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Adding Dialogue to the Negotiator's Tool Kit

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Name almost any world, national or local conflict and you'll usually hear someone saying the situation needs more dialogue.

Finding a way, listening to the arguments and bringing about resolution take specialized skills. And they can be learned, says Joanna Ashworth, director of Simon Fraser University's continuing studies Dialogue Program.

"Our dialogue courses attract participants from all sectors - non-governmental organizations, First Nations, business and labour, government, corporations and consultants. "But many want to learn more about consensus-based decision making. Our answer is the new diploma in dialogue and negotiation. Simon Fraser is committed to developing dialogue education."The inaugural cohort begins classes April 15 at SFU's Wosk Centre for Dialogue (application deadline is Feb. 15). Designed for mid-career professionals, this non-credit, post-graduate program will offer consensus-based approaches to use in, and between, organizations. "We know that experienced negotiators in many spheres are keen to add the tools of dialogue to their tool kits,"says Ashworth. The 120-hour, nine-month program combines online courses with three, three-day intensives taught by university faculty and senior conflict-resolution professionals.