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Dominion Building
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The Source

forum of diversity

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UNESCO International Year of Plant Health



Verbatim

All the colours of Vancouver

by NATHALIE ASTRUC

I have known many geographic latitudes and multicultural societies, starting with my island of origin. I come from a land of mixed races and cultures, Reunion Island. For me, diversity is natural. I always felt a little cramped, uncomfortable, in mono-cultural societies. I have explored different lands, always looking for a balance in post-colonial societies, in eminently pluralistic societies born of pain but of infinite richness.

In a very humble way, I am a bit of an explorer. Like many others, I have surfed the wave of visas for young people that allowed me to discover new countries, the famous working holiday visa. I've always liked to look at maps, to follow the contours and the borders as one would appreciate a sculpture.

The colour chart of Nature

I have only been here for a few months, but I'm noticing a thousand nuances. I had been warned about the rain, but I'm finding much more than a drizzle, or a drip-drop. I'm also discovering a very artistic city, with a wide palette of colours, of shadings and pastels, of big skies, all the greens, all the blues, all the reds, oranges and yellows and especially all greys. Each colour is itself broken down into several more, like a rainbow that appears when the light passes through raindrops.

It was the breath of love that filled my sail and led me here. I followed my man and here I am at the gates of the Pacific once again. I met him on the other side, in Australia, and I'm coming back to gravitate around him, with the same objective, that of finding peace.

"Van", for those in the know, is an odd painting. Strangely, pastels and greys blaze in the sky. But everything calms down, as

See "Verbatim" page 6

Supporting sustainable ecosystems

by DANIELA COHEN

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), declaring 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health provides a "once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development."

The FAO notes that plants are critical for human life by providing both oxygen and food, yet pests and diseases result in a 40% loss of food crops annually.

This causes a detrimental shortage in food supply and damage to agriculture, the primary income source for poor rural communities. The threat to plant health has also increased because of climate change and expanded international travel and trade, which spread pests and diseases worldwide. The FAO stresses the importance of both preventing the threat to plant health as well as addressing it in environmentally friendly ways.

Connotations of plant-based diets

The issue of plant health is especially important due to the current

movement towards a more plant-based diet. Rishad Habib, PhD candidate in marketing and behavioural science at the UBC Sauder School of Business, believes this type of diet can address pressing health, environmental and welfare issues.

"From a health perspective, developed countries often struggle with heart disease and stroke, and it's been shown that a more plant-based diet would lower rates of these very serious diseases which are the major causes of death in the Western world," she says.

From an environmental perspective, Habib notes that the

amount of water and land required to grow plants is much less than that required to grow the same amount of meat.

"Of land used for growing crops, about a third is used for growing food for animals. So instead of eating the animals that eat the crops, we could get the energy from eating the crops themselves," she adds. "It's more efficient, taking out the middle animal."

Lastly, from a welfare perspective, she highlights the "abysmal" conditions in factory farms that contribute to keeping the price of meat low, and that are harmful to both human and animal welfare.

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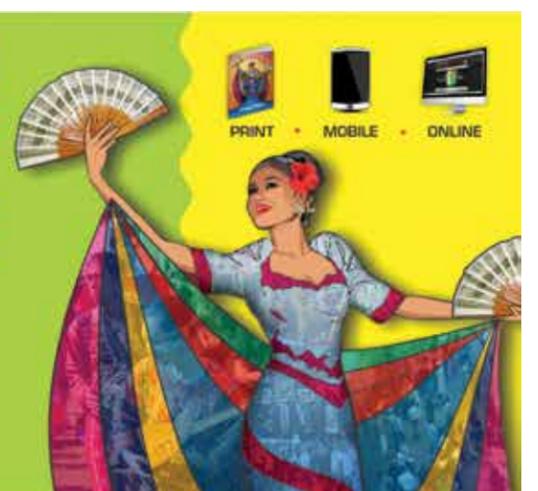


Musician dreams big
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Cultural Spotlight

New Year celebrations across the globe

by MANDEEP WIRK

Jan. 1 may officially be New Year's Day, but not all Canadians celebrate the new year on the same date.

Canadians from the Filipino, Jewish, Russian, Ukrainian and Tibetan communities greet the new year at different times and celebrate in different ways.

Polka dots for prosperity

"Preparations begin immediately after Christmas and New Year celebrations start on December 31 and end on January 7," says Tomas Avendano, founder of Multicultural Helping House and a member of Vancouver's Filipino community.

On New Year's Eve, family members share a midnight meal to strengthen family ties.

"I used to celebrate New Year's with 78 members of my extended family. I'm the eldest and everybody kisses my hand to pay respect and receive blessings," says Avendano.

Some food traditions show a Chinese influence like noodles for long life and eggs for new life.

"We cannot celebrate anything without roasting a pig. There is food in abundance on the table," says Avendano.

Homes display 12 round fruits, and people wear polka dots in order to attract prosperity. Before the clock strikes midnight, doors are left wide open for good luck to enter.

"The night before the new year is very noisy with fireworks. Around midnight many people drive around town honking their horns to chase away evil spirits. The more noise you make, the more abundance you will see," adds Avendano. "We pray for good jobs, good health and good relations."

Self-reflection and repentance

"The Jewish New Year, or Rosh Hashanah, occurs in late September/early October," says Deborah Tabenkin, program director at the Jewish Community Centre.

Jews believe Rosh Hashanah is also a time when God passes judgement on all beings.

"On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, there is a ceremony called Tashlich where you go to moving water and throw bread into the water. And the symbolism is that you're getting rid of sins.

The 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is a time of repentance and self-reflection, and then you fast on Yom Kippur to be inscribed into the Book of Life," says Tabenkin.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are solemnly observed holidays for Jewish people.

"Rosh Hashanah is not so much celebrated because it is a religious holiday. People go to the synagogue to pray and have a festive meal at home," Tabenkin says.

Apples dipped in honey are eaten on Rosh Hashanah for a good and sweet new year.

Three chances to celebrate

New Year's Day is a bigger holiday than Christmas in Russia, a legacy of communist times when the New Year took the place of Christmas.

called Malanka at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre," says Gladys Andreas, community organizer.

Ukrainian dancers entertain festival goers as they enjoy perogies and cabbage rolls with sauerkraut.

"When I was little and lived on a farm, on New Year's Eve the guys would get dressed in costumes and go from farmhouse to farmhouse playing pranks on farmers," says Andreas.

According to Andreas, some traditions have been lost with people moving into the city. However, her church still organizes a group to go sowing grain from house to house on New Year's Day. After obtaining permission, members sprinkle grain on the floor while saying a verse.

"Rye and wheat and all other grains, for your good luck and



▲ All cultures see the new year as auspicious.

"Russians celebrate New Year's Day officially on January 1 and then they celebrate old style New Year again on the night between January 13 and 14. Since the revolution we celebrate the new year twice," says Inna Mikhailov, proprietor of a Russian specialty store in Vancouver.

Although the state follows the Gregorian calendar, the Russian Orthodox Church uses the Julian calendar.

"Russians keep their Christmas tree till New Year. Our friends here celebrate New Year with their family. We go to their house with presents for the old style New Year," says Mikhailov.

On New Year's Eve, Russians enjoy a late supper party with family and friends.

"Traditionally we have blintzes (pancakes) with red caviar and Olivier salad," says Mikhailov. "Many Russians now also celebrate Chinese New Year in February by eating out at a Chinese restaurant. Russian people look for new traditions to make life interesting and they like the Chinese symbols."

Grains for good luck

"[For us], New Year's Day is January 14. On New Year's Eve, we have a banquet and a dance

your good health, may the crop that you reap be better than last year," Andreas recites.

Time to seek advice

"This year, the Tibetan New Year, or Losar, will be on February 24," says Tashi Tsetan, community volunteer.

Houses and monasteries are cleaned and decorated with colourful prayer flags.

"On the night of February 21, we have a dumpling soup that predicts our fortune," says Tsetan.

He adds that it is a time to put away negative thoughts to start the new year afresh.

"On Losar, families visit monasteries to pay respect to dharma teachers and get advice for the year ahead," Tsetan says.

People enjoy eating festive food like fried pastries called khapse.

"We burn juniper leaves, chant mantras and wish good for the country and humanity," says Tsetan.

Common human aspiration

All cultures deem the newborn year to be an auspicious time. Although the cultural communities celebrate New Year's Day in different ways, they all desire a happy and prosperous year ahead. ✍



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“Once neglected, now celebrated”

by LIN WEAVER

This is how Cree-Métis literary critic Deanna Reder describes writings and storytelling by Indigenous authors in Canada. As associate professor in the departments of First Nations studies and English at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Reder is principal investigator of the project *The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America to 1992*, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project for 2015–2020.

Reder is also a founding member of the Indigenous Literary Studies Association (ILSA), and served on the ILSA council from

2015–2018. In 2018 she was elected to the College of New Scholars in the Royal Society of Canada.

The Source asked her what Indigenous writing means.

with Indigenous peoples in other countries as we all fight to have our rights recognized. As one of the organizers of the Indigenous Voices Awards, I have delighted in reading the entries

as possible and champion their work. This involves providing a short biography and bibliography, or posting taped “conversations with Canadian Native Authors” or collecting the unpub-

Sumac’s *You are Enough: Love Poems for the End of the World*, or Dene writer and photographer Tenille Campbell’s *#Indian-LovePoems*.

“ There are over fifty Indigenous languages in Canada, with oral and written stories significant to each.

Deanne Reder, literary critic

Deanne Reder: In recent years we have begun to use the term “Indigenous” instead of Native, Aboriginal, or Indian, because it has an international dimension that allies ourselves

by an amazingly bright, brave, brash, compassionate new generation of Indigenous writers.

TS: Would you say that the Indigenous peoples of Canada are culturally diverse?

DR: Yes, while there are some similarities among us produced by a common experience under Canadian rule, there is no generic Indigenous culture. There are over fifty Indigenous languages in Canada, with oral and written stories significant to each.

TS: What is “*The People and the Text*” project?

DR: The aim of the project is to collect and study one of the most neglected literary archives in English and French Canada. The project focuses on all modes of Indigenous storytelling in what is now called Canada, from the beginning up to 1992. The goal is to identify as many writers

lished writings of Secwepemc and Ktunaxa writer Vera Manuel, recently released as *Honouring the Strength of Indian Women: Plays, Stories, Poems* (2019).

TS: Is there a particular author that you would like to mention?

DR: There are so many! Everyone ought to read Métis matriarch Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed*, first published in 1973. Another matriarch of the field is author, educator, and activist Dr. Jeanette Armstrong, who is fluent in Sylix and English and grew up on the Penticton Indian reserve in British Columbia’s Okanagan Valley. Her writings are very well known and loved. And any reader who wants to discover a new generation focused on poetics, love, and sexuality ought to seek out: Oji-Cree writer Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*; Cree poet Billy-Rae Belcourt’s *The Wound is a World*; Ktunaxa poet Smokii

TS: Maria Campbell did not think of herself as a writer at first, but she began writing by sending letters to her grandmother. Did your grandmother influence your way of thinking, your work? Did your grandmother influence your way of thinking, your work?

DR: Yes, my grandmother was a healer and my mother was a storyteller. I remember Mom telling the story about how Kohkum, my grandmother, cured a man from blindness after dreaming of a bear with a necklace of willow around its neck. I realize now that Mom was sharing not just that the bear is a symbol for medicine but that dreams are powerful and stories can preserve that power. ✍

To learn more, go to www.thepeopleandthetext.ca



Photo courtesy of Deanna Reder

▲ Deanna Reder says everyone should read Métis writer Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed*.

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Heritage buildings of Gastown: The Dominion Building

by ANINDITA GUPTA

This time, the focus of this column is on a building situated in the heart of the city's financial district, across from Victory Square: The Dominion Building, previously named the Imperial Trust Building.

The Dominion can be easily spotted from anywhere in Gastown or the area around it due to its unique architecture and style. It is triangular shaped and is also one of the few steel-top buildings of Vancouver.

Background and architectural style

At 53 metres and only 13 floors tall, the Dominion stood proudly as the tallest building in the city of Vancouver, as well as in the British Empire, until it was surpassed by the erection of a neighbouring structure, the Sun Tower. It was designed and built by architect John Shaw Helyer between 1908–1910.

The Dominion has always stood out because of its height and its unusual architecture.

The beauty of this landmark is that it doesn't commit to one single style that people are generally used to seeing. Instead it uses different styles in a complementary manner, unusual for the city of Vancouver. Some of the architectural

styles the building combines are Beaux-Arts, the Chicago-style steel frames and the columns that are rarely seen paired together.

The Beaux Arts style of architecture has its roots in France from before the French Revolution and was governed by the Académie royale d'architecture under Louis XV. Some very typical characteristics of this style are a flat roof, arched windows and doors and a raised first floor, most of which can be seen in this building. However, it's the roof of the Dominion that stands out.

The Dominion has a steel mansard roof that was the first of its kind for Vancouver. A mansard roof, put into layman's terms, is a roof that is more curved with a flat top instead of a dome, which is just as beautiful, uncommon and confusing as it sounds. The inside is also something that stands out to someone who has ventured in. Helyer wanted to build the entire building around a ten-storey spiral staircase which stayed as the core design idea, and still exists. Take a look by stepping in. Thankfully, this building is still open to the public, unlike the previously discussed Hotel Europe.

The city's own building

Another interesting fact about the Dominion is that it is not



▲ The Dominion Building.

just a building in Vancouver, but Vancouver's own building.

Vancouver experienced an economic boom around 1905 and in the heat of this boom, the Dominion's original owners, Imperial Trust Company, set out to construct it with the hefty budget of \$600,000. Unfortunately, they could only reach half the amount. And due to this, citizens were contacted via ads to help contribute! While many citizens did invest and contributed towards completing this half-built structure in their city's centre, they could not raise enough. And so, the Imperial Trust Company merged with the Dominion Trust Company, who completed the building and gave it its current name.

Unfortunately, the city's economic boom came to an end in the 1940s and the failing Dominion Trust Company had to sell its only asset – the Dominion Building – to the Dominion Bank. To clarify any confusion, the two companies were not related in any way. On a slightly unrelated note, the Dominion Bank merged with the Bank of Toronto in 1995 to become the TD Bank as we know it today.

Many facts about the past of a city remain interconnected, and digging up older newspaper articles or an enthusiasts' blog will keep some of us history connoisseurs forever satisfied. ✍

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Contribution



Planting the seed about the importance of soil health

What's the big deal about soil? It's all over the place. And, anyway, it only affects farmers, right?

That might be your first reaction upon seeing this headline. That's because we really don't talk much about soil, one of our most precious resources. I want to change that.

Of course, soil is important for farmers, but it's equally important for all of us, as people who need food to survive. If

1980s, but since then the idea has been somewhat eroded (no pun intended).

Many farmers are engaging in soil-friendly practices, such as planting cover crops to keep the soil active all year round. However, short-term cost can be high so economic factors often prevent farmers from adopting certain sustainable methods. Tradition and unfounded perceptions are further impediments to change.

“ We need real, strong leadership from the government in order to build momentum around soil protection.

Robert Black, Senator

our soils continue to be degraded at the current rate, we will not be able to sustain our food production. And that should be a scary thought for us all.

In 2016, only 7% of Canada's soil was deemed suitable for agriculture. That's an alarmingly low number. And soil is not a renewable resource. Many agricultural practices of the past (and some in the present) have had a damaging effect on our soil, including the reduction of organic matter, erosion, and salinization.

According to Dr. David Lobb, a soil expert and a professor at the University of Manitoba, the cost of soil erosion in terms of lost crop yield was \$3 billion in 2011. He said that adopting better farming and tilling practices would solve only half the problem; we also need more aggressive strategies to increase the organic matter in soils and to restore the productive capacity of eroded soils.

If you are reading this and realizing you haven't heard much about this issue, you're not alone. That's because we have a major lack of data around soil. The government needs to take a lead on collecting, analyzing, and sharing data on soil productivity so that we can move forward with a plan.

There are soil experts, researchers, and advocates in Canada, some of whom have been concerned with soil health for decades, but we need to start listening to them. We can't afford not to.

There was a push towards soil conservation back in the

We need real, strong leadership from the government in order to build momentum around soil protection.

This issue is very much connected to that of climate change. Not only is the loss of CO2 from the soil detrimental to the soil itself, but that CO2 doesn't just disappear - it goes into the atmosphere. In 2019, it's well past time for us to focus on soil, through sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.

What we know for sure is that we can't carry on with the



▲ The senator Robert Black.

“business as usual” approach. government must prioritize soil health. Otherwise, the future of Canadian agriculture, and thus food production and availability, will be pretty bleak.✍

Senator ROBERT BLACK represents Ontario in the Senate.

This article appeared in the October 14, 2019, edition of The Hill Times.

Photo courtesy of the Senate of Canada

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Presented by Main St. Village Vancouver (www.villagevancouver.ca) and Little Mountain Neighborhood House (www.lmnhs.bc.ca)

Hasan Namir incites creativity in the New Year

by KYLIE LUNG

Poets and authors will come together to share their works at the Vancouver Public Library, central branch on Jan. 22. Hasan Namir, Jennica Harper, Chantal Gibson, and Alex Leslie will present their multi-genre works to kick off the first events of the 2020 Vancouver Writers Fest.

Poets in Conversation is the first Incite event of the new decade, an event series of the Writers Fest that showcases authors. One such author this year is Hasan Namir who released his second book *War/Torn* in April of 2019. Namir was born in Iraq and a lot of his work concerns being gay in a culture that absolutely forbids it. Through his work to bring this taboo topic to light, Namir won the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Fiction for his first novel *God in Pink* at the 28th Lambda Literary Awards.

From Iraq to Canada

Born in Iraq in 1987 Namir moved to British Columbia in the late 90s when he was 11



▲ Hasan Namir, poet, and interrogator of religion and masculinity.

years old. He spent many formative years in Iraq before settling in Canada, so memories of his homeland remain at the forefront of his mind. He can still picture the restaurants he frequented with his family and even the house he grew up in. The colorful images of Namir's

past helps paint a vivid landscape for the reader to explore while reading his work.

Namir has had a propensity for the written word since he was a young boy and followed that passion into adulthood by going to Simon Fraser University and receiving a BA in English.

"I've always loved writing since I was 6 or 7 years. I used

“Despite the fact that my home country is often *War/Torn*, people are still living their lives.

Hasan Namir, author

to read a lot of books and I knew I wanted to be an author like the authors in the books I read," says Namir, "I come from a family of writers. My grandpa was a poet and my aunt was a murder-mystery author, so I knew it was in my blood to be a writer."

Bringing taboo topics to light

Namir published his first book *God in Pink* in 2015. It focuses around a young gay man named Rami. Rami is left to keep his sexuality a secret in war-torn Iraq as he navigates university life during the turbulent war times of the early millenia. *God in Pink* was released to critical praise and four years later, Namir is back to continue telling stories from his homeland.



▲ Hasan Namir's second book *War/Torn*.

War/Torn is a book of poetry that focuses on more than one story of hardship in Iraq. With this second work, Namir delves into territory he had previously left undiscovered in his first novel.

"*God in Pink* obviously has inspirations from my own life story. I wrote it as if I stayed in Iraq. *War/Torn* is a lot more personal, in which the body is me.

I got to expand on the themes I introduced in *God in Pink* with *War/Torn*," says Namir. "The book was focused mainly on the self vs. religion, sexuality vs. religion, the 'I' vs. 'the other.' There were poems that were the voices of the silenced, the voices of victims of violence because of their sexuality. The open space in poetry allowed me to freely explore these themes even further than I expected."

A misunderstand nation

The stories within Namir's works are ones that may not normally be told, or even allowed to be voiced. Being gay in an Islamic nation is illegal and people must keep that secret buried deep within them otherwise their lives are in jeopardy. Through these tales of perseverance, empathy crosses all social and cultural borders.

"Despite the fact that my home country is often *War/Torn*, people are still living their lives. They are safe and they are all right. The media tends to make things look a lot worse than what they really are," says Namir. "With Islam, the media portrays it through the actions of very few individuals who don't really represent the religion. Islam is a peaceful religion and the actions of the terrorists don't represent Islam." ✍

For more information, please visit www.vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/5de97a0cab0e002e00e088cf

in town, the palette is reduced to primary colours; those of the signs, always blue and/or red and/or yellow. These colours are so frank and brutal, as if in opposition to Nature, a particularly human, if not social form of violence.

The contrast is chromic but also economical.

Something that hit me hard when I arrived in Vancouver: the aimless wanderers. The haggard eyes of the poor, the delusions of the hallucinated, the despair of poverty and mental insecurity. In addition, the passage from light to shade takes place in the snap of a finger, at the very corner of the street. Obviously, I always reflect on the root of these evils. Who can get used to the brutality of the gap between rich, very rich and poor in such a developed country?

Vancouver's mission is to celebrate diversity and difference with respect used as cement.

There is also an interesting range of people, nationalities, languages heard, signs written in cryptic alphabets on the street. Vancouver's reputation as an international capital for learning English had been mentioned to me, but Vancouver is pleasantly more cosmopolitan than the brochures.

What I really found interesting in Vancouver during these first observations concerns the Francophonie. It's a concept that has always appealed to me, that I have studied, that I like to explore, but so far, it has been difficult for me to find a concrete application, a balance between languages. Vancouver seems to me to be fertile ground for the development of the latter, the hope of a blossoming, as evidenced by the writing of this piece in a bilingual newspaper. ✍

Translation by Barry Brisebois

“Verbatim” from page 1

a Vancouverite told me, at dusk. As if, after a hectic day, everything merges into these peach tones, into this golden light that we see on the North Shore, reflecting in the windows.

I've experienced other cities and although it is pleasant to be lulled by first impressions, I always wanted to discover the other face of the place, the beauty of everyday life, the unsuspected elegance of routine, the magnified mundaneness of a place. How to tire of a trip on the SeaBus when the journey will never be the same? Of course, like everyone else, it will take time to penetrate the heart, to know the secrets, to grasp the guts, to define the personality and finally, to understand the soul of this place.

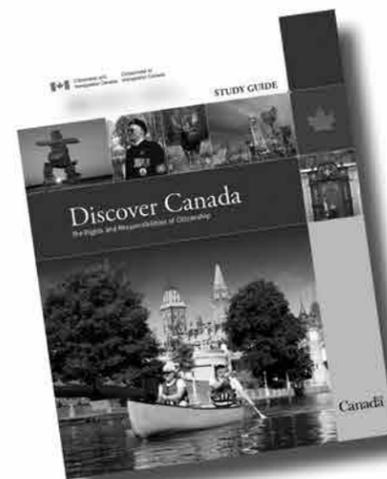
The contrasts of humanity

Nature offers a complete range of colours. On the other hand,

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A story told in images and a few words

by JAKE MCGRAIL

The Surrey Art Gallery Association will host their first Thursday Artist Talk of 2020, on Jan. 9, a monthly series that provides a platform for different artists to share their work and their experiences with the local public.

This month's event will be led by New Westminster-based graphic novelist PJ Patten, whose upcoming book *Tower25* explores his mental journey of overcoming addiction and other obstacles in his life.

A personal creation

The event is free and open to all ages, and will include discussion on both the artistic process behind the creation of *Tower25*, as well as the very real story that forms the backbone of the novel.

"The story is based on events that happened in 2005–06," says



Photo by Eden Fineaday Patten

▲ For graphic novelist PJ Patten empathy is key.

Patten. "I had lost everything I'd owned due to drug addiction, and I was homeless in Southern California. It's a memoir about trying to sort out sobering up and the problems you face when you're trying to get back on your feet again."

Patten has always been a big fan of manga and graphic novels, and the style of *Tower25* is based on illustrations he's made in personal journals over the years. There are even a couple pages in the novel that were taken directly from his journals.

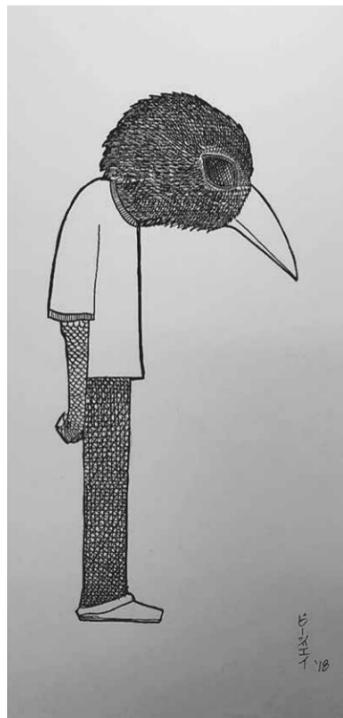
"All throughout my life I've been drawn to drawing and writing," he says. "I still keep a regular journal, and I feel it helps get those unspoken, unknown things out of you in a way that can help you process them. Writing and drawing have helped me get through a lot of things in life."

Patten's style is somewhat unorthodox, as *Tower25* has no panels or speech bubbles. There are a couple images per page with a few sentences added, a fluid combination that is influenced by his Japanese grandparents. His grandmother was a painter and his grandfather a poet, and Patten sees his creation as a balanced combination of those two styles.

"I feel like there's something that can be told when you combine images and words together that you can't do with either one by themselves," he says. "I feel it pulls the reader in more, and that graphic novels can take a subject that is heavy and makes it easier to read or stomach."

Reaching out

In its initial stages, *Tower25* was very much a personal exploration



▲ Raven Boy.

project, a vehicle for Patten to sift through his own experiences in a constructive way. After receiving encouragement from his wife, he kept at it, and discovered he had a lot that he needed to put onto paper.

"Getting it on paper has helped me gain control of its narrative," says Patten. "Instead of having these skeletons in my closet or in my head, it's out on the paper and that's freeing."

As the project began to develop, Patten shared some of his work online. He received some positive feedback, which made him feel that the story is something that could give a voice to a perspective that doesn't always have one.



▲ Weights.

"The main character is basically faceless throughout the book," he says. "I did that so people could picture someone they know or someone they've seen inside the story for themselves. Overall my goal is to raise an awareness of the issues of homelessness and addiction, and focus really on the human side of it."

Patten keys in on empathy as one of *Tower25's* biggest targets. He wants readers to more fully understand what addiction can be like, and develop empathy for those who struggle with it. He hopes that this week's event at the Surrey Art Gallery will be a platform to shift the minds of the audience with regards to

both the message and the medium of *Tower25*.

"I hope people will come away from [the event] with the idea that comics or graphic novels aren't just for kids, they are a medium that can carry important messages," he says. "And I hope that people will have a better understanding of homelessness and addiction, and maybe will be a little more kind and understanding to people who are suffering." ✍

For more information visit www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation/30458.aspx?startDate=Dec-13-2019. You can also follow Patten on Instagram @pjipattenillustration

Photos courtesy of PJ Patten

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► "Ecosystems" from page 1

Habib explains that despite the advantages of a plant-based diet, the moral connotations of being vegetarian or vegan may prevent people from choosing plant-based foods. In ongoing research by Habib and UBC professors Yann Cornil and Karl Aquino, they find that non-vegans/vegetarians react negatively to products labelled "suitable for vegetarians" or "100% vegan," but the negativity diminishes when alternate labels like "100% plant-based" are used.

"These words have more than just the literal meaning, they have deeper connotations, with identity and moralization," she notes. "Plant-based labelling is more neutral, inclusive and effective. Labelling that focuses on minimizing harm is also effective as it piggybacks on existing moral values and makes it more challenging for people to reject the product."

Habib believes this research has potential to assist companies in more effective labelling of sustainable products. She describes additional research with professors Katherine White and David Hardisty around the SHIFT framework, which explores the five factors (social influence, habit, individual self, feelings and cognition, and tangibility) that can be leveraged to change behaviour in a more positive direction.

Food as a community connector

The Edible Garden Project (EGP), a non-profit initiative in North



▲ Healthy produce at a farmers' market.

Vancouver, uses food as a platform to transform community, address urban environmental, health, and social issues, and empower citizens to learn to grow their own.

"I think that the most important function of the EGP is a link to food systems that people are really disconnected from these days," says project manager Claire McGillivray. EGP focuses on three main aspects: teaching through education in elementary schools and workshops for all ages, sharing produce grown at the Food Hub through the work of a large volunteer base spread over five satellite locations, and growing food that is sold at the farmers market so the profit can continue to support project costs.

"Our hope in training kids in ecological literacy is having a way for them to expand their circle of compassion...to think about themselves as part of a

[is] that everything is connected, that the health of the planet and everything in it is directly connected to their health and well-being, and it's the same for adults."

To address plant health, EGP focuses on prevention. "We have a small site but grow a big diversity of crops so we're not harbouring any one type of pest or disease that likes one plant family," McGillivray says. "Most pests or diseases have a specialty of what plant family they go after, so we use crop rotation as one of our techniques to not be planting the same plant family in the same place year after year so that we can spread out those pests. Another of our tactics, which is quite intuitive, is that diversity creates more habitats for predatory insects."

Supporting plant health

Community members can get involved with the EGP by volunteering, donating money or supplies, or attending a farmers market or workshop.

As Habib notes, plant health is crucial in creating the capacity to feed the growing world population, particularly if more people do switch to plant-based diets. The FAO emphasizes that we all have a role to play in plant health, whether as a consumer, farmer, business owner or government. ✍



▲ Rishad Habib.

system, the impacts they have on the environment and other people around them," McGillivray explains. "The message

To learn more about how you can support plant health, visit www.fao.org/plant-health-2020/take-action/en/

The Shoplifters – play tackles social inequalities

by RAMAN KANG

“The Shoplifters is a comedy,” says Agnes Tong, an actor in the play. “There are underlying political themes but it’s not a social activism play.”

The play will be going on tour across the lower mainland from Jan. 9–Feb. 9, 2020.

Art makes an impact

“Art is a way to challenge systems and to challenge our norms,” says Tong.

An actor and dancer, Tong, originally from Ottawa, moved to Vancouver after getting accepted to Langara College’s Studio 58 for theatre.

Starting off in dance, she switched to acting after recognizing that dance was not a viable option for a long-term career due to its impact on her body.

Tong, who is first generation Chinese Canadian, says her parents questioned her pursuit of an artistic lifestyle.

“My parents very much believe in security and education and when they would ask me what my back up plan was, I’d say I didn’t have one,” she says. “If there’s a back up plan then I’m not fully focused on the plan, so I just took the risk into acting as another adventure and form in which I can express in.”

What are you worth?

The Shoplifters is a story about two low income women who steal from a grocery store by tucking two 16-ounce ribeye steaks under their dresses, explains Tong.

“I don’t think this play is promoting theft by any means, but it is a complex conversation about economic inequality and how that looks when society pigeon-holes people into a certain class based on income or employment, race or gender,” she says.

After getting caught, the play’s two thieves are taken to a little break room at the back of the grocery store and are harshly interrogated by two security guards, says Tong. One of the security guards is an expert in his field while the other guard is a young, hot-headed, eager trainee, who will go to great lengths to do right by God.

Tong plays the role of Phyllis, a young woman who works coat check at a restaurant and is marginalized, economically challenged and lives in low income housing.



▲ In *The Shoplifters*, theft is an act of resistance.

Her good friend Alma, who is a seasoned shoplifter, coerces Phyllis into stealing from the grocery store, which Phyllis has never done before, but becomes convinced to do so because it’s her birthday.

“Alma challenges Phyllis to celebrate herself, live large, grab at life and celebrate her birthday with these juicy 16-ounce steaks, which otherwise they would never be able to afford or entertain the idea of eating something so extravagant,” says Tong.

Although Phyllis is quite nervous about the repercussions of her actions and believes in Karma, Tong says she contemplates

what her life is worth and maybe that she is taking some steaks from a corporation that may not even notice they’re gone.

Symbolism in art

Tong says *The Shoplifters* calls into question ethics that are based on institutions where right and wrong is black and white versus the ethics of people who are driven by their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing.

“This play very much symbolises theft as an act of resistance against a system; it delves into conversations around personal morality and ethics,” says Tong.

The Shoplifters is presented to the audience in a way that is meant to start conversations around responsibilities and how people can take action against something that isn’t serving the collective.

The script for *The Shoplifters*, written and directed by Morris Panych, delivers a powerful message in a hilarious way, says Tong. “Once you see something a few times it kind of loses its humour, but watching this show over and over again still just tickles me and makes me laugh,” she adds.

For more information and tickets, please visit www.artsclub.com.



▲ Agnes Tong plays the character of Phyllis in *The Shoplifters*.

The Rogue Presents

Beolach

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Info: 604-736-3022 - Tickets: Highlife, Tapestry or
www.roguefolk.com

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A new decade – and a new Khanvict

by XI CHEN

For someone who has no formal music training and is mostly self-taught, Asad Khan, popularly known as Khanvict, has come a long way – transforming himself from an engineer, to a successful wedding DJ, and now into a music producer.

To mark his new milestone as an original artist, Khan will be delivering his first live set at Imperial Vancouver on January 17th, featuring Raaginder, a violinist from the United States. The two artists, of Pakistani and Indian origins respectively, infuse traditional Indian music with a modern twist. They have been collaborating since Khan's first EP, *Kahani*, launched last year.

"I developed a strong name as a DJ in North America in the South Asian community – people still think of me as Khanvict, the wedding DJ," he says. "This upcoming show is the first step to show what the new Khanvict is. So much preparation has gone into this show beyond the music. I am passionate about building a cohesive audio-visual set that can give the audience a multi-sensory experience."

A new trajectory

Khan is no stranger to curating a memorable experience for his audience. Decibel Entertainment, a successful wedding DJ company he founded in 2013, has won multiple awards. This success gave Khan the financial freedom to further pursue his passion as a musician.

"Creatively, I felt I had reached a plateau. I had really good sets for weddings, but it was no longer challenging."

According to Khan, his trajectory changed when he went to his first music festival. He was so taken aback by the atmosphere that he decided he wanted to DJ at these festivals. It was around the same time that he also met

music videos that are socially igniting. We just did a video for Turiya Turiya, where we take a jab at the fact that women tend to do most of the housework in South Asian families. We have these older aunties sitting on the couch while their husbands are serving tea and cleaning the house, and later the aunties go out to a rave while the uncles stay at home," Khan chuckles.

The accidental musician

As an immigrant kid who moved to Canada with his family in his early teens, music was not Khan's initial calling. He first

“ I like the idea of making music videos that are socially igniting.

Asad Khan, DJ

pursued engineering at UBC until luck knocked on the door and he answered.

Khan recalls the pivotal moment in his life. "Back in 2010 to 2011, I had no interest in doing music yet. I ran into an old friend whose dad used to send DJs to weddings. I was looking for a summer job and he asked 'Why don't you come work for my dad?'"

Kahn feels he learned a very valuable lesson that day. "If someone gives you an option, then at least you should go check it out...it changed my life. When I saw a few hundred people dancing at the wedding, I knew it was something that I would really enjoy doing."

Turning down lucrative wedding gigs these days in order to make time for his own music, Khan says making a connection with people through his art is what motivates him.



▲ Khanvict is known for his stunning productions and special effects.

Tarun Nayar, a DJ/producer and a band member of Delhi 2 Dublin – a Canadian world music group that plays a fusion of different music genres. Sharing a similar vision, the two started their own record label, Snakes and Ladders, in 2019. Khan's first EP *Kahani* was released by the label last year, and he is in the process of releasing more music this year.

Beyond creating music, Khan is also interested in making more impactful visual content. "I like the idea of making

"I experienced some really amazing moments on the dance floor with the right artists, and the idea of being able to create that for thousands of people in a lifetime is really special," he says. "That, plus I like being on stage, taking all the energy that people are giving and putting that into my performance and giving it back. You don't think about what you are doing on stage when you hit that flow state."

For more information, please visit www.khanvict.life

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Cultural Calendar

January 7–21, 2020

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Welcome to 2020, a brand new year - but is it also a brand new decade? There are two schools of thought on the matter: some people think a new decade starts in 2020, others think it starts in 2021. Canada's National Research Council argues that because there is no year zero in the Gregorian calendar (the year 1 BC is followed by AD 1), all decades, centuries and millennia begin with Year 1. However, in everyday parlance, instead of marking decades calendrically, most people mark it culturally: "The 20s" refers to the years spanning 2020-2029. Whatever side of the debate you fall on - Team Zero or Team One - have yourself an amazing 2020!

David Wojnarowicz: Photography & Film 1978–1992
Jan. 9–Apr. 5
Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at UBC, University Endowment Lands
www.belkin.ubc.ca

The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery will be presenting the photographic and filmic works of American artist David Wojnarowicz from Jan. 9 to Apr. 5. The exhibition presents over 100 works including photographs, test prints, silkscreens, 16 mm and Super 8 film and collaborative video works. Wojnarowicz worked as an artist and writer merging found and discarded materials together with a deep understanding of literary influences into sophisticated combinations. The exhibit will reflect on his art-making and activism at a time of political and personal uncertainty, shedding light on a practice that has been exemplary and inspirational, not only for his contemporaries but also for current generations.

Wen Wei Dance and Turning Point Ensemble
Jan. 10, 4 p.m.
Scotiabank Dance Centre, Vancouver
www.thedancecentre.ca

Artist-in-Residence Wen Wei Wang, Artistic Director of Wen Wei Dance, shares excerpts from his latest work in an informal studio showing. A co-creation with Turning Point Ensemble, *Flying white* 飞白 explores the space between black and white, inhale and exhale, east and west and sound and movement. Six dancers and an intercultural ensemble of musicians interact on stage and with representations of elements including rice, paper, water, silk and ink.



▲ *Flying white* 飞白 explores the space between black and white, inhale and exhale, east and west.



▲ Benjamin Bagby will dramatize the awe-inspiring poem Beowulf.

January Exhibitions at Place des Arts
Jan. 10–Feb. 6
Place des Arts, Coquitlam
www.placedesarts.ca

The Place des Arts Gallery is currently showcasing three new exhibits this month. Check out collaborative alchemy art by artists Pierre Lechner, Edward Peck and Phyllis Schwartz, who use plant-based materials to contemplate the full cycle of natural growth and transitions that are in an ever-changing state of permanence and impermanence. Watercolour artist Tammy Pilon's exhibit showcases her latest abstract paintings. For Pilon, creating the paintings is therapeutic, allowing her to relax, experiment and push her creative boundaries. Finally, painter Alex Sandvoss showcases screenshots of social media influencers off YouTube and anonymized these individuals with the face of capitalistic heroine Barbie, intending to frame these venerated pawns of the advertisement industry in a more poignant light.

Beowulf: The Epic in Performance
Jan. 11, 7:30 p.m.
Vancouver Playhouse
www.earlymusic.bc.ca

"Hwaet!" commands the storyteller. Listen! And tremble at this fearsome tale! A millennium or more has passed since the superhero Beowulf appeared in the annals of epic poetry, yet the legend of his bare-handed conquest of the terrifying Grendel endures. As one of the world's leading practitioners of historically informed music and theatre, medieval music composer and singer Benjamin Bagby will dramatize the awe-inspiring poem in the original Anglo-Saxon, while simultaneously accompanying himself on medieval harp, at the Vancouver Playhouse on Jan. 11.

Gluten Free Expo 2020
Jan. 11–12
Vancouver Convention Centre at Canada Place
www.glutenfreeexpo.ca

On the weekend of Jan. 11, the Vancouver Convention Centre at Canada Place will host the Gluten Free Expo featuring numerous exhibitors, cooking demonstrations, dietitian presenters and, of course, plenty of tasty gluten free culinary dishes to sample. Listen to presentations from registered dietitians helping you to create healthier diets, and watch chefs create healthy gluten free versions of beer, pizza, perogies, breads and more. For tickets and further information, please check out their website.

2020 Chinese New Year Vancouver Carnival
Jan. 11–18
Aberdeen Square, Richmond
<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/aberdeen-square-amp-mooby-yoho-28865088059>

Bring your family and friends to celebrate the Year of the Rat with food and shows at Richmond's Aberdeen Square! Co-hosted by Aberdeen Square & Mooby Yoho, the carnival will last eight days from Jan. 11 to 18. This annual event also celebrates the local history of Asian communities in the greater Vancouver area. This family-friendly event will feature cultural performances, authentic food and free New Year's gifts.

Antarctic Traces
Jan. 16, 7 p.m.
Vancouver Maritime Museum
vancouvermaritimemuseum.com

Antarctic Traces, a documentary film showing at the Vancouver Maritime Museum on Jan. 16, is a study of the devastation caused by human exploitation of nature in South Georgia, Antarctica. Featuring the rough landscape of the coast, archival images of the whaling industry and numerous literary sources, this film explores the impact of the industrial slaughter of seals, sea elephants, and whales in the region. In an alternating rhythm of still images, moving pictures and individual camera pans, the film presents a disturbing portrait of penguins and seals making their homes in a dead, chilly landscape of glaciers, skeletons, industrial ruins and rusted ships.

Gramma
Jan. 17–Feb. 1
Pacific Theatre, Vancouver
www.pacifictheatre.org

The Pacific Theatre will be presenting *Gramma* from Jan. 17 to Feb. 1. Korean-born Maki is excited to begin her new life in a Regina basement suite, but her elderly landlady seems determined to treat her as nothing more than a servant. Playwright and actor of *Suitcase Stories* Maki Yi returns to Pacific Theatre with a poetic new tale of human connection in the loneliest of circumstances. Check out the theatre's website for tickets and more information.

Dine Out Vancouver Festival 2020
Jan. 17–Feb. 2
Various venues throughout Vancouver
www.dineoutvancouver.com

Experience Canada's largest annual food and drink festival this year at Dine Out Vancouver! This 17-day festival features over 200 restaurants with plenty of food,

craft beer and cocktails to go around. Experience all the culinary expertise you could possibly want with guided dining tours, cooking classes, cocktail masterclasses, dinner and film pairings, craft beer tasting and much more. Check out the festival's website for more info.

Pitha Utshob 2020
Jan. 19, 4–9 p.m.
Punjab Banquet Hall, Surrey
www.facebook.com/events/478325033084984/

Come with your friends and family to experience Pitha Utshob - the cake festival. Pitha is a popular rice cake in Bangladesh and are primarily made from a batter of rice flour or wheat flour, which is shaped and optionally filled with sweet or savory ingredients. When filled, the pitha's pouch is called a *khol* (literally "container") and the fillings are called *pur*. The Greater Vancouver Bangladesh Cultural Association is organizing this festival for everyone to enjoy this popular food in the eastern regions of the Indian subcontinent.

The Rogue Presents the Return of
David Francey
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Friday, January 10th and Saturday, January 11th
at the Mel Lehan Hall at St. James
3214 West 10th Avenue - \$32 (\$28 members)
Info: 604.736.3022 - Tickets: Highlife, Tapestry or
www.roguefolk.com

