

ZAID KHAN

Strategy, Foresight, and Systemic Design

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PROFILE

Strategy, innovation, and communications leader with fifteen years directing upstream planning, research, and positioning for organizations including Metrolinx, Enbridge, General Motors, TD Bank Group, Canada Pension Plan, the University of Toronto, and OCAD University. I have led strategy teams and carried budget responsibility in agency, university, and institutional settings, and built a new institution from launch.

- **Systems thinking and strategic foresight.** A Master of Design in the field, governance roles at the Canadian Centre for Futures Literacy and the International Society for Systems Sciences, and a monthly practitioner gathering I have co-hosted since 2024.
- **Innovation strategy.** Innovation portfolios with allocation targets, stage governance, development funnels, and KPI frameworks.
- **Strategic communications.** Brand, marketing, campaign development, and knowledge mobilization at national scale, from repositioning a bank's capital markets arm to research that reached the Prime Minister and helped launch a federal investigation.

EXPERIENCE

Strategy Consulting Director & Instructor OCADU CO

2024 – 2025

- Wrote the pitch and the foresight framework that won CIFAR's business, and that CIFAR then used to build foresight capability inside its own organization.
- Built the upstream decision architecture for the university's executive team: a seven-point *Strategic Considerations* framework that gave leadership a consistent, defensible way to weigh high-impact choices under severe financial pressure.
- Designed and taught a two-day systems thinking course for internationally trained engineers.

Strategy Director Leo Burnett Toronto

2013 – 2019, 2022 – 2025

Delivered award-winning brand and marketing strategies for tier-one organizations. Clients included Metrolinx, Enbridge, General Motors, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, and TD Bank Group.

- Ran the same arc across every account: research design and synthesis, strategic positioning and vision setting, creative strategy and brief formation, then KPI setup and dashboards. Directed the strategy side of the \$6 million Metrolinx account over three years, and managed the teams working on the business.
- Developed brand strategy and value propositions for TD Securities after its acquisition of Cowen, and for TD Commercial Bank. Worked Enbridge at the masterbrand level and on transitional energy and gas delivery. Rebuilt how Canada Pension Plan Investment Board presented itself to audiences unfamiliar with, or skeptical of, the pension.
- Designed Metrolinx's innovation strategy: a tiered portfolio with allocation targets, a development funnel, stage governance defining who decides what advances, a KPI framework, and a cross-functional ambassador model. Ran the workshop that put it into practice, in which all ideas were moved into development.
- Directed tourism and destination travel strategy with Metrolinx and its regional partners, including the journey mapping and persona work behind it.
- Built Metrolinx's *Making Possibilities Happen* employer brand platform on qualitative research across 34 employees and 12 departments.

	Strategy Director Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Toronto 2020 – present - Lead the strategy and delivery team for research communication and knowledge mobilization at a SSHRC-funded institute, including budget ownership. - Translated a dense research report, <i>Under Layered Suspicion</i>, into a public communications package. It reached the Prime Minister, was cited by public officials, and contributed to the launch of a federal investigation.
	Head of Operations Muslims in Canada Archives, University of Toronto 2020 – present - Designed and executed the launch strategy for a new archival institution, leading the archive and operations teams and managing its budget. - Secured a \$4 million endowment from Heritage Canada, hired the founding archivist, and grew the collection past 1,000 artifacts.
	Research Officer Canada Revenue Agency 2010 – 2013 Researched strategies for improving tax compliance among small and medium-sized enterprises.
EDUCATION	MDes, Strategic Foresight & Innovation — OCAD University BCom, Marketing — University of Ottawa Human-Centred Design & Prototyping — IDEO Communications & Advertising Accredited Professional — Institute of Communication Agencies
SELECTED PROJECTS	Our Digital Native Land — a systems map of federal service digitization and what held its pace back. Banana Republic: Futures of Food Regulation in 2050 — a foresight study testing how far a sector’s present assumptions hold. Responding to Complexity with Humility — Master of Design thesis on when not to intervene in complex social systems. Innovation Excellence Award, OCAD University.
SPEAKING	<i>Role of Design in Knowledge Mobilization</i> — Canadian Knowledge Mobilization Forum (2026) <i>Humble Posture Towards Systems Change</i> — International Society for Systems Sciences (2026) <i>Humbling Design by Sensing Rhythms</i> — TEDxOCADU (2025) <i>Thinking with Time</i> — lecture in Systemic Design course, OCAD University (2024)
AFFILIATIONS	Founding Board Member, Canadian Centre for Futures Literacy (2026 – present) Vice President, International Society for Systems Sciences (2026 – present) Consultant, Societal Dynamics (2025 – present); Researcher, Systems Changes Learning Circle (2019 – present) Co-organizer & Co-host, Systems Thinking Ontario, a monthly gathering (2023 – present) Member, CSRP Institute; Systemic Design Association; Kasurian
SKILLS	Strategic foresight and scenario planning · systems mapping · innovation strategy and governance · design research · environmental scanning · stakeholder engagement · organization design · brand and marketing strategy · measurement and evaluation · bilingual (English and French)
AWARDS	Judge’s Pick, RGD Awards Canada, for the Islamic Art & Material Culture Collaborative (2022) Finalist, Emerald Real Impact Award, for <i>Under Layered Suspicion</i> (2022) Innovation Excellence Award, OCAD U, for <i>Responding to Complexity with Humility</i> (2020)