



Barriers remain for the Deaf despite better technology

by ERNA VAN BALEN

When Vinu Abraham was growing up in India, he had to write letters and wait for a response in order to communicate with others. His friends could just pick up the phone and talk to each other. Born deaf at a time when limited communication technology was available to him, Abraham is now a communications technician at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH) in Vancouver and an active member of the Deaf community.

Modern technology has changed the way people communicate with each other, and this is especially true for the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. Smartphones, Skype and Facetime offer tremendous opportunities for people who mainly communicate visually through sign language. Though technology helps, communication barriers still exist between Deaf and hearing people.

One of the biggest current challenges is to bring Video Relay Services (VRS) to Canada. VRS is a system by which a Deaf person can call a hearing person through a sign language interpreter, using a video phone. An 18-month trial of VRS ended in January 2012, but the Vancouver-based organization B.C. Video Relay Services Committee (BCVRS) is advocating for re-establishing this service for Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians.

According to Lisa Anderson-Kellett, communications officer and volunteer with the BCVRS Committee, VRS has an enormous impact on the quality of life of



▲ Vinu Abraham, a communications technician at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, with a teletypewriter.

Deaf and hard of hearing people. Like most Deaf people, Anderson-Kellett grew up in a hearing family and often felt she was the last one to find out about family news.

"Video Relay Services is a way for me to connect with my hearing family members and feel more in tune with my family," she writes.

On March 27, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the body responsible for regulating telecommunications and broadcasting, announced a public consultation on whether video relay

service should be offered. In the meantime, the Deaf will have to continue to rely on an old-fashioned piece of technology to call a hearing person: the teletypewriter (TTY). With a TTY, a Deaf or hard of hearing person can call the message relay centre and type a message, which the operator then conveys to the hearing party. Communication using a computer and the Internet, called IP Relay, is a more modern version based on the same principle.

However, VRS offers many advantages over the old TTY service. With TTY, it is impossible to

interrupt and have a smooth and natural conversation. Another disadvantage is that the first language of many Deaf people is not English, but American Sign Language (ASL), a language in its own right which has nothing to do with English or any other spoken language. Deaf people need to type information in their second language, which may not be understood as well by the hearing person at the other end.

"With the ASL interpreter, they can read the nuances of my emotion or expression, and relay that

See "Deaf Technology" page 10 >

Verbatim

Turn the page

BY LÉO NEWMAN

My bag was packed for the journey. It was a long one and at 11 years old I really couldn't comprehend the more than 11,000 kilometres we were about to travel.

"Now boarding."

I walked onto the first leg of a flight from Vancouver, Canada to Cairns, Australia. Five weeks later my family and I landed back at YVR. Everything in Vancouver was the same, except me. My passion to see the world had been ignited.

Since then I have travelled to more countries than I can count on my fingers and toes, made friends with people from various cultures and learned phrases in languages most people don't even know exist. These experiences have given me a new way of seeing my city, Vancouver.

Saint Augustine once said, "the world is a book and those who do not travel read only a page." By exploring the world beyond Vancouver we are able to see not only what makes this city beautiful, but also its blemishes.

Travelling, whether to the U.S., Morocco, Lithuania, France or Peru, provides a point of comparison. As you pile into the Parisian metro tighter than sardines into a can during the morning rush hour, you realize that many more people could fit on the Skytrain in Vancouver. Then, as you cruise along packed in tight enough to feel the pulse of the person next to you, it dawns on you that having some space wouldn't be so bad.

When abroad - and when coming home - what becomes most striking are the little things. How long you spend eating dinner, what's appropriate attire for daily life, how you resolve an issue at the bank or even what the most common topics of discussion are. None of these are fixed. The more places we go, the more pages we read, the clearer

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My Turn

SERGE CORBEIL

An ambitious idea ahead of its time

The Liberal Party of Canada's leadership race, now in its final leg, has forced the party to face the harsh reality of a fragmented Canadian electorate. This is thanks to candidate Joyce Murray, MP for Vancouver Quadra, who has used her leadership campaign to insist that it is necessary for opposition parties to cooperate in order to block the Conservative Party.

candidate. I doubt that a Liberal candidate would easily accept offering his or her place to a candidate chosen by another party. Even if Murray were to be elected Liberal leader she would have to work very hard to convince her party to accept her ways.

Her proposals in matters of democratic reform don't end there. In fact, the proposed strategic voting cooperation would

“If, following the next elections, the “progressive forces,” as [Joyce Murray] calls them, should win, a rethinking of our electoral system would be in order.

Ms. Murray's proposal has been at the center of many discussions within the party and among its supporters. Many believe that strategic voting and interparty cooperation is the only way to break the stranglehold the Conservatives have in many ridings where a vote split on the left has enabled the current government to prevail. This is, in any case, the basis for Murray's hypothesis. She is convinced that simply combining the votes for opposition parties in the many ridings where the Conservatives won by a thin margin would ensure the defeat of the Conservative team.

only be in effect for the 2015 elections. If, following the next elections, the “progressive forces,” as she calls them, should win, a rethinking of our electoral system would be in order. Murray hopes to move Canadian elections to the preferential ballot system. True, at first glance, the idea is alluring. Yet this system has demonstrated many times over that it tends to create parliaments in which a majority is harder to win, resulting in backroom deals to create coalitions. This produces weaker and less transparent governments. Take Italy, for example. Although not exclusively a preferential



▲ Joyce Murray, MP for Vancouver Quadra, calls for party and voting reform.

She proposes to allow members of the Liberal Party to choose their own riding's candidate as custom warrants but she, as leader, would reserve the right to decide whether cooperation with either the NDP or the Green Party would be the best strategy for defeating the Conservative

system, its current situation reveals the downside of preferential ballot voting.

Nevertheless, Murray proposes an ambitious program that could seriously change the way we elect MPs and, by extension, our democracy as a whole. Though the debate is largely academic, since her chances to win are slim, the proposal has clearly created two camps within the Liberal Party:

Justin Trudeau in one corner and Murray in another. This proposal is at the core of Murray's campaign. It's the challenge that

most clearly separates her from her adversaries, especially the favorite, Trudeau.

Trudeau completely rejects Murray's prized strategy, convinced that the Liberals will gain power in good time without having to deal with the diluting effects of coalitions. There is some truth to this belief. The electorate routinely gets bored of any government, whichever it may be; voters will eventually feel that it's time for a new government in Ottawa. Trudeau believes that if it is not in 2015, then it will be the next time around. He is ready to wait it out. If he becomes leader, he'll have lots of room to maneuver and will not have to face the ire of his partisans should he lose one election. ✉

Translation Monique Kroeger

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Thailand makes a splash with Songkran festival

by NATALIE MUNDY

This time of year brings about spring cleaning traditions across the Northern Hemisphere. For Thailand, the *Songkran* festival is a time when people cleanse their homes, their spirits and each other in a three-day water fight.

Austin Sakchai, born in Bangkok, has been living in Vancouver for the past seven years as owner-director of Smile Thai Wellness. He says *Songkran* is the traditional Thai New Year and officially runs from April 13 to April 15. According to Sakchai, there are now a few thousand Thais living in Vancouver, and they will be celebrating *Songkran* across the city.

"It is one of the most important festivals of the year. It's like Christmas day in the western world," says Sakchai.

Thirty-year-old Chananchita Chumphonwong was born in Thailand and moved to Vancouver four years ago. She explains that *Songkran* has many water-based traditions, and the pouring of water is symbolic of the cleansing of the spirit, mind and body.

"The water is also supposed to wash away bad luck. It is believed that doing this will bring good luck and prosperity for the New Year," says Chumphonwong.

To the largely Buddhist population of Thailand, *Songkran* is also a time for temple visits and religious rituals, says Chumphonwong. Bathing the Buddha with ritual water, both at home and at the temple, is an essential ceremony. And the cleansing doesn't stop there. *Songkran* is also seen as a day for spring cleaning.

"Many Thais take the opportunity to get their houses spic and span for the New Year," says Chumphonwong.

She says many international tourists plan their travel to coincide with the festival to join in the fun of *Songkran* water

fights. "For three solid days in the middle of the hottest month of April, the streets explode with an all out soak festival," she explains.

Sarah McNeil, a 24-year-old interior design student from Edmonton, stumbled upon the festival while travelling through Bangkok in 2008. McNeil hadn't planned to be in Thailand for the festival and began to wonder why there were so many water guns for sale at the local markets. As the celebration escalated through the week, she realized people were arming themselves for a giant water fight.

McNeil says she was in her element running through the busy streets with her squirt gun and backpack full of water. "It was one of the best experiences of my life. I felt like a kid again."

Sakchai says the festival was not always like this and has changed dramatically over time. "The festival gets crazier and crazier every year. In the past they used a cute little bowl to wash their parents or elders gently and nicely in a more respectful way," he says. "But now they use big containers, water guns or even garden hoses to soak people completely." You're guaranteed to get wet as soon



▲ Thais celebrate Songkran festival in Thailand.

as you leave your home, Sakchai says.

While some travellers like McNeil embrace the craziness,

others are not so amused, says Chumphonwong. She's grown tired of the strangers splashing in the streets and recommends

participating in the more traditional aspects of *Songkran* such as the processions, beauty contests, cultural games and religious rituals.

Luckily for Chumphonwong, she'll be free to enjoy the traditional celebrations of the festival in the much cooler climate of Vancouver where the only soaking she'll have to worry about is the possibility of rain. ☞



▲ Pouring water symbolizes the cleansing of the spirit, mind and body.



▲ A Songkran procession in Thailand.

Songkran will be celebrated at:

Yanviriyai Buddhist Temple at 2004 East Pender Street, Vancouver

Buddapanyanuntarama Buddhist Monastery at 4796 Canada Way, Burnaby

Dhammakaya International Meditation Society of B.C at 3331 Capella Place, Richmond

► "Deaf Technology" from page 1

context to my mother. Now that the [VRS] trial is over, I'm back to texting, and texting is unemotional," Anderson-Kellett explains.

This communication barrier between Deaf and hearing people does not make the Deaf a disabled group. The Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) states that deafness is medically defined by the extent of loss of functional hearing and by dependence upon visual communication. But the sociological or cultural definition of the Deaf encompasses "individuals who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on Sign language. Their

preferred mode of communication is Sign."

Abraham agrees that Deaf people are not defined by their amount of hearing loss but by their shared culture, experiences and language.

"Out in the hearing world, [people's] opinion of us is that we might be more disabled than we actually are. [...] The way that we communicate is a little bit different, but otherwise our minds are the same. It's just a lot more comfortable being able to communicate in your native language," Abraham explains through interpreter Jenn Lyon.

Abraham does not use interpreters in his work with hard of hearing and non-Deaf clients, but uses texting, writing and other

creative ways to communicate. He says that many clients first had to warm up to the situation that he was completely deaf, but that they are now comfortable communicating with him.

Interpreter Lyon, who has Deaf parents and grew up in the Deaf community, also found ways to communicate with her mother and with her Deaf friends after the VRS trial expired. She uses Facetime with her mother and her friends that have iPhones and texts with those that do not. Lyon knows that English is not their first language and she can easily decipher their text messages through her experience with the Deaf community.

Other technologies can also aid communication and are gener-

ally welcomed in the Deaf community. Skype has proven to be useful because it allows for visual communication, which is ideal for Deaf people. Many apps are available for smartphones, such as one for baby bed time stories in American Sign Language, one of the two sign languages used in Canada, the other being Langue des Signes Québécoise, or LSQ. There are also apps that teach hearing people signs and finger-spelling.

Despite the fact that Deaf people now have more options than ever before to communicate with hearing people, discrimination still exists, says Abraham. He was refused a job at one of the nation's top banks, where he was that told they could not hire him

because of communication barriers. Abraham thinks this barrier is only perceived as such in the hearing world.

"We have e-mail and we have so many different ways of using technology to our advantage. Deaf people can, and they do, learn English so that they're able to write and communicate in English to people who speak English. [But] we can't learn to hear, so hearing people need to learn to be able to communicate with us, more than we need to learn how to communicate with them," he says. ☞

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Earth Day, the carbon tax debate and the B.C. election

This year Earth Day lands in the middle of the provincial election campaign. This is good timing, given the global climate emergency and B.C.'s alarming and increasing reliance on fossil fuel exports.

Protests will be held in various locations around B.C. on April 22, along with a host of other Earth Day related activities. Other events will happen throughout the rest of the week, including an annual parade and celebration on Vancouver's Commercial Drive which will take place on Saturday, April 20. Many of these actions will focus attention on the tar sands pipelines – both Enbridge's Northern Gateway and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion proposal.

“If we actually taxed the rich at higher levels, we could afford comprehensive, free public transit systems in all major urban centres.

Both of these mega projects seek to massively expand the amount of tar sands bitumen crossing British Columbia for export and they have emerged as a major point of contention between the people of B.C. and the Big Oil-friendly Harper government in Ottawa.

The Earth Day spotlight on these issues won't help the beleaguered Christy Clark and her B.C. Liberals, who are trailing badly in the polls. But then Clark has abandoned any pretence of courting voters concerned about the environment. Instead, she's going all out on pro-business rhetoric, playing up the old

Clark did nothing to indicate she agreed with the rationale for the tax in the first place – to reduce carbon emissions in an effort to mitigate climate change. In fact, the B.C. Liberal leader's rhetoric sounds a lot like the NDP's 2009 campaign opposing the carbon tax altogether.

This time around, the NDP looks set, along with the Green Party, to play the role of defending the carbon tax. So far, NDP leader Adrian Dix hasn't announced specifics, other than to explain that he would direct carbon tax revenues towards spending on transit.

That's where this discussion should be headed. Rather than throwing the carbon tax under the bus with anti-tax rhetoric that plays perfectly into the ideological assumptions of neoliberalism, we should be throwing the carbon tax and its revenues into buses. It's time to start talking more seriously about increasing tax revenue in general, in order to aggressively fund and expand public transport.

Just as important as taxes on fossil fuels, I would argue, are general taxation levels on corporations and high income earners. A vigorous, progressive tax system is a necessary reform to curb the vast inequality that has grown in recent decades. It's also the best mechanism for generating the revenue necessary to develop a public transit infrastructure that could finally wean our society off of its destructive addiction to car culture.

If we actually taxed the rich at higher levels, we could afford comprehensive, free public transit systems in all major urban centres. Redirecting the billions of direct and indirect subsidies to fossil fuel industries towards transit and green technologies would also help.

In other words, we need to do much, much more than preserve and expand the carbon tax.



▲ Passengers board a TransLink bus.

trope of the NDP as tax-happy socialists.

This is the only explanation for the Liberals' shift on B.C.'s once-upon-a-time-much-vaunted carbon tax. Last week Clark told the media that, if re-elected, her government would freeze the tax, which is set at an already quite minimal \$30 per ton of fossil fuel.

“We believe in making life more affordable for British Columbians,” Clark recently stated. “[The NDP] aren't committed to that. We believe in lower taxes wherever we can make that happen, recognizing that government is a real problem in affordability for people.”

Systemic change to our transportation system is a necessary complement to all efforts to stop tar sands pipelines.

As Pablo Solon, the former Bolivian ambassador to the UN and a leading voice in the fight against climate change, put it recently: “To stop climate change we need to change ourselves. We need to stop thinking growth and ‘development’ and push instead for the redistribution of wealth.”

This year's Earth Day is a chance to think about changing both our provincial government and ourselves. Turfing out the B.C. Liberals is just one small step on a long journey. ✍

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Vancouver demystified

by PHOEBE YU

As Vancouver approaches its 127th anniversary and tourism season nears, it's time to re-visit stories of the city's muddled history. Some of the myths that persist today – Chinatown tunnels, public executions, blood spilling onto alleyways – stem from half-truths, misunderstandings or are just plain old urban legends.

Blood Alley Not so Bloody?

Blood Alley is an evocative name with a less evocative past. Tourist information on Vancouver suggests that Blood Alley was named for the buckets of blood spilled onto the streets by butchers that populated the area in the early 1900s. Other rumours suggest that it might have been a place where murders or public executions took place. But according to local author and civic historian John Atkin, what is now Blood Alley Square was simply an alleyway between Water Street and Cordova Street.

Atkin surmises that the misconception originated from an article in *Vancouver World*, the city's daily newspaper during Vancouver's 12th anniversary, when an old-timer drew a map of the early town. On the map, Water Street was mistakenly labeled Carrall Street, and vice versa. Atkin explains that at the time, there was a butcher named George Black at the corner of Water and Carrall Street, and so the butcher that was supposed to be located at the edge of the creek suddenly ended up on Carrall Street.

Like Atkin, tour guide Ali Butcher has never come across any record of a butcher shop in Blood Alley during his research. Butcher is part of the Tour Guys, a group that aims to show a different side of Vancouver to the public through free, interactive walking tours. He clarifies that Blood Alley is actually called Blood Alley Square, and the connected alleyway is called Trounce Alley.

Butcher explains that Blood Alley Square was part of Gastown's rebranding and revitalization in the 1970s, along with the addition of the fake cobblestones and the steam clock.

"They thought that Blood Alley sounded like a cool, folksy, Wild West name," he says.

Tunnels Under Chinatown?

Chinatown's history is rich with stories of opium dens and

gambling. Around the turn of the 20th century, police and health officials were always after the Chinese for drugs and gambling, Atkin says. However, opium was legal in Canada until 1908 and the 'gambling dens' were actually mahjong game parlours.

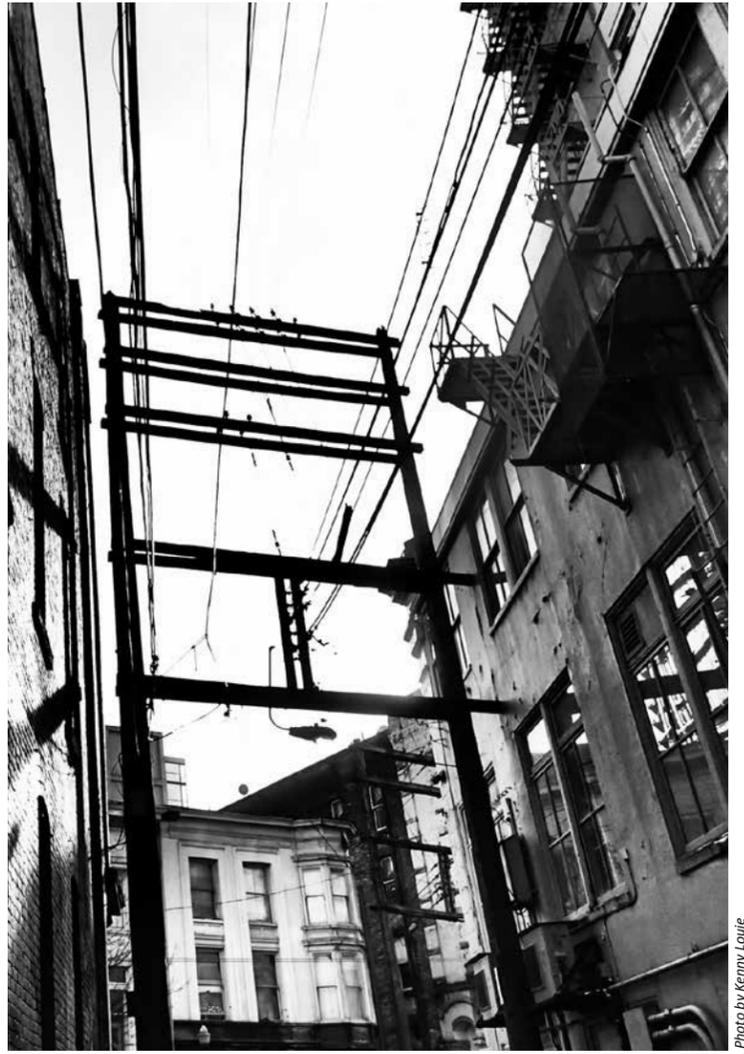
During his research, Butcher discovered that there were tunnels under the post office and separately under other buildings, but no network of tunnels running through the city. However, the basements of buildings in early Chinatown used to be connected, and Butcher speculates that this is how the tunnel rumours started. Although it is not well documented, illegal activities likely took place in the tunnels, Butcher explains. When the police showed up, the patrons would pack up their things, go downstairs and escape through the alleyways behind Pender Street, says Butcher.

Then and Now

As to why these myths persist, Butcher suspects that people like to hold on to the stories of whiskey-running and smuggling of contraband during prohibition.

"It's romantic. People like to hark back to the early Gastown days and it was a debauchorous place," he says.

Atkin stresses the importance of learning about the city's real history because it impacts what we do today. Citing the Downtown Eastside as an example,



▲ Blood Alley Square in Gastown.

Photo by Kerry Louie



▲ John Atkin, local author and civic historian.

Photo courtesy of John Atkin

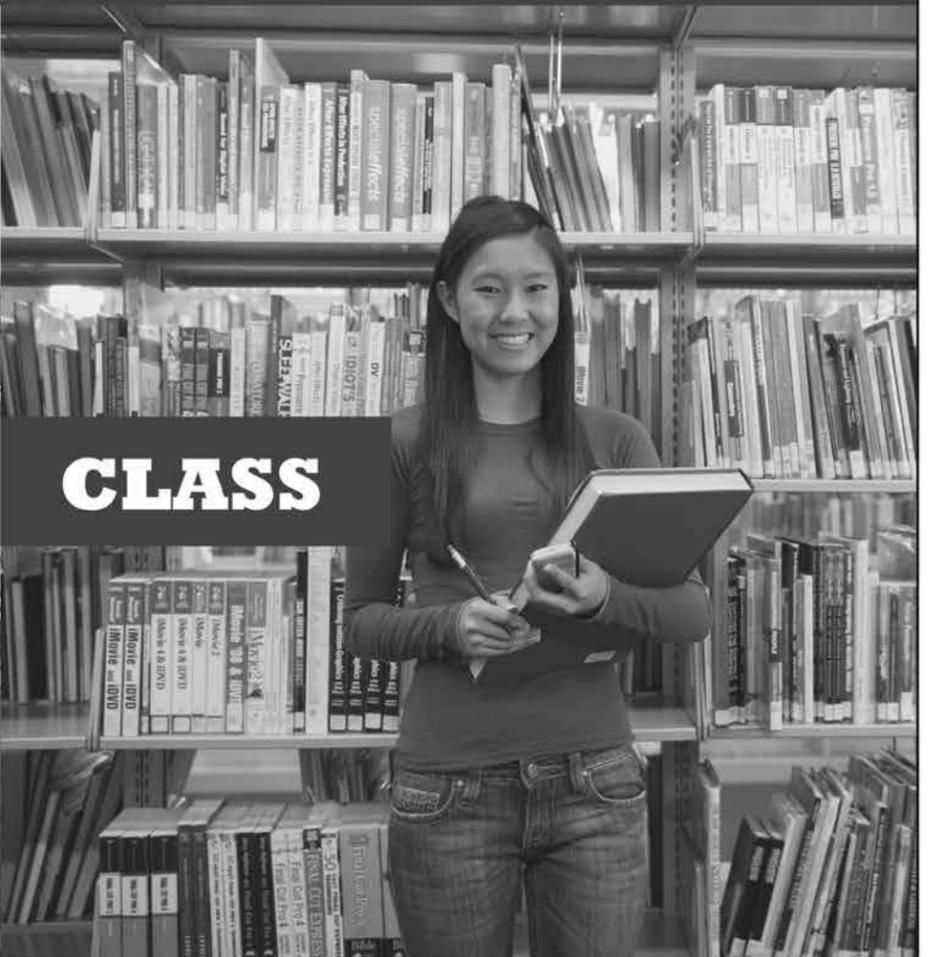
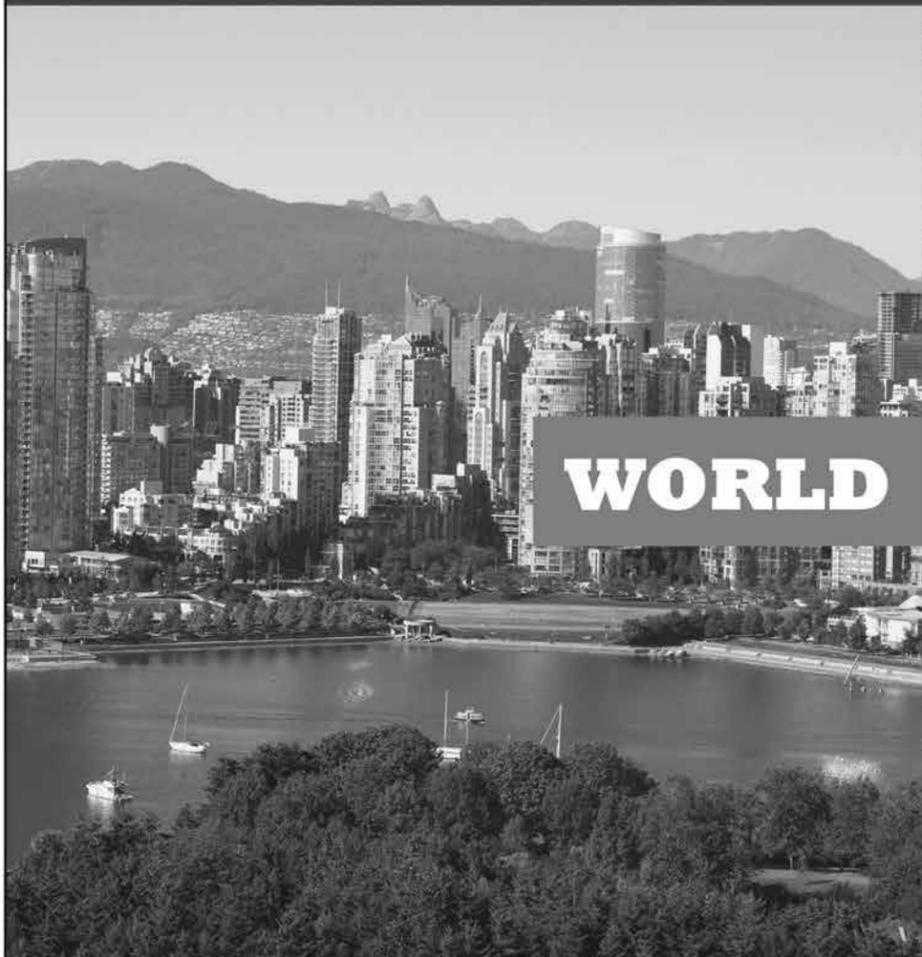
Atkin says that the current concerns about its gentrification stem from a perception that it's always been a poor neighbourhood, even though it was once a vibrant part of downtown that was associated with the resource industry.

"If you look at the development of neighborhoods, and you understand how neighborhoods

actually develop, then I think you have a better sense of how they can continue to develop," he explains.

Butcher hopes that there will be more of an interest in the city's human histories and says that some of Gastown's real history is actually more interesting than mythical butcher shops. ✍

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Vancouver boasts about the highest quality water in the world ...but does it deliver?



Photo by Tom Raftery, Flickr

by BESSIE CHOW

Despite numerous reports on the quality of Vancouver's tap water, George Chiang, 35, still prefers to boil or filter it before drinking.

"It's a cultural thing," says Chiang, who was born in Taiwan and has lived in Vancouver for over 14 years. Chiang explains that he acquired his habits from his parents, who still live in Taiwan.

The self-employed resident is well aware of the city's claims about the high quality of its drinking water.

"Our tap water is as good as it gets," says Glenn Bohn, a communication specialist with Metro Vancouver. "There is no need to boil, filter or treat it in any way.

Chiang, however, expresses concerns about impurities coming from his building's pipes.

"My building is at least 20 years old. In Taiwan, I have heard many horror stories about what gets into the water from the pipes. So I think it's better to be safe," says Chiang.

While Bohn insists that such worries are unnecessary, and that the city tests the water over 136,000 times every year from source to tap, a message from the medical health / drinking water officer in a 2011 report seems to support Chiang's concerns.

"As per standard recommended water practices, 'water from taps that are not used for several hours is good for washing or watering plants not for drinking or cooking, as it may contain elevated levels of lead or copper,'" reads a statement from the City of Burnaby's 2011 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report.

A fact sheet from Canadian Springs, one of the largest direct delivery drinking water companies in the country, further points to the presence of other potentially toxic materials in municipal water, including chlorine, rust and other man-made chemicals and pollutants that may be cause for some concern,



▲ Pins from Metro Vancouver's campaign to promote tap water.

especially among those with weaker immune systems.

According to Mengo McCall, director of business development for Canadian Springs, four out of

five police stations in Vancouver failed to meet minimum water quality standards due to high lead content deposited from the buildings' pipes.

"I drink tap water and feel good about it."

Bradley Pierik, water engineer

"I am not an alarmist," says McCall. "These are very small quantities and vary from building to building. It is just something to consider."

Water engineer and social entrepreneur Bradley Pierik offers a different perspective.

"There is a ton of business effort to get people not to trust [municipal] water, but it's nonsense," says Pierik, who suggests putting tap water in the fridge to neutralize the chlorine.

After years of research in developing countries such as Haiti, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia, Pierik designed and created a portable water purification system, which he intends to market in countries where water-borne illnesses are a major cause of death and disease. However, the system—called Tapp—will not likely be available in Canada any time soon.

Pierik explains that most Canadians living within the municipal water grid have no need for the device.

"I have studied water for years and years and worked for the biggest water corporations in the world. I drink tap water and feel good about it," says

Pierik, who currently lives in Vancouver.

McCall emphasizes that his company is not against tap water, but is in fact dependent on it. Canadian Springs is a subsidiary of Aquaterra Corporation, Inc., which also offers services in water filtration, coffee, tea and break-room supplies.

"We fully support tap water," says McCall. "The problem is that it does not go everywhere."

McCall refers to numerous warehouses, parking garages and boardrooms, which are not usually equipped with tap water facilities.

There are further inconsistencies within different water systems.

British Columbia's Ministry of Health Services counts more than 3,300 water systems under the province's jurisdiction, serving almost 90 per cent of the population. The remaining ten per cent of the population relies on a variety of public and

private systems, including 468 small First Nations water systems under federal jurisdiction. While B.C.'s water systems have generally received favourable

reviews, recent reports point to serious discrepancies in the monitoring and operation of systems from region to region, especially in First Nations communities.

According to a 2011 federal report, 154 out of 188 First Nations water systems in B.C. are categorized as having a high overall risk level of containing water-borne illnesses.

Additional concerns about the effects of nearby industrial development and other polluting activities leave Chiang preferring to err on the side of caution. Nonetheless, he expresses a general appreciation for Canada's natural abundance.

"I would prefer to drink boiled or un-boiled water in Canada over in Taiwan any day," says Chiang. ☞

For current boil water notices and water quality advisories, visit: www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/dwadvisories.html

► "Verbatim" from page 1

this becomes. It isn't that one way is better than another, but by seeing this diversity you can engage with and appreciate it more.

The beautiful thing about travelling is that it opens you up to experience diversity in a way that nothing else can, even after you return home. It's as if your sense of curiosity gets kicked into overdrive. By shattering your notion of the way the world, friendship, taxis, food, etc., works, everything can be seen anew.

Simply going away isn't enough though. As American historian Daniel J. Boorstin writes: "The traveller was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sightseeing.'" This zealous search for excitement doesn't end when you come home.

Shortly after I returned from living in Paris last year, where I spent the final year of my undergraduate degree studying international relations, I was waiting for the Seabus at Lonsdale Quay. I decided to get a slice of pizza and, while waiting for it, I asked the woman who was serving me where she was from. "Romania," she replied, "Do you know where that is?"

I did, and asked if she was from Bucharest, the capital. She was floored. I've never been there, but friends of mine have and they've all told me it's a beautiful and interesting city.

I asked her how to say thank you in Romanian: "mulțumesc." I immediately put it in my phone as a note. Now every time I get a slice of pizza there, I tell her "mulțumesc" and the smile it gets is priceless.

But I'm no saint. My traveller spirit ebbs and flows like everything else in my life. It was undoubtedly at a high point when I learned how to say thank you in Romanian. I doubt I ever would have had that conversation if I hadn't been abroad though.

People in Vancouver often brand their home as an international city. Strengthen and build this reputation, starting with yourself. Internationalize this city from the inside out. Many cities have people from around the world, but what can make a city truly international is the people who are able to connect the local with the global.

For me, by gaining international experience not only have I learned to see Vancouver in a new light, it's also opened up a new side of the city that wasn't accessible before, the international side. Whether it's speaking with someone in French, talking to someone about his or her home country or saying a couple words in the person's native tongue, it creates a sense of welcome, or so I've found.

Vancouver is a beautiful city with international character. Internationalize yourself, turn the pages of the world, as Saint Augustine would say, be Daniel J. Boorstin's traveller and engage with what our city has to offer. ☞



NOW ACCEPTING APPOINTMENTS FOR FREE TAX CLINIC FOR LOW INCOME NEW IMMIGRANTS

Burnaby, BC—Throughout March and April, MOSAIC will have free tax clinics staffed through the Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program. Service will be provided in over ten languages and will be available for low income new immigrant families and individuals. Appointments are required and can be made by calling 604 254 9626.

Eligibility: Low income individuals/families with Permanent Resident status who have been in Canada for 5 years or less and are only submitting a basic tax claim for 2012. For more details, please visit www.mosaicbc.com/tax-clinic

Service Location: MOSAIC Burnaby Office, 5902 Kingsway, Burnaby

Service Dates: March 5–April 25, Tuesdays–Thursdays

Service Languages: English, French, Arabic, Cantonese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Sinhalese, Spanish, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Tamil, Vietnamese

Contact: Appointments required. Please call 604 254 9626.

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MANITO AHBEE FESTIVAL MOVING TO AUGUST

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES CHOICE MUSIC AWARDS NOW ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS FOR 2013

The much-anticipated Manito Ahbee Festival is poised to make itself a summer staple.

The weeklong event, which brings thousands of First Nations dancers, performers and musicians from across the world together each year in Winnipeg, will take place August 16–21, 2013 – a departure from its usual November date.

"It's with great anticipation and excitement that we announce the new dates for the Manito Ahbee Festival," says Executive Director Lisa Meeches. "The change is welcome and allows us to expand on outdoor activities and programming that offer new experiences to youth, families and the thousands of visitors that come to Winnipeg each summer."

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries – a strong advocate of promoting Aboriginal arts and culture – will once again serve as Presenting Sponsor.

"Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is pleased to be the Presenting Sponsor of the Manito Ahbee Festival. We look forward to the first – ever summer celebration that will no doubt enhance the experience of the thousands of people who take part in the Manito Ahbee Festival every year," said Winston Hodgins, President and CEO of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. "Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries takes great pride in supporting our communities and celebrating the rich Aboriginal culture that is an inherent part of our province."

The Festival will return with the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, Indigenous Marketplace and Trade Show and International Competition Pow Wow at the MTS Centre. New with the summer schedule will be outdoor events at The Forks' Oodena Circle and a Cultural Camp for youth, more exciting details to be announced over the next five months.

"This is just such a time of innovation, reflection and celebration for us," says Meeches. "We can't wait to see what the summer will bring."

THE TIME TO GET INVOLVED IS NOW

With the new schedule comes new timelines, which means the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards (APCMA) submissions are now open. The APCMA celebrate the finest in Aboriginal music from across North America and beyond. Artists can submit now, with an industry vote to decide official nominees from the submissions. This will be followed by worldwide free online voting by fans to determine the winners.

Submission timelines are as follows:

Deadline for submissions: May 17

Industry voting period: May 27–June 17

Nomination announcement: June 28

Public voting: June 28–July 19

Awards: August 2013

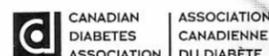
Artists can download submission entry forms at aboriginalpeopleschoice.com.

"Traditions are a big part of my culture. Unfortunately, so is diabetes."

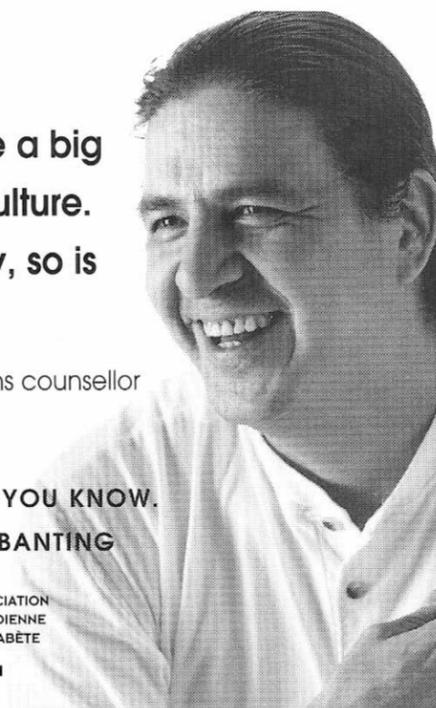
Bernie, First Nations counsellor

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Focus on Local Artist

Documentary to inspire revolution

by SARA WHITTAKER

Revolution, the documentary that sounds the alarm about humanity's present self-destructing trajectory, will open in Vancouver theaters April 12, during Earth Day celebrations.

It is the second movie of its kind churned by environmental crusader Rob Stewart, the 32-year biologist, photographer and film director who created *Sharkwater*. However, his new goal is "much bigger than *Sharkwater*", as he writes in his memoirs *Save the Humans*, published last year. Then, Stewart aimed to save the sharks from the humans, now he is set to save humans from ourselves.

other international research centres such as Stanford University in the US, Plymouth Marine Laboratory in the UK and Dalhousie University.

"The ocean is compromised in its productivity and health because it is becoming warmer and more acidic. Both warming and acidification are linked to fossil fuel combustion. The movie deals with that in some detail," explains Worm.

The format

The documentary has "a different approach," says Worm. "[Stewart] is not trying to lecture but [to] show his personal experiences, and to share them. It is



▲ Rob Stewart on a set for his film Revolution.

His vision is "To change the public's perception of the natural world so profoundly the resulting revolution saves humanity, and creates paradise on earth for us and millions of other species."

Both book and documentary warn about our impending extinction driven by our behavior: consumerism, overpopulation, depletion of natural resources, pollution. "90 per cent of the fish is gone, 75 per cent of the forest is gone. Our system will not sustain nine billion people," says Stewart.

"We are destroying our system, the very ocean life that gives us most of our oxygen. Electric cars and recycling were not enough. A revolution was needed," he said during a phone interview from his native Toronto.

The topics

"The movie documents important trends like there are less of the larger life forms [reefs, large fish]," says Dr. Boris Worm, professor of Marine Biology at Dalhousie University in Halifax. The topic is familiar to Worm, who has predicted the extinction of many large fish by 2048. The forecast was based



▲ Fish populations are threatened by fishing, global warming and pollution.

on a comprehensive study of over 55 years worth of data on fishing practices published in the journal *Science* in 2006. It involved him and members of

left to the viewers to decide how this relates to them," he says.

"I read a lot of scientific papers but I don't go in the ocean," says Dr. Andrew Weaver, professor at the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences at the University of Victoria. "There is a lot of gloom and doom, but [Stewart] makes it uplifting. He brings the change that we read about in the newspapers to the screen and makes it real," says Weaver.

The message and the audience

Fifteen countries, 4 years and one million dollars later, the final cut of *Revolution* takes viewers on a journey from the pristine waters of the South Pacific Ocean, to the barren Alberta tar sands. Here, Stewart says he found the "greatest environmental atrocities," but also "the biggest [environmental] defenders: young people fighting for government policy changes." Young people are his most important audience because "they have historically been involved, and are the ones most greatly impacted by the destruction of the environment," he said.

According to Weaver "[youth] are the ones that will live with the decisions we are making today." However, he explains that only "30 to 40 percent" vote. "We have a democracy, let's use it," says Weaver, who is a candidate in the upcoming provincial election in Victoria.

Stewart is confident his call-to-action will work, citing history and his previous success as evidence; *Sharkwater* raised public awareness about shark finning, and effected government policy to ban the practice in over 100 countries.

"When 124 million people saw *Sharkwater*, government policies changed," says Stewart.

"When Martin Luther King fought for equality in America, one million people joined the demonstrations. I want everybody to fight," he says. ✍

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Cultural Calendar

April 9–23, 2013

by PHOEBE YU

Springtime calls for some singing and dancing in the rain. That's probably why there are a few music events happening, such as the Vancouver Music Industry Awards and Electro Vaudeville Festival. Other notable events include the Celebrate Spring Festival, Nifty for Fifty Sale and the Vaisakhi Day Parade.

* * *

Secrets of the Forest: An Archaeologist Explores the North Shore

Tuesday, April 9
7 p.m.–8:45 p.m.
Burnaby Public Library,
McGill Branch
4595 Albert St., Burnaby
604-299-8955
www.bpl.bc.ca

Archaeologist Bob Muckle will talk about his findings in North Vancouver's Seymour Valley – artefacts that reveal the history of early 20th century life. Some of the discoveries he and his students made include a camera excavated from a bathhouse in a secret Japanese camp, a marijuana grow-op and a supposed Sasquatch lair. Open to the public, but seating is limited. Early arrival encouraged.

* * *

Tea: A Mirror of Soul

Tuesday, April 9
7 p.m.–9 p.m.
Vancouver Public Library
350 W. Georgia St., Vancouver
604-331-3603
www.vpl.ca

Discover the history, rituals and mythology of tea with tea experts. Focus will be on China and Japan. Open to the public, but seating is limited. Early arrival encouraged.

* * *

Vancouver Music Industry Awards

Wednesday, April 10
6:30 p.m.–10:30 p.m.
Vancouver FanClub
1050 Granville St., Vancouver
604-689-7720
www.vancouvermusicindustry.theinnerface.com

Celebrate Vancouver's music industry as the awards night spotlights local acts. Shaun Verreault of Wide Mouth Mason will be the night's entertainment. There's also a silent auction of various rock n' roll treasures and memorabilia. Tickets: regular tickets \$50, last call tickets and at the door \$60, after party \$20.

* * *

Dark Secrets of the Universe

Thursday, April 11
7 p.m.



▲ Flower blossoms at the Celebrate Spring Festival.

H.R. MacMillan Space Centre
1100 Chestnut St., Vancouver
604-738-7827
www.spacecentre.ca

As part of the Women in Science Speaker Series, Stéphanie Côté will talk about the phenomena of dark matter and dark energy that make up the universe. Côté is an astronomer and currently the group leader of the Canadian office at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria. Admission by donation.

* * *

Electro Vaudeville Festival

April 12–13
Grandview Legion
2205 Commercial Dr., Vancouver
778-989-6674
www.electrovaudevillefest.org

Old swing and jazz tunes are revamped with electronic music and modern beats. Dance to electro-swing music performed by bands from Europe and North America. There will also be cabaret and circus performers. Tickets: \$29 for Friday, \$38 for Saturday, \$50 for two-day pass. Age restriction: 17+.

* * *

Celebrate Spring Festival

Saturday, April 13
11:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Nikkei National Museum
6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby
604-777-7000
www.centre.nikkeiplace.org

Celebrate spring by the Japanese Canadian garden under the cherry blossoms while dressing up in a kimono, participating in a tea ceremony, enjoying Japanese and Korean choir performances and much more. Order your Sakura Bento lunch in advance for \$12. Event is free and open to the public.

* * *

Nifty for Fifty Sale

Sunday, April 14
11 a.m.–8 p.m.
Heritage Hall
3102 Main St., Vancouver
778-997-1944
www.ferrmelissa.wix.com/niftyforfiftysale



▲ Some of the clothing on offer at the Nifty for Fifty Sale.

Featuring over 30 Vancouver artists and indie designers under one roof. Everything from clothing and accessories to shoes and hats is \$50 or less. Admission \$1.

* * *

World Malbec Day Tasting

Monday, April 15
2 p.m.–6 p.m.
Legacy Liquor Store
1633 Manitoba St., Vancouver
604-331-7900
www.legacyliquorstore.com

World Malbec Day is celebrated on April 17 to mark the day Argentine president Domingo Sarmiento officially sought to

transform Argentina's wine industry. Malbec is a kind of purple grape used for making red wine. Enjoy some free wine tasting and empanadas. Open to the public.

* * *

Earth Day

Saturday, April 20
11 a.m.–3 p.m.
Broadway to Grandview Park
Vancouver
www.earthdayparade.ca

Join Windermere High School's Youth for Climate Justice Now for the annual Earth Day parade, starting from Commercial and Broadway and culminating at Grandview Park. There will also be speakers, musicians and performers. Open to the public.

* * *

Vaisakhi Day Parade

Saturday, April 20
9:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Gurdwara Sahib Dasmesh Darbar
12885-85 Ave., Surrey
604-724-7264
www.surreyvaisakhiparade.ca

Sikhs worldwide celebrate April 20 as a holy day, and it was also harvest time when farmers celebrated the coming of a new year. The parade starts and ends at Gurdwara Sahib Dasmesh Darbar. See website for route information. There will also be food, drink and live music. Open to the public.

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A Hidden Symbol?

© 2013 Denis Bouvier | denisbouvier.com

Off the main path along the waterfront of the Olympic Village, barely visible amidst the new spring growth, is "Canada's North Star." It's a beautiful work in stainless steel with an electropolish finish by Squamish First Nations artist Wade Baker. It was inspired by the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. At the heart of

the Canadian maple leaf design is the Coast Salish North Star, symbolizing the star one follows on a journey like striving to become an Olympic athlete and the reflecting light that shines not only from the star but from all those who strive for a higher goal. As we can read on the plaque below the sculpture, this work was meant to express respect for

First Nations culture and history by Canada in the form of the maple leaf and extend that respect by welcoming the whole world to the 2010 Olympics.

Idle No More, an indigenous grassroots movement, has formed with ideals similar to those which this sculpture represents. Its goals are to revitalize and empower First Nations peo-

ple. Their members hope through knowledge and activism to instill respect by the Canadian government for their rights. They want to shine light on Bill C-45 which they believe weakens environmental protection of their lands. The shining light of their movement, like the symbol in this work, has reached out to the world.

Let's hope the symbol repre-

sented by this work continues to stay "in the light" and inspire all who see it.

Wade Baker's sculpture can be found by walking directly towards the water from Terra Breads at Athlete's Way and Manitoba, just past the bridge and to the left facing the water.

Don Richardson



Saluti!

The Board of Directors of the Vancouver Chamber Choir invite you to join us for a festive fundraising dinner in support of the Choir's Community Outreach and Education Programs.

Savour the authentic Italian cuisine of La Piazza Dario Ristorante at the Italian Cultural Centre and enjoy participating in the silent auction.

It's an evening of allegria!

Wednesday, May 15, 2013
6:30 pm reception, silent auction
7:30 pm music, dinner, wine

La Piazza Dario Ristorante
at the Italian Cultural Centre
3075 Slocan Street, Vancouver

Tables of 6 or 8 are available

Tickets are \$135 with a tax receipt for \$75

Please reserve your tickets by May 8, 2013
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