. Their nausea increases every minute. They hate Tech #1 but they can’t leave; they want to hear the rest of the conversation.*

Tech #2 says, "I can see it's happening. Have you seen how many people are protesting? They are diverse. They are warriors. They are risking arrest to peacefully protest. They know it's time. They won't stop. It's happening!

Let's get back to work and do our part to fight COVID-19. I look forward to seeing you again."

Tech #2 taps his heart with 4 fingers, 4 times, as he leaves the room.



### END OF ACT 3

Act 4 of this play-within-a-play will follow very soon – likely by the middle of August.

Act 5 will follow by the end of August. It will be the last act written by me.

I encourage you to write and perform your own acts. The 2 Lab Techs will be happy to help you. Speak with them while you write. Borrow their microscope and look closer at the world you live in. Talk to people. Do something. Do not be indifferent.

This story was written for the COVID-19 Archive at the Brock University Library to serve as a historical record of time during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 by Robert Hicks - Canadian Peace Activist, Climate Activist, and Poet. Please visit the Archive to view Acts 1 and 2 and pass them to family, friends and others.