Say “Bonjour” in Vancouver
by BETTY SHEA

The 2016 Census shows that just over 57,000 individuals in British Columbia, or roughly 1.25% of the population, speak French as their mother tongue. Yet, French language and culture is alive and well in B.C.

According to data published last month by the B.C. government, students enrolled in French immersion programs increased by about 30% over the last 10 years and now represent about 9.5% of the overall student population in the province.

For those who want to learn and practice French, Vancouver offers many opportunities ranging from French classes through local universities and colleges, to membership in cultural institutions, to French language meetups.

Foreign languages and new perspectives
Those who learn a foreign language often cite the benefits that come from gaining a different perspective. Languages have historical context and cultural emphases that expose the language student to both obvious and subtle differences in world views. By viewing the familiar through a different lens, a foreign language can also lead to a deeper understanding of one’s own language and culture.

David Varty, lawyer and Honorary Consul of Senegal, started to spend more time studying French in university.

“Learning a second language increases the understanding of one’s own first language,” he says. “It exposes an individual to another culture, different traditions and a different way of thinking.”

Knowledge of French has opened many doors for Varty, both professionally and personally. It made communicating with local Senegalese easier. It also made travelling to other French-speaking countries, such as Tunisia, Algeria, Switzerland and Luxembourg, richer and more meaningful.

For Canadians learning French is also a direct way of learning one’s own culture. Michael Huenefeld, a project management instructor, points to Canada’s official bilingualism as a reason why he makes time to sit. In a room of about 20 people, I was one of three people of colour. For the first time in my life, I felt like an outsider. I wanted to quit the program altogether within the first two weeks, not because someone had said something to me, but because I felt like I didn’t belong. I had never been a minority in my neighbourhood and now all of a sudden in that classroom, I was alone. Being in that room made me feel insecure about who I was; I looked different, I thought differently and no one could pronounce my name correctly. The lack of understanding between the collectivistic culture in which I grew up compared to the individualistic culture of my classmates made me overwhelmingly uncomfortable. I knew I had to be the one to adjust.

Growing up as an Indo-Canadian in Southeast Vancouver, I was surrounded by culture. In school, we celebrated Multicultural Day where students dressed up in traditional attire and learned about the different cultures we all came from. Because diversity was all around me, I did not feel like an outsider.

Say “Bonjour” in Vancouver
by RAMAN KANG

On the first day of my journalism class, not only was I late but I was lost. My classroom was located around a corner, tucked away, nearly impossible to find. Unfortunately for me, everyone else managed to look at me. I stared back at them scanning the room for a place to sit. In a room of about 20 people, I was one of three people of colour. For the first time in my life, I felt like an outsider. I wanted to quit the program altogether within the first two weeks, not because someone had said something to me, but because I felt like I didn’t belong. I had never been a minority in my neighbourhood and now all of a sudden in that classroom, I was alone. Being in that room made me feel insecure about who I was; I looked different, I thought differently and no one could pronounce my name correctly. The lack of understanding between the collectivistic culture in which I grew up compared to the individualistic culture of my classmates made me overwhelmingly uncomfortable. I knew I had to be the one to adjust.

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The Ukrainian side of Canada

by COLLEEN ADISON

Libby Griffin has a story to tell about her Ukrainian heritage, and she hopes all Canadians will listen.

Ukrainian settlers helped make Canada the place we know today, says Griffin, who has long been involved with Ukrainian communities in Vancouver and in her small hometown of Voland, near Peace River, Alberta. But little is known about what the Ukrainians did.

“They opened up the West,” says Griffin, a longtime member of Vancouver’s Ukrainian Culture Centre. “They were unprepared.

“Muskog and mosquitoes

“My talk is general but it also focuses on my experiences as a first generation Ukrainian-Canadian growing up in Northern Alberta,” says Griffin, explaining that her grandparents were members of both the first and second waves of Ukrainian immigration.

“The Ukrainians were always under someone or other. My paternal grandparents’ passport said Austria, and my maternal grandparents’ passport said Poland, and they were Ukrainians.”

Driven by occupation and impelled by promises of a new land, Ukrainians came to Canada.

“There was nothing. There was muskeg and mosquitoes and swamp and muskeg. They literally cleared the land with their hands. It wasn’t an easy life,” she says.

Griffin also points out that many of these early settlers were unprepared.

“The women always brought their seeds to plant their gardens,” she says. “Otherwise they came with maybe an axe. Many of them would have perished if it weren’t for the First Nations people who helped many of them, brought them food. Some First Nations even stayed with the Ukrainians.”

Settling in towns was difficult for the Ukrainians as well.

“The women were, for the most part, illiterate. There was huge discrimination against the Ukrainians. Many Ukrainians changed their name to enable them to get jobs. There are so many examples of Ukrainians who couldn’t get jobs,” Griffin says.

But the Ukrainians survived, and many prospered. Griffin points out that the language developed in her home town, populated mostly by Ukrainians, was their own, a true immigrant language.

“You took English words and put Ukrainian endings on them. The Ukrainians thought we were speaking English, and we thought we were speaking Ukrainian. It was language we made up,” she says, laughing.

A better country

Nowadays, Griffin is a retired elementary school teacher.

“I taught music and Grades 2 and 3. You put music anywhere on your resume and that’s what you’re going to end up doing,” she laughs.

Griffin is now a key figure at the Ukrainian Culture Centre where she sings in the choir.

“It’s such an interesting mix of people,” she comments. “We have Ukrainian ladies who’ve come to join their families, those of us who speak the language and were born here and then we have people from the community who aren’t Ukrainian at all, and they sing the Ukrainian songs phonetically.”

Music and her Ukrainian culture are the highlights of her life.

“Everything adds to the mosaic of Canada. If you appreciate your culture and you share it, it makes for a better country, a better world,” says Griffin.

For more information, please visit www.auvcanada.ca.

The Ukrainian side of Canada
Islamic Centre opens doors to a journey into Islam

by OZLEM SULEYMAN

The youth of Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre in Richmond is organizing an event called ‘A Journey into Islam’, to showcase Islam through interactive exhibits, guided tours of the centre and ethnic dinner. Sahir Moosvi, a data scientist and the organizer of the open house, aims to demystify Islam by reaching out to other people.

“THERE are a lot of mysteries and misconceptions about Islam,” says Moosvi. “Muslims can lead good lives and be good neighbours too. We can answer questions in a non-confrontational way in a very relaxing environment.”

Dinner and discussion

The event is divided into two parts. The first part includes a dinner to have small talks and build relationships. The second part is the exhibits section: high-impact exhibits, guided tours of the centre and an ethnic dinner. Sahir Moosvi, the organizer of the open house, aims to demystify Islam by reaching out to other people.

Zaidi says Islamic centres are established only in the Western world to have lesser restrictions and carry out various religious and cultural activities while preserving the sacredness of mosques, which are used for worshipping purposes only. Az-Zahra Islamic Centre is an “extension of a mosque.”

“A mosque is only for worshipping obligations or collective praying,” he explains. “Other cultural and social activities are not encouraged in a mosque.”

According to Moosvi the Islamic Centre helps new immigrants in Vancouver by providing many features such as cultural and political circumstances. Subsequently, there is a need to understand the universal message of the Quran.

Az-Zahra Islamic Centre is one of the “Ithna ashari” or “Twelve” denominations, which is the largest branch of Shia, one of the main branches of Islam. Zaidi explains that the “Ithna ashari” has very strong academic grounds and history. It also has a lot of common grounds such as prayers, fasting, hajj, zakat and the principle beliefs with Sunni, the other main branch in Islam.

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**A celebration of Nowruz**

**by Vinh Nguyen**

In celebration of cultural diversity in Canada, Coquitlam Public Library will be holding a crafting event for families on Mar. 10, 2018 at the City Centre branch. The event, Persian New Year Family Craft Program, will have fun activities all while promoting cultural learning.

Aiding the search for more information on Nowruz, Parsa Kiani, 4th year SFU Psychology student, explains what Nowruz is all about and what the celebration means to him as an Iranian living in Vancouver.

**Persian New Year**

The word Nowruz is the combination of new and ruz, according to Kiani: new meaning new in Farsi, and ruz meaning day. The two words combined, Nowruz is interpreted as the new day, explains Kiani.

“This is a very fitting name as the precise beginning of Persian New Year takes places when the season changes from winter to spring on the vernal equinox [March 20 or March 21],” he says.

Nowruz celebrations usually take place on either March 20th or March 21st, according to Kiani. He says it is the time of year when friends and families gather; everyone visits each other’s houses and enjoys delicious meals together.

“One of the most prominent celebrations during Nowruz is Chahar Shanbe Souri,” says Kiani. “It is the fire jumping tradition that happens on the last Wednesday of the year, when people gather and light a small bonfire and jump over the flames. This is an ancient tradition that also has been the very essence of our culture,” says Kiani enthusiastically.

Kiani reveals that sometimes the exact time of the new year will be very late at night, and that so many actually end up going to sleep instead of staying up.

Delaram Hoorfar, VP External of the SFU Iranian club, adds her perspective to the story of Nowruz.

“When the new year time comes, we all kiss each other and congratulate each other, wishing each other a good year,” Hoorfar says. “It is also believed that we are supposed to let go of all the differences, problems and grudges, to forgive each other and make up with enemies and lost friends – to start the year fresh, with love and kindness.”

Hoorfar also enjoys Nowruz traditions in her home as well.

“No matter what time the new year starts, my family gathers around the table about an hour before, all dressed up and happy, praying or watching Persian Nowruz shows with traditional Persian dances, poetry, music, etc,” says Hoorfar. “The elders are supposed to give the younger ones some money or candies, called eidi, and many Persians, such as my family, put some money between the pages of a Quran and the youngsters take some from it, as it is believed that it will bring more money in the year ahead.”

**The Vancouver Persian community**

Also a participant in the SFU Iranian club, Kiani is proud to showcase what the club has achieved.

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Delaram Hoorfar, VP External of the SFU Iranian club

"As the largest Iranian association in Simon Fraser University, we are proud to announce that for the last three years we have held and organized our signature Nowruz gala,” says Kiani. “During our [previous] sold out events, live traditional Iranian music and dance, a photo booth with Haftsin table, and Shahnami Khani are a few things that we have going on.”

Reflecting on the Iranian community, Kiani says that North Vancouver is home to a large portion of this community.

“You can definitely learn a lot about us by trying some Persian cuisine at a restaurant on Lougheed Avenue” exclaims Kiani.

For more information, please visit www.coqlibrary.ca/programs-events/children.
When worlds collide... virtually
by VICTOR VAN DER MERWE

The Vancouver International Women in Film Festival (VWF) will be giving the public a chance to experience Tidal Traces, a four-frame 360-video VR dance piece co-created by film director Nancy Lee and choreographer Emmalena Fredriksson. This virtual reality work places viewers in the centre of the performance. In it, three characters, played by Riianne Svelnis and Lexi Vajda, explore a new and uncertain world moving between tranquility and ominous beauty and peril. The collaboration between the two artists, with the support of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), is a pioneering step in the Virtual Reality Entertainment genre and is one of the presentations worth a look at the festival.

Putting on Google head gear and headphones, the viewer is instantaneously somewhere else. It may have been filmed in the intertidal mudflats of Boundary Bay Regional Park, but with the amazing music and ghostly dance figures the viewer is transported to the mystical vision of Lee and Fredriksson.

The challenges started right away with naming the piece.

“We had a roundtable at the NFB when both tide and light were right. It felt like we had all these flying parts that we had to tie down. The (camera) rig had to be sorted, the tide had to be sorted and the light had to be right,” says Lee. “The dancers’ responsibility were quite different,” says Fredriksson. “They had to negotiate both the desire to be good dancers and what their bodies can do in that environment. A lot of the dance stuff became about problem solving because the hardness of the sand would change. On one day’s rehearsal the terrain would be one way and then the next it would change.”

The challenges kept coming during post production. While Lee was looking at the composition, Fredriksson made sure the dance standard was respected. He had to happen without making too many cuts as to keep the piece flowing as much as possible.

Lee took most of the technical challenges upon herself, and Fredriksson the choreography, the creative vision was a collaborative one. In the end both artists hope that the piece is one that lives up to the experience of the new medium.

For more information, please visit www.womeninfilm.ca.

About Tidal Traces

“With Tidal Traces we hope the viewer will have a 360 VR dance experience that makes them feel and think beyond the technology,” says Lee. “We wanted to create an art piece that would challenge the medium and create a form for the viewer. Our aim was to create an immersive environment, in which the viewer feels empowered to explore and be with their own relationship to the 360 VR medium, the dance, the site and the sound. Perhaps a poetic, meditative and curious experience.” (Joint statement from Nancy Lee and Emmalena Fredriksson).

Dancers Zahra Shahab, Riianne Svelnis and Lexi Vajda.

DocuAsia Forum looks at the African diaspora
by ALISSON MCGRANE

Taking a leap into another perspective, the organizers of DocuAsia Forum offer viewers a special chance to see documentary film Les Sauteurs (Those Who Jump) on March 10, 2018 at SFU Harbour Centre.

The Cinevolution Media Arts Society is responsible for programming the twice-annual DocuAsia Forum. Their 2017 spring edition will follow a theme of displacement by showing documentary films that put the focus on sensitive and relevant social issues concerning contemporary Asia.

A wider conversation

This spring, Cinevolution is taking a look outside Asia to consider reflections of relevant social issues, set in Northern Morocco. Originally founded by a group of Pan Asian filmmakers, artists and community organizers, Cinevolution is now locally focused on identity politics and, increasingly, grappling with the theme of gender. Its team and board consists mainly of women who are acutely aware of these issues and challenges.

Parallels between Chinese and African diasporas

In February 2017, Chang and her team at Cinevolution attended the forum for people of African descent at the Orpheum Annex in downtown Vancouver.

“It was cool to hear the speakers talk about diaspora – the history of slavery and oppression and forced extraction from their homes. It made us reflect on how the African diaspora is different or similar to the Chinese diaspora. We are interested in diaspora – for our artistic projects – the technology’. We wanted to use intercultural engagement to reach out – being forced out of your home by war is different than choosing to come to a new country as a skilled immigrant,” says Chang. “Les Sauteurs (Those Who Jump) also brings up fascinating questions about borders, militarism... it is a great film.”

Exploring issues through various approaches

DocuAsia Forum works in partnership with the City of Richmond, SFU’s David Lam Centre, KPU’s Asian Studies Department and Centre A. Its format includes a showing of the documentary film followed by a panel discussion. The panel will include representation from an academic perspective, from community-based organizers and from the filmmaker (or a local artist).

“We provide a venue (often at the Richmond campus, but not always), and provide refreshments and speakers who help guide a discussion on the issues the film raises. Depending on the film and a number of other factors, we sometimes have a large contingent of students in attendance as well,” says Robert Menzies, chair of the Asian Studies Program at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and frequent Cinevolution collaborator.

For 2018, Chang notes that the theme of displacement follows from the 2014 theme of “Syria Speaks” which grabbed media attention on the refugee crisis and fed conversation about refugees in Canada.

“At DocuAsia Forum, we want to talk about refugees and their issues in Vancouver, and how that relates to/reflects the world more globally. There is a local connection from these global films to how displacement is happening in this country [there was displacement of indigenous people in Canada by the settler],” says Chang. “We focus on intercultural understanding and communication plus fostering understanding of media in the community,” says Yun-Joo Chang, Vice-President of Cinevolution.

For more information about Les Sauteurs (Those Who Jump) and DocuAsia, please visit www.cinevolutionmedia.com.
Where math, nature, disability and spirituality intersect

By Harpaull Gill

Sequence, a play written by Canadian ophthalmologist and actor, Harpaull Gill, takes on La vraie vie, explores the age-old philosophical tension between free will and determinism.

Performed by the Realwheels Theatre Troupe, the play runs March 14–24, at the Presentation Centre, Theatre for the underrepresented.

Vancouver-based non-profit theatre company The Real wheels Theatre Troupe seeks to bring actors with disabilities together in a non-judgemental and welcoming environment that is accessible to all. Their goal is to change people’s conception and understanding of what it means to have a disability.

“We don’t ask people what their disabilities are, but we ask what sort of accommodations they need. For example, we plan re-occurring periods of time deal with what discomforts issues, and provide ASL interpreters as well as personal care attendants for some of our performers,” says Rena Cohen, the play’s director.

Cohen says that this was what really attracted her to this theatre troupe, and in 2009 she decided to join them as managing director. Although she didn’t have a lot of experience working with people with disabilities, she was inspired by the actions of Realwheels’ managing producer and co-founder James Saunders. She was impressed with his vision and compassion about working with people with disabilities, and that Realwheels could fill an important niche by meeting the needs of a group of people that were and remain under-represented.

“The most rewarding aspect of my work is seeing the theatre’s positive impact on the cast and audience members,” says Cohen.

Theatre as therapy… and profession

Cohen believes that identity politics and self-identification have become more important in the last few years. Two of the performers in Sequence self-identify as having a disability and two do not.

One cast member, Jake Anthony, who self-identifies as a person with a disability, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at an early age. As is typical for people with A.S.D., Anthony found it very difficult to socialize with others and to understand communication, especially non-verbal communication.

“Before I started acting I had a hard time even looking people in the eye… through acting you become an expert on human emotions,” he says. “What started off as a life tool became something that I loved.”

Anthony’s parents enrolled him in a theatre program with the City of Burnaby with the aim of improving his reciprocal communication. He soon discovered that he enjoyed and had a talent for the theatre, and it wasn’t long before his hobby and his therapy became his profession. His first acting gig was The Heirs of Eros of Arrows at the age of 15, and he hasn’t looked back since.

“A lot of people often ask me if I get afraid onstage. Sometimes I find that I’m actually more comfortable on stage than I am in real life situations. Sometimes it’s nice for me to be able to escape and be somebody else for a few hours,” he says.

Although Realwheels represents an important step towards greater inclusion, Cohen and Anthony still believe that there is a lot of work that still needs to be done on the larger societal level. They feel that while the voices of people with exceptionalities are thoughtful and considerate, they aren’t always heard and that people often focus on what a person with a disability can’t do as opposed to what they can do.

“Realwheels looks at people based on their abilities and works with them,” says Anthony. E

For more information, please visit www.realwheels.ca.

French in Vancouver? from page 1

to practice French. “French language and culture are an integral part of Canadian history and culture. It is one of the reasons why French is important to me,” he says.

Language and culture

For those looking to learn French, local universities and colleges, such as UBC Extended Learning, offer language classes from beginner to advanced levels. Another way to learn French more effectively is by taking an interest in French cultural events happening around the city. Huene, a native speaker of English and Spanish, started to study French at the age of 14. “French language and culture go hand in hand – each helps us understand the other,” he says.

“In my case, as a boy I started to become interested in one essential aspect of French culture – history. This helped motivate me to study French language later.”

Hélène Creusot, event coordinator at Alliance Francaise de Vancouver (AFV), believes that learning a foreign culture is part and parcel of learning a foreign language.

“I don’t see how you can learn a language without learning about a culture,” says Creusot. “Even if you look in detail at the words, every word in French or in another language has a history and a culture. When you learn about the culture it’s easier to learn the language.”

Creusot emphasizes that the culture promoted by AFV is diverse.

“French culture is not only from France,” says Creusot. “We have Celebrate Africa [in February], it’s the largest continent where we speak French. We work a lot with French-Canadian associations. The exhibition in March [Gabriel Martins: Rues de Montréal] is about the streets of Montreal. It’s Francophonie culture.”

Canada is a member of La Francophonie, an organization made up of 84 states and governments using French as a common language. AFV is celebrating International Francophonie Day throughout the month of March with various events including a concert by two Swiss artists.

Social aspects of language learning

Vancouver offers many opportunities to practice French in a social setting. For example, AFV hosts about 60 events each year that are open to the general public. There are also many meetups where participants can find others who want to practice French.

Varty has been organizing French-speaking events for 15 years and currently hosts a weekly breakfast meetup for French speakers of all levels. Any language will wither if not spoken regularly,” he says. “Getting together once a week gives participants an opportunity to speak. The added benefits that come from the meetups are camaraderie and friendships.”

AFV also tries to introduce French speakers of all levels.

“Most of our events are bilingual,” explains Creusot. “The movies in Movie Club always have English subtitles. At the Apéro, we have some people who don’t speak French. We have beginner students who come and they can say ‘Bonjour’ and after that they switch to English.”

The Apéro is a French tradition of having a drink and snacks after work and before dinner. It is a social event where people can relax and talk about their day. Creusot tries to introduce a different theme for each Apéro. Usually there is a theme such as galette des rois, a pastry traditionally eaten at Epiphany, a Christian feast day. February’s theme was crêpes in recognition of Candlemas, a Christian festival. She likes events like the Apéro because it brings together regulars and newcomers.

“We have students, members and new people coming who have heard about the event and are curious and want to know more and to meet new people,” says Creusot. “It’s really fun. What you can expect from coming to one of these Apérons is meeting a lot of people from different countries, who speak different languages, are different ages, and have different levels of French.”

For more information, please visit www.alliancefrancaise.ca.

To participate in a French language Meetup, visit www.meetup.com/Vancouver-French-Meetup.

Design a fantastic resume and cover letter, fine-tune your interview techniques, learn valuable skills to succeed in the Canadian workplace. For insight into the job market, access special career-related articles. All at NO COST. The Progressive inter-cultural Community Services (PICS) Society, Vancouver Branch, has been helping immigrants and newcomers to Canada for over 14 years.

Our Group Job Search Workshops are 4 x 2 hours, 5 module rotating program, running weekly, with 16 sessions each month. This includes basic computer orientation, with instruction on using Word and Excel, and accessing the Internet. Workshops are held within a culturally diverse environment, led by qualified facilitators. Past and current EI recipients are always welcome. Knowledgeable case managers are available to guide you through the process of reaching your career goals.

PICS Vancouver also offers one-on-one employment assistance, paid on-the-job work experience through our Wages Subsidy program, and one-stop Career Centre with a broad range of job hunting resources. Funding for all programs is provided by the Ministry of Social Development and Social Services Division.

Please call 604-324-7733, go to www.pics.bc.ca, or visit us at 200-8161 Main St., Vancouver, to find out how we can best help you.
The Lady of the Bead

BY SIMON WILLIAMS IM

An empty canvas is one of great potential. Bead Bai and Home Between Crossings are the first historical novels in an ongoing trilogy being written by Kenyan-born Canadian ethnographer and writer, Sultan Somjee. The writer has spent nearly a decade working on his trilogy, which takes the reader on a journey from the drought-stricken fields of India, shantytowns of Africa to ends in Vancouver, Canada.

Somjee made his move to Canada back in 2003. During his time here, he has been actively researching the experiences of those who fell into experiences akin to himself, his family and particularly his mother. The writer jokes that his unemployment and job hunting pushed him towards the pen and paper.

A story needing to be told

The first two novels explore the bead trade between East African Indians and local Kenyan tribes in the 1900s. The bead merchants were mostly the Khojas, an Indian trading caste. But it was largely the women who did the work, handling, displaying and-trading in beads. Therefore, the first book was titled Bead Bai, the equivalent of “Lady of the Bead.”

For newcomers to Canada, the ability to experience an empty canvas and to create something fresh would be a similar experience to that of Sakina. It’s like arriving in Canada after years of stresses and strains, good times and bad and embracing beauty in other cultures hitherto unknown to them.

“I think it’s also important to keep things from the old country and tell stories about them. My books are about stories from things in the old country,” Somjee says. For more information, please visit www.banyen.com/events/bead-bai.

For the immigrant artist, the immigration experience is much easier when he or she is open to appreciate art from other cultures. Sultan Somjee, author of Bead Bai, says researching, stories and evidence that formed part of an exhibition titled Asian-African Heritage in East Africa curated by Somjee, included ethnographic evidence, they combined to enhance the book’s sense of realism. The story embodies Maasai beadwork and focuses on intercultural transcendence through art.

“The Khojas, influenced by Sufi peers (spiritual leaders) from the 15th century, have a leaning towards Islam,” says Somjee. Somjee adds that history has not acknowledged the women who helped to develop the bead trade and influenced African aesthetics.

“This is a story that needed to be told,” Somjee says. “In trading communities, generally, we hear only the stories of the men because they are supposed to deliver commerce, or simply said, to earn a living, becomes a woman who faces many challenges but she finds comfort in her art. Research, stories and evidence that formed part of an exhibition titled Asian African Heritage in East Africa curated by Somjee, included ethnographic evidence, they combined to enhance the book’s sense of realism. The story embodies Maasai beadwork and focuses on intercultural transcendence through art.

“For the immigrant artist, the immigration experience is much easier when he or she is open to appreciate art from other cultures,” said Somjee. The immigrant’s “empty canvas”

For newcomers to Canada, the ability to experience an empty canvas and to create something fresh would be a similar experience to that of Sakina. It's like arriving in Canada after years of stresses and strains, good times and bad.
Whenever Laakkuluk Wil- liamson Bathory prepares for a performance, she challenges herself to put on a different mask — made of black grease paint mixed with red.

Like her mask, which is based on a traditional Greenlandic Inuit dance mask known as uajaerneq, used in rituals performed during the cold winter months, the audience can expect a completely new performance as it is entirely improvised. Williamson Bathory will perform with Tanya Tagaq, a critically-acclaimed throat singer, at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts Mar. 13-16 as part of the Beyond Words series.

"It's going to be a crazy ride. It always is between the two of us. It's going to be special because it's in a very special place. We'll be able to concentrate on what we do in a way that I think the audience will really absorb well," says Williamson Bathory, who is also a published academic, poet, and an outspoken advocate for creative spaces, gender equality, and an indigenous political voice.

Ancestral Inuit gift

Williamson Bathory says their performance offers a large spectrum of extremes: something exceedingly frightening to something exceedingly funny; something very sexual to something very sweet and innocent. Or both or all of it, she adds. "Our Inuit ancestors have given us that gift of being able to be the extremes in life and it's also through experiences in life that have allowed us to perform these things on stage," says Williamson Bathory, who is originally from Saskatoon, Sask. and is now based in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

Williamson Bathory doesn't take her performances for granted. "It's such an honour to be able to be in this realm where people will take all sorts of different perspectives on what they see and experience and hear. It's truly an honour to be able to do that as an artist, an Inuit, as a woman, as a friend and collaborator. It's a beautiful experience for me," she says.

MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S GROUP

English Conversation Circle for Persian-Speaking Women

Join this free conversation circle for women to improve your English. Persian-speaking volunteer assistants provide support to Persian-speaking women of all English levels. Topics are relevant to everyday life and are chosen by the group.

Tuesdays, March 20 & 27, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Burnaby
Tel: 604 254 9626 ext 1021
For more information, please visit www.mosaicbc.org

SENIORS CLUB ACTIVITIES

Activities at MOSAIC 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

Knitting Circle
When: Tuesdays, March 20, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Activities at Brentwood Community Resource Centre, 2055 Rossler Avenue, Burnaby

English Conversation Circle
When: Fridays, March 16, 10:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Wai Daeng Gong
When: Fridays, March 16 & 23, 9:00 am – 10:00 am
Tai Chi
When: Fridays, March 16 & 23, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Contact: Elenie 604 293 3907 or echoch@mosaicbc.org
Jennifer 604 254 9626 ext 1157 or jplff@mosaicbc.org

MOSAIC is a multilingual non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

Artists use improvisation to create unique performances

by Florence Hwang

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For more information, please visit www.chancentre.com.

"The Source"

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Tanya Tagaq.

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Charting new musical territory

By CURTIS SEUFERT

Densabi takes the stage at Visual Space on March 10, bringing their improvisatory blend of traditional Japanese instruments and ambient electronic music. The electro-acoustic musical approach of the trio, composed of Alcvin Ramos, Bernie Arai and Chris Gestrin, centres around the beauty of impermanence and decay.

"Each performance is never the same. We never know what will manifest until it happens, which is very exciting, I feel! It comes and goes instantaneously like a fleeting thought," says Ramos.

Densabi is sure to chart new musical territory with each performance.

"Personally I like the idea of degeneration and decay as a guiding principle for making sounds in this band," says Ramos.

The term ‘Sabi’ is also incorporated into the term ‘wabi-sabi,’ a Japanese aesthetic concept that translates roughly to ‘beauty of imperfection,’ a concept which Ramos says he appreciates the lengthy musical experience and aptitude, a strong element of the sonic course, guided by the aesthetic principles of wabi-sabi, that allows the group to explore different sounds and musical paths.

"The fact that we play instruments that range from ancient (shakuhachi) to obsolete or outdated (‘80s video game systems) to contemporary (lap-top) relates [to wabi-sabi]. Personally I like the idea of degeneration and decay as a guiding principle for making sounds in this band," says Ramos.

With such abstract yet tangible musical goals, and the musical experience and experimental drive to achieve them, Densabi is sure to chart new musical territory with each new performance to come.£

For more on Densabi, visit www.densabi.com.

Photo courtesy of Densabi
March 6–20, 2018

by Simon Yee

You might have heard the saying, “be lovere the Iedes of March,” somewhere before. This ominous expression comes from William Shakespeare’s play Julius Caesar, where a fortune teller warns the Roman consul that something bad will happen in the middle of the month of March, which the Romans called the Iedes of the month. Well, just because something bad happened to Julius Caesar on March 15 (FYI he was murdered in the Roman Senate), doesn’t mean something bad will happen to you! Go out there and enjoy the many cultural events happening on the Iedes of March!

Cultural Calendar

Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa
Feb. 22–April 21
grantgallery, vancouver
www.grant.ca

The grant gallery will host a solo exhibition by Guatemalan-Canadian artist Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa. Working in drawing, performance, sculpture and video, Ramirez-Figueroa explores the entanglement of history and memory and how women have filled at least three of the key creative roles, be it writer, director, producer, cinematographer, lead performer, editor or composer. Films range from abstract cinema and bits-of-film fiction and theatre, he reframes historical events and protagonists. The exhibit Requiem for Mirrors and Tigers marks the artist’s first solo presentation in Vancouver since he left the city to pursue an international art education and career.

Vancouver International Women in Film Festival
March 8–11
Vancity Theatre, Vancouver
www.womeninfilm.ca

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, the Vancity Theatre will be hosting the International Women in Film Festival for the 13th time from March 6 to 11. In each of these extraordinary films from around the globe, women have filled at least three of the key creative roles, be it writer, director, producer, cinematographer, lead performer, editor or composer. Films range from abstract cinema and bits-of-film fiction and theatre, he reframes historical events and protagonists. The exhibit Requiem for Mirrors and Tigers marks the artist’s first solo presentation in Vancouver since he left the city to pursue an international art education and career.

Lila Downs
March 12, 8 p.m.
Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at UBC, University Endowment Lands
www.chancentre.com

The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts will welcome back Mexican-American vocalist Lila Downs, who will share her eclectic and vibrant blend of boleros, jazz, rock, and blues and more on March 10 at 8 p.m. With proud Indigenous roots and a powerful social conscience, Downs last year released her tenth studio album, Salón Lágrimas y Deseo. This collection of works honouring iconic Latin American women won the 2017 Latin Grammy for ‘Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album’. Chan Centre audiences will be among the first to hear this empowering and uplifting anthem live. For tickets and more information, please check the website.

Vancouver Chinese Garden
March 9, 11 a.m–5 p.m.
Vancouver Chinese Garden
vancouverchinesegarden.com

Visit the Vancouver Chinese Garden on March 9. For more information, please check the garden’s website.

Lágrimas y Deseo
March 15–17
Various venues in Vancouver
www.celticfestivalvancouver.com

Celebrate the Iedes of March with the Irish at CelticFest. Although the festival won’t be having a Saint Patrick’s Day parade this year, there will be several performances happening, including an Irish Séisiún, a Celtic Fest Ceilidh and the Welsh Men’s choir: There will also be Irish themed parties at the Blarney stone both for whole family and for adults-only! For more information, please visit the CelticFest vancouver website.

I Lost My Husband
March 15–24
Gateway Theatre, Richmond
www.gatewaytheatre.com

The Gateway Theatre in Richmond will be producing an English-language production of French Canadian Catherine Léger’s comedy I Lost My Husband, a wickedly funny play about an aging party girl and her dreams of independence. Evelyn loses her husband in a bar bet. The thing is, she’s not entirely sure she wants him back. A smart, feisty, subversive comedy about the important things in life: love, freedom, karaoke... and never letting frozen yogurt stand in the way of your dreams. Check out the theatre’s website for tickets and showtimes.

Arthur Miller’s The Crucible
March 15–21
Frederic Wood Theatre at UBC, University Endowment Lands
www.theatrefilm.ubc.ca

This March, the Frederic Wood Theatre will be the venue for an adaptation of Arthur Miller’s The Crucible, a timeless parable of morality, a scorching indictment of intolerance and a central work in the canon of American drama. In a tight-knit Puritan town, a group of girls discover dancing in the woods and then immediately fall ill, causing panic to pervade. But experts are brought to light, and scapegoating leads to treachery and betrayal. Performances will be on Wednesday – Saturday with a preview on March 14, an Opening Night Reception on March 15 and Post-Show Talkback on March 21.

Culture at the Centre
March 18–Oct. 8
Musée des beaux-arts, University Endowment Lands
www.mba.ubc.ca

The Museum of Anthropology will present their first-ever collaboration between six First Nations communities with the illuminating new exhibition Culture at the Centre, on display from March 18 to October 8. Coordinated by curators Jill Baird and Pam Brown, the collective effort between the Musqueam, Squamish, Lil’wat, Heiltsuk, Haida and Halq’ewenit nations offers insight into the significant and innovative cultural work taking place in five Indigenous-run cultural centres and museums in B.C. to support their language, culture and history. Covering a wide geographic expanse, from what is now Vancouver to the Nass River Valley, this is the first time the participating communities will come together to curate an exhibition and showcase their diverse cultures in one space.

* * *

Special Author Talk: Jan Wong
March 9, 2 p.m.
Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, Vancouver
vancouverchinesegarden.com

Jan Wong knows food is better when shared, so when she set out to write a book about her lifelong love of food in France, Italy and China, she asked her 22-year-old son, Sam, to join her. On their journey, Jan and Sam lived and cooked with locals, seeing firsthand how globalization is changing food, families and cultures. Along the way, mother and son explored their sometimes-troubling relationship, uniting – and occasionally clashing – over their mutual love of cooking. A memoir about family, an exploration of the globalization of food cultures, and a meditated on the complicated relationships between mothers and sons, Apron Strings is complex, unpredictable, and unexpect- edly hilarious. Wong will be presenting her book at the Classical Chinese Garden on March 9. For more information, please check out the garden’s website.

* * *

North Shore Art Crawl
March 10–11, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Various locations on the North Shore between Lions Bay and Deep Cove
www.nwarts council.ca

Come visit the North Shore where they will be holding a free weekend event for all to explore artists’ studios, galleries and more from Lions Bay to Deep Cove. The Crawl celebrates the cultural vitality and creative energy of local artists, featuring them in approachable and accessible art venues that encourage the community to connect and celebrate expression and diversity. Observe artists working with acrylics, oil, watercolour, pottery, ceramics and more! Please visit the arts council website for a complete list of artists.

* * *

Tenth Annual Norouz Festival
March 21, 6 p.m.
Capilano Mall, North Vancouver
www.culturinirani.org/foundation

Celebrated since the time of the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties, Norouz is the Persian New Year marking the first day of spring and the beginning of the Iranian calendar year. In honour of this occasion, the Canadian-Iranian Foundation will proudly present the tenth annual Norouz Festival on March 21 at the Capilano Mall in North Vancouver.