



Building momentum: constant change with every word



by SHALINI NAYAR

This year, in Vancouver and throughout much of the world, there has been a vigorous drive to build momentum and create movement towards positive change. From coverage of local groups promoting the integration of diversity, to reflection on larger political issues, throughout the year the *Source Newspaper* provided readers with a front row view of change in our community. Let's take a look back.

In the first issue of 2012, writer Anita Kovacs highlighted a local campaign called Our City of Colours, which aims to help the integration of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and

queer (LGBTQ) individuals in many of Vancouver's ethnic communities. Through the media, attention has been brought to what is often a veiled subject in some ethnic groups. As Kovacs reported, the importance of this issue is rooted in the need to be progressive in addressing the needs of changing demographics within Vancouver's LGBTQ community.

Spring began with Vancouverites standing up and taking action. As writer Eric Chu reported, locals came together to march for a day of action to end racism and discrimination. They joined their peers in various places around the world to show solidarity with the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial

Discrimination, helping to create a movement. Also, local recognition of International Women's Day, covered by writer Panayioti Yannitsos, showcased the importance of gender equality and the momentum that keeps this topic relevant.

And just when we all thought that the Occupy Vancouver protests had been banished, columnist Derrick O'Keefe spent a night in Zuccotti Park in New York with hundreds of others, six months after the original Occupy's inception. He reminded us that despite lacking the physical presence of protestors, the issues at the heart of the local movement such as inequality, poverty and the need for political change are still significant.

The impending summer months energized our writing team to explore some less-discussed topics. The stereotyping and media portrayal of certain cultures with respect to violence was covered by writer Phoebe Yu. She was able to use a combination of expert opinion, Canadian data on immigration as well as local experience in her coverage, and touched on the concept of cultural racism.

Writer Brendan Munro brought Shadeism to light in his article discussing skin colour variation within cultures. By including references to the film *Shade-ism* by Canadian filmmaker Nayani Thiyagarajah and discussing the

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Verbatim

I. am. Canadian?

by NICOLE LAWSON

I was born and raised in Vancouver. Anyone growing up in this multicultural town knows that it's par for the course to rub shoulders with people from around the world. I have friends from Brazil to Japan, and I can buy the best international meals for less than the price of a movie ticket.

Yet, after all these years, what makes me cringe most is visitors from far-flung, exotic lands with strong cultural identities and unique customs like Japan, Mexico, Brazil, India, Fiji, Afghanistan – even Seattle – asking "What does it mean to be Canadian?" Followed closely by, "What is Canadian food?" I'm pretty sure they're looking for a mainstream answer.

"Well, every night it's a toss-up between hamburgers and macaroni and cheese followed by a helping of bannock. Afterwards we all bundle up and go outside for a quick game of hockey on the year-round frozen pond in the backyard."

I know I'm being facetious. Truth is, I don't have a good answer. Don't get me wrong. I absolutely love my country, but I hardly know how to sum up living in the amazingly diverse city of Vancouver into one 'Canadian' experience.

What always intrigues me is how visitors to Canada view us. Over the years I've pieced together what people think about Canadians. I'm fascinated by their observations. I'm like a dry sponge – please, tell me what I am! Through the years, I've picked out many pieces of info.

First, there's the American perception that came from my cousins who visited Vancouver from New York once when I was a child. They raved about our drinking water.

"Canadians have the best water," they said.

Dumbfounded, I'd stare at them, certain that it didn't taste like anything. As a teen, I was shocked to find out their

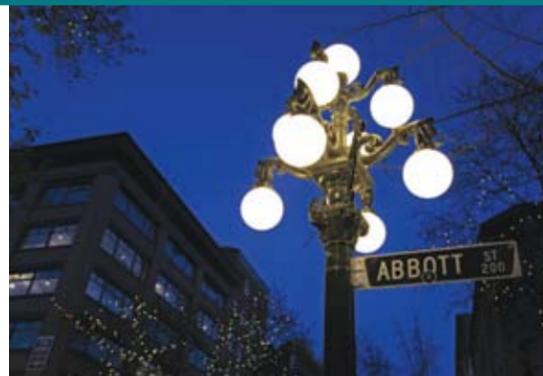
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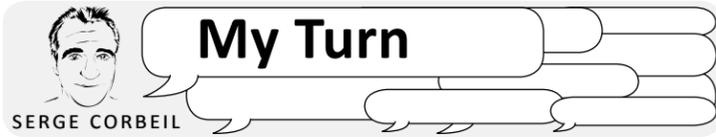
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My Turn

SERGE CORBEIL

Hope rises for the Conservatives following by-election results

The three by-elections that took place across the country on November 26, including one in Victoria, show two things: Prime Minister Harper's troops are losing some battles, and yet he can still have a good night's sleep. I know this might seem contradictory, so let me explain.

In the three relevant ridings, the Conservatives declined in terms of percentage of votes compared to the 2011 federal election. Surprisingly, it was in the traditionally secure terrain of Alberta that they suffered the most. In Calgary Centre – Joe Clark's former riding, no less – the Conservative candidate saw her share of the vote shrink by 21 per cent, a significant loss. In the Victoria by-election, Conservative support dropped by 9 per cent. There is nothing worrisome about this for the Conservatives since that riding has never proved a strong one for them.

It is by turning to Ontario and the results of the third Nov. 26 by-election that we see why Stephen Harper can look ahead with a certain dose of optimism. Conservative success in the riding of Durham, which has a history of alternating between Liberal and Conservative, enables him to walk with serene confidence. His candidate managed to corral over 50 per cent of the votes despite slightly lower voter turnout than in the last federal election. That says a lot, because govern-

ing parties tend to be punished during by-elections.

Since Ontario is the Promised Land for federal parties hoping to form a government, the message is that – at least for now – all's well. For a government deemed unpopular in public opinion, the results in Durham must have made some Conservatives smirk.

Add to this another observation that works in favour of the Conservatives: I am talking about the overt rift among voters branded as progressives. These are voters traditionally known as being centre or centre-left on the political spectrum. This really came into play in Calgary Centre, where the significant drop in Conservative support should have signalled their downfall. However, while both the Liberal and Green candidates were able to benefit from the NDP's significant drop in votes in that riding,



▲ Joan Crockatt, newly elected MP for Calgary Centre

Photo by Gordon McDowell, Flickr

Translation Monique Kroeger

the progressive vote was still split. In fact, the strong showing by the Green Party prevented a Liberal victory, allowing the Conservative candidate to be elected with just 37 per cent of the total vote while the Liberals took 33 per cent and the Greens 26 per cent.

The mini electoral evening delivered the worst news for the NDP. Even if they made minor gains in Ontario, their losses in Victoria and Calgary Centre were significant. Once again, the Green Party proved a major factor, its growth in Victoria almost costing the NDP its seat there.

These by-elections show in some small way the success of the Conservatives' strategy. This strategy was to attack the opposition mercilessly: keep on inundating the media with negative messages aimed at their main adversary, in this case NDP leader Thomas Mulcair, in the hope that people would believe what the Conservatives were saying or would at least begin to doubt the Conservatives' foes.

These unfounded bombardments are standard issue in the Conservatives' strategic arsenal, so much so that they sometimes bring about some pretty amusing situations.

For example, the Calgary Centre Conservative Party candidate said that her victory showed just how strong her party was and how it was gaining ground. The party may be strong but it would be an error to think that the results show that it is on an upward curve.

None of this matters much. The preferred Conservative strategy remains the repetition of messages in the hope that they become reality in the minds of voters. To date, it has served the Prime Minister's team well. ✍

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fairness cream industry, Munro revealed that this topic still permeates cultural norms.

"Thiyagarajah's film contends that a subtler and more insidious form of discrimination known as shadeism or colourism exists," wrote Munro.

Summertime brought the beat of many established festivals that Vancouverites looked forward to, and the *Source Newspaper* proved to be an information hub for many events. Vancouver also celebrated some new additions, one of many being the first annual Vancouver International Busker Festival. As writer Elton Hubner described, previous busking festivals in other Canadian cities were well received, building interest for one here. Locals were able to come together to celebrate the all-inclusive performances of buskers and support their continued presence in the city.

It was all about hunkering down when school began and settling into work routines again as

we approached fall. The changing tides of the school system in Vancouver, motivated by a drive to incorporate the unique needs of Aboriginal people, manifested in the establishment of the first Aboriginal school in B.C.

As Riyah Lakhani wrote, a shortage of Aboriginal teachers, coupled with low enrolment in English 12 First Peoples (an English 12 course equivalent) has contributed to difficulties for this group in the conventional education system. The elementary school opened this past September in Vancouver.

Writer Bessie Chow covered the rising costs of funerals, a less recognized yet important issue for many people in the lower mainland. As Chow wrote, groups for whom the funeral service is important may face financial difficulties. While cremation is less expensive, it is forbidden in some belief systems. According to the Cremation Association of North America's statistics in Chow's article, Vancouver's cremation rate is the highest among all North American cities, the top reason being to save money.

Always a hot topic of debate, a different perspective on the B.C. housing market was offered in writer Natalie Mundy's article discussing the issue of double

discrimination. Mundy described the unique challenges that disabled individuals face in Vancouver by detailing an individual's personal struggle with housing in Vancouver. Mundy contextualized this personal story by providing insight into relevant organizations, such as Spinal Cord Injury BC, the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities and the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University.

As 2012 comes to a close, we are left with the opportunity to build on the momentum of change into the coming year. We have been witness to stories that have demonstrated significant growth as much as we have learned about topics that need more attention.

Throughout the variety of reporting that the *Source Newspaper* has provided, it is evident that the only real constant has been change. While not all change is positive, the result can certainly be progress. With that in mind, the *Source Newspaper* will continue to provide our readership with stories that matter.

We invite all of our valued readers to get involved and follow us on Twitter, Facebook or to visit us on the web at www.thelasource.com for up to date information or to conduct your own year in review by visiting our archives. ✍

Spencie's View

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Time keeping defines world view

by BESSIE CHOW

Hawaiian-born Reyn Nakamoto, 32, needs to know the time. Living in Pacific Standard Time and working in Japanese Standard Time while still keeping up with Hawaii-Aleutian Standard Time, the Vancouver-based Japanese-American is

Redman, who is based at the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in his hometown of Victoria, B.C., emphasizes the historical and cultural significance of time measurement.

“We pick up strange threads of history with time-keeping,” he says. The current internationally accepted scale of time, Coordi-

“If I couldn’t tell the time, it would be pretty jarring.

Reyn Nakamoto, Hawaiian-born Japanese-American

one of many global citizens for whom tracking time is especially important.

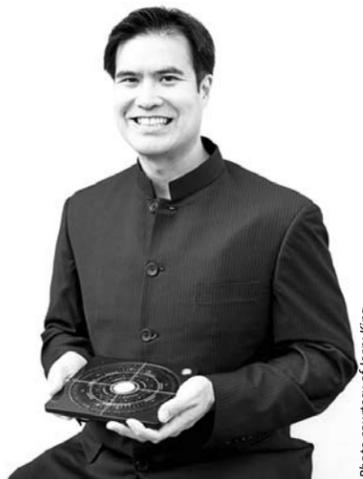
“If I couldn’t tell the time, it would be pretty jarring,” says Nakamoto, who works as a software engineer for a Japanese IT company. After two years in a long-distance relationship, Nakamoto finally moved to Vancouver in 2011 to be with his girlfriend, whom he met in 2006.

According to www.timeanddate.com, the number of standard time zones around the world is either 24 or 25, depending on one’s definition of time zones versus the International Date Line. The economic and political significance of time-zones, in addition to ever-increasing demands in communication technology, transportation and environmental systems, makes the job of the scientists at the National Research Council (NRC) of Canada particularly crucial.

“[Time] is one of the most fundamental ways we organize the world,” says Prof. Russell Redman, a radio astronomer at the NRC, the organisation in charge of maintaining official time for the country.

nated Universal Time (UTC), runs on atomic clocks, which are kept synchronized all over the world to a precision of about three nanoseconds – that is, three billionths of a second. For Redman, this precision is a profound development from the traditional method of using the day as the fundamental unit for time measurement.

“In precise time-keeping, the day is actually a sloppy unit,” says Redman, who points out that the changes in the length of



▲ Jerry King.



▲ Maya calendar in Andres Quintana Roo, San Miguel de Cozumel, Mexico.

Photo by Xiaozhuli, Flickr

the day over the course of a year are about 100,000 times larger than the precision of a second. In fact, due to a gradual slowing of the Earth’s rotation, the current day is off by almost eight hours from what it was during the Roman Empire.

For feng shui master Jerry King, the science of time measurement has different implications.

“When is it a good time for you to make high risk investments, to get married...[or] to buy property can all be calculated,” says King, founder and president of White Dragon Consulting.

King, who is fluent in English, Chinese and Spanish, and has knowledge of Arabic, is also a big fan of the history of time-

keeping. According to the Vancouver-based polyglot, the Chinese calendar system founded on the Five Element Theory has been in use for over 4000 years in China.

The Five Element Theory is based on the idea that the energies of five elements – water, wood, earth, fire and metal – are all active to different degrees depending on the year, day, hour, place or direction. Originally used for agricultural purposes to determine the best planting and harvesting cycles, the theory was eventually found to be equally effective for individuals, whose luck could be calculated based on the specific interplay of energies present at the time of birth.

“This is all logic,” says King, who has written a number of articles with predictions about world leaders and celebrities, including Kim Jong-Un and Justin Bieber.

Another culture with a strong belief in the interconnectedness of nature, people and time is the Maya.

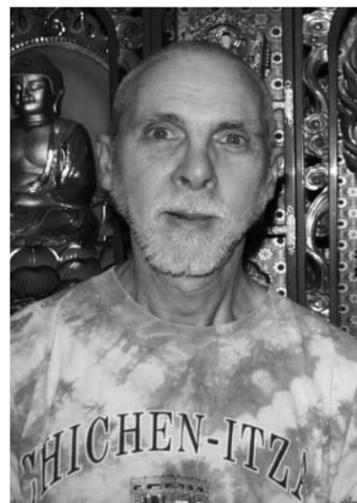
“The Maya think of time as divine,” says University of British Columbia professor Marvin Cohodas, an expert in Maya art history and an exhibited basket weaver. “All deities have life cycles and they are regenerated.”

Cohodas explains that an understanding of the Maya calendar, which consists of several cycles or counts of different lengths with no correlation to seasonal changes, depends on knowledge of the agricultural cycles of maize. From the annual planting, growing and ripening of their staple crop, the Maya draw parallel concepts of dying, transformation and rebirth.

“In the same way that maize sustains people, people sustain maize,” says Cohodas, indicating that such co-dependency blurs the distinction between agriculture and religion.

“Maize is divine... like the whole cosmos, it goes through cycles of destruction and creation,” he says.

As for the purported apocalypse at the end of the Maya long-count calendar on December 21, 2012, Cohodas makes some clarifications.



▲ Professor Marvin Cohodas.

Photo courtesy of Marvin Cohodas

“The ancient Maya view was the cosmos would be recycled. The Maya today think it’s a good chance for a kind of renewal,” he says.

Nakamoto, who is not religious, is not worried about the end of the world. However, if given the opportunity, he would love to be able to travel back in time to explore the origins of such beliefs.

“I want to investigate...see what actually happened and how it affected people,” he says. For now, tracking the present is most important. ☞

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Left Bank



It's no secret: workers want and deserve a voice in politics

Last Friday's front page of the *Province* featured photos of NDP leader Adrian Dix and B.C. Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair, promising shocking revelations inside. What was the big news?

"Unions across B.C. are in 'extensive' pre-election talks with the NDP, and the party's labour platform is being developed with the B.C. Federation of Labour, according to a document obtained Thursday by [the] *Province*."

The article went on, quoting a B.C. Liberal spokesperson: "Adrian Dix tried to fool people that he was a moderate with a modest agenda... He just got busted."

“Corporate influence over politics is seen as natural. When workers demand a say in politics, however, it's a shocking revelation, a nefarious conspiracy.

Well, not really. Actually, the *Province* front page might as well have reported the shocking news that Vancouver could expect rain this winter, or that they had obtained secret documents showing Jimmy Pattison had quite a bit of money.

The truth, it turns out, is that the document "obtained" by the *Province* was widely distributed at last month's B.C. Federation of Labour convention in downtown Vancouver.

As it happens, I attended the morning of the labour convention when delegates debated and discussed their political action committee's report.

Held in the cavernous new convention centre building, the labour meeting's venue was a reminder of the wealth that exists in our society and of what we can build with our collective labour.

In that comfortable setting, nearly 2000 delegates of labour unions from across the province gathered to discuss the real, grinding hardship faced by working people and the poor in B.C.



▲ Adrian Dix.

A dozen years of B.C. Liberal government has resulted in a wider-than-ever gap between the haves and the have-nots, between the rich and the poor, between Labour and Capital.

It's no secret that the Liberals are a coalition pulled together to defend the interests of big business. When Gordon Campbell came into office back in 2001, some of his first acts were aimed at weakening the power of labour unions: ripping up public sector contracts to open the door for contracting out and privatization; changing the labour code to make it harder to unionize a workplace and easing restric-

tions on child labour. There was a period of relative labour peace as the government agreed to long-term contracts designed to avoid strikes and disruptions around the 2010 Olympics. But 2012 has seen a return to strikes and lockouts, especially in the public sector.

So it's no surprise – and also no secret – that B.C.'s labour movement wants to see the Liberals replaced with the NDP, a party with organic, traditional ties to the labour movement. That morning at the labour convention, countless delegates stood up to urge their fellow workers to mobilize for the NDP in the May 2013 election. Some raised important concerns

that too much energy and money was going into electoral politics, and not enough into organizing workers who don't yet enjoy the benefits of unions. Yet the desire to see the end of the B.C. Liberals' stint in power was unanimous.

Immediately after the delegates' discussion wrapped up, Adrian Dix was invited to speak, and he was given a warm reception as he proudly listed the labour movement's contributions to helping make our society more decent and humane.

Dix spelled out some of what he would do for workers' rights in B.C. The speech was measured and self-consciously limited in what he promised, as has been Dix's approach since becoming Opposition leader. He even made light of the role the mainstream media played in setting the limits of political discourse, citing a talk radio host who advised him to "shake hands but not embrace" the labour movement.

You never hear mainstream media voices telling Christy Clark not to embrace big business. It's a subtle but pervasive bias that reflects the limits of democracy under the reigning neo-liberal capitalist economic system. Corporate influence over politics is seen as natural. When workers demand a say in politics, however, it's a shocking revelation, a nefarious conspiracy.

In reality all politics reflects the ongoing conflict over money and power – the class struggle. And it's absolutely no secret whose side the B.C. Liberals are on.

Premier Christy Clark, at her party's recent convention, made it clear by celebrating "Free Enterprise Friday." That's not even newsworthy, but imagine the uproar if the NDP had a "Workers Wednesday," let alone a "Socialist Saturday."

Big media polices the vocabulary of our political discussion in the interest of big money. I'd like to think that the influence of these corporate media outlets is shrinking, with the rise of alternative outlets and social media.

But be aware and read all media critically; we can expect many more absurd cover stories from the *Province* and friends between now and May's election. ✉

see

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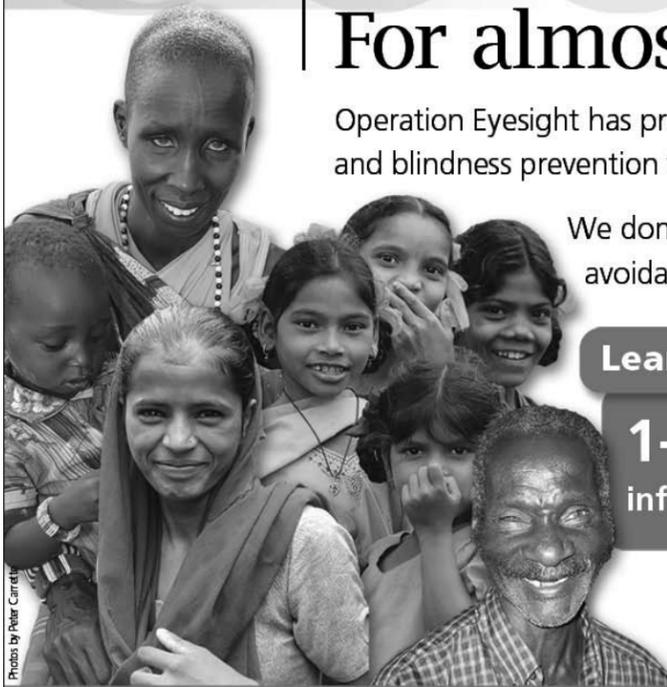
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Jon Washburn – *Music for A Child's Christmas in Wales*

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Toy makers carve out simplicity

by SOPHIA HYEYOEN KIM

British-born Canadian Gary Owens is a self-taught toy maker who looks forward to the Christmas season each year. Owens casual hobby as a toy maker quickly grew into a successful home business, and then into the internationally renowned Tuff Toys store, established in 1987.

Owens recognized the difficulties of making a living as a toy maker from the beginning.

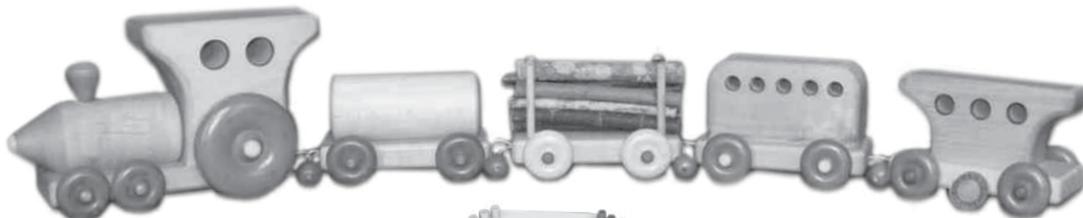
dren from many different cultures," says Owens.

Chris Weston is the President of The Hamilton Toy Museum (THM), and like Owens, he recognizes children's enchantment with toys and the importance of toys in childhood development. THM is the only museum in Canada that features the history of toys. Part of its mandate is to preserve the cultural heritage of toys, with a focus on Canadian traditions.

"Toys are important tools for

Schmuck states that toys reflect culture and reality, and open doors for children to connect ideas, build identities and develop personalities. However, Schmuck believes that toys have become merely "bartered goods" between parents and their children, a means of self-occupation and symbols of consumer desires.

Rhonda Pummell, local toymaker and owner of Knotty Toys, believes there is still a magic to handmade toys that overshadows consumer-



Photos courtesy of Tuff Toys

When Tuff Toys first opened, Owens did all of the logging, manufacturing, marketing and distribution of his products himself.

"Now I have three jobs and make toys as a hobby," says Owens.

Despite the hardships of running a handmade toy business, especially with the competition of large toy manufacturers whose products are made in China, Owens says that toy making is a great hobby and that he still delights in making toys.

"It is always a treat to watch the eyes of children when they see my booth. Many small ones remember me from year to year," says Owens.

Owens has donated thousands of toys to the local food bank during the holiday season over the past ten years on behalf of Salmon Arm Volunteer Fire Department, of which he has been a member for 23 years. He also sent three boxes of small toy cars to a kids club and school in Zimbabwe in 2010.

"It is truly a privilege to know that my toys are all over the world and being enjoyed by chil-

child development. They not only develop gross and fine motor skills, but help children role play and develop empathy skills," says Weston.

Weston does not believe that handcrafted toys make much difference on the development of a child compared to factory-manufactured toys. However, some modern toys with too many features can stunt the child's imagination by doing too much, says Weston.

Prof. Egon Schmuck at the University of Erfurt in Germany also believes that toys play an essential role in childhood development, and that they are essential building blocks of culture.

"In history, play has always been a culture-creating activity. All the different areas of culture (language, dance, music, theatre, customs, etc.) developed from play," says Schmuck.

ism and keeps her customers coming back. She and her husband, Ray Pummell, started making toys in their garage and gradually expanded their business when they joined Circle Craft Co-operative.

Although her business may not bring in as much profit as large toy corporations, Rhonda feels that it is important for customers to have more options for buying local, quality wooden toys.

"There's a lot of people concerned with the materials used in toys from a safety aspect, the finish on the toys, the chemicals that are used," says Rhonda.

The sustainability of her products is a top priority, says Rhonda. Even the toy packaging contains vegetable dyes and recycled material. She says there is a movement towards using more sustainable materials for toys.

Rhonda believes that the reason customers keep coming back to her store is because of a few defining characteristics in handmade toys that set them apart from factory-manufactured toys.

"Each toy has its character. It is not exactly the same as any other one," says Rhonda. ✎

► "Verbatim" from page 1

peers truly thought we lived in igloos and it snowed year-round.

"But Vancouver shares a border with Seattle," I exclaimed.

Didn't matter – all Canadians live in a perpetual blizzard.

In my 20s I showed Vancouver off to a family friend from the United Kingdom. He loved the West Coast. At least I thought he did, until one night at 2 a.m. when I was tired of the Vancouver night scene. He noted how conservative and reserved Canadians seemed: we never wanted to party past two in the morning. Oh, and everyone took the use of recreational drugs way too seriously.

Wait. What?! Vancouver – the heroin capital of the world, the city that nearly invented marijuana use – didn't do enough drugs?

He said most Brits felt this way about Canadians. We don't take risks, we only party on the weekends. We don't know how to "tie one off" on a Tuesday night.

Then there's the German perspective that came from a student I briefly dated in my late 20s who was living in Vancouver. His view came out one day on Granville Street when a woman apologized for stepping in front of us.

"That's what I hate about Canadians," he sputtered.

I gave him a quizzical look.

"You always say sorry for the silliest things like walking past someone, and you're all nice and warm on the surface, but you never want to be there for people like a true friend. In Canada, no one wants to get involved," he said.

I tried to explain that we're just a polite bunch, but he wouldn't have any of it. He felt politeness was just a cover to keep people at arm's length in our culture. I thought it was an interesting observation...and apologized for being that way.

And finally, there's the perception from my Irish colleague a few years back who took away my Italian heritage. Having a beer on a weeknight – but before 11 p.m., because I'm Canadian – I told him my boyfriend was also Irish and that I was half Italian.

"Really?" he asked, giving me a deadpan look. "And where were you both born?"

"Well, Ontario and Vancouver Island," I admitted to him.

This sent my new Irish friend on a rant – he was so tired of Canadians telling everyone they're from a different country when they were born in Canada.

"If you went to Ireland and told everyone you were Irish, they'd laugh at you. You're Canadian," he said.

What I heard from him was that I am not half Italian. Truly, up until that point, it was the most exotic thing about me.

So what have I pieced together from all of this? I've learned that

Canadians have stellar drinking water, live in snow huts, are completely conservative and reserved, are unfailingly apologetic and should have no ties to their heritage.

Then, I moved to Toronto for two years and went to journalism school with students from around the country and the world. The biggest question on everyone's lips was: Where are you from?

I always answered with enthusiasm – Vancouver! I was proud of my hometown, and my fellow students wanted to know what Vancouver was like.

I gleefully told them Vancouver is sea and mountains. It's hiking and biking. It's appreciation of First Nations art and access to the best international food and spices you can think of.

It's gluten-free bakeries that turn a profit. It's David Suzuki as our local superhero. It's knowing that *50 Shades of Grey* refers to the weather. It's having the privilege to know people from around the world who teach you the most beautiful cultural customs to integrate into your own life.

I realized I could rattle off an answer about being a Vancouverite with ease and pride. I might be a bit shaky when it comes to wrapping up the whole Canadian experience into a few sentences, but I know with every bone in my body what it's like to be a Vancouverite.

I am. Vancouver. ✎

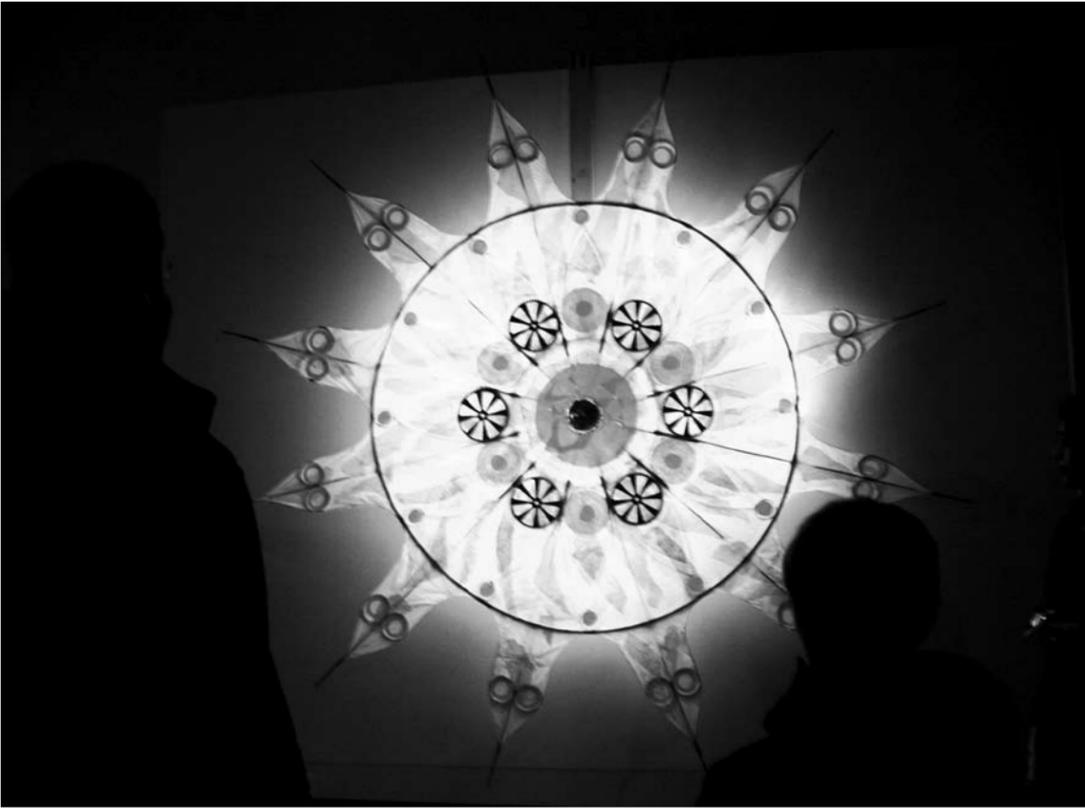


Photo courtesy of Secret Lantern Society

▲ Mandala at the Roundhouse.

Lantern Festival lights up darkest night of the year

by PHOEBE YU

On the darkest night of the year, Vancouver's annual Winter Solstice Lantern Festival brings beauty and creativity to five neighbourhoods in anticipation of the sun's return and longer daylight hours.

In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice is the time when the Tropic of Cancer is farthest away from the sun, marking the shortest day of the year, usually around Dec. 21.

Naomi Singer, artistic director of the Secret Lantern Society, which produces the festival, says many people are affected by the darkness of the season, but every day after the solstice brings more sunlight and cause for celebration.

From ancient to modern times, every culture has had its own version of winter solstice celebrations. In Persia, fires were burned as a symbolic act of the sun's defeat over darkness. The Romans



▲ Performers under the Tree of Life at the Roundhouse.

dedicated this time of year to the god of seedtime, Saturn, and exchanged gifts to commemorate the event. It's argued that even present-day Christmas has roots in these pagan traditions.

"Many cultures celebrate the winter solstice. It's actually a physical relationship of our planet to the sun," Singer explains.

Singer adds that ancient cultures revered this moment because it symbolized the return

minate at Britannia Community Centre.

One of the highlights of the festival is the Labyrinth of Light, which is held at the Roundhouse and Britannia community centres. Helmut Jaskolski, author of the book *Labyrinth: Symbol of Fear, Rebirth and Liberation*, suggests that the concept of the labyrinth stems from the Greek myth of Theseus and Ariadne, but it shows up in other places as well.

“It's a very essential, primal kind of celebration.

Naomi Singer, artistic director, Secret Lantern Society

of the sun, meaning food would grow again, and animals would return.

"It's a very essential, primal kind of celebration," she says.

The festival started in 1993, when the parks board called for a local arts community project. Singer says that she wanted to do a festival that would bring many people together and, since the winter solstice is universally celebrated, it would do just that.

The celebrations will take place in the East Side, Yaletown, Granville Island, Southeast False Creek and Chinatown neighbourhoods. Each location, except the East Side, will begin with a procession of attendees and their lanterns, and then end at a designated community centre.

The East Side has partnered with the In the House Festival to start things off with intimate concerts inside select homes, follow with the procession and cul-

It has been found in an ancient Egyptian seal, cathedrals and art.

Roy Liu, special events coordinator at the Roundhouse Community Centre in Yaletown, says that the candles are set up in a specific pathway to form the labyrinth. He emphasizes that it's a spiritual experience where people can meditate while walking through the maze. This year people can avoid lineups and book their tickets online.

At Southeast False Creek, event highlights include a shadow puppet show, stilt walkers and the Legion of Flying Monkeys Orchestra, where the musicians play instruments made out of wood and plants carved by artist David Gowman.

On Granville Island, the Vancouver Morris Men, an English Morris dance group, will be performing, as well as traditional African dancer, Jacky Essombe.

In Chinatown, people can celebrate the Chinese winter solstice, dong zhi, which marks the arrival of the yang (light) energy. Visitors can also walk through lantern-filled Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Park.

Singer says everyone has their own personal experience of the festival and the labyrinth but, for her, the goal was to bring a sense of beauty to the community.

"I want to give people a chance to express creativity and to experience beauty and to gather together in celebration," Singer says. ✎

The Winter Solstice Lantern Festival is happening Friday, Dec. 21, 6 p.m.–10 p.m. Donations encouraged.



Photos courtesy of Secret Lantern Society

▲ The Labyrinth of Light at the Roundhouse.



Variety's Got Talent presented by Coast Capital Savings is BC's premier talent search for BC's next singing sensation!

Jan 2nd–Jan 16th:

Video auditions accepted at www.varietysgottalent.ca

- o VGT is open to everyone from the ages 13-29 who reside in BC.
- o All auditions must be submitted online
- o All videos will be judged by music producer Su Bailey and Sam Feldman & Associates.

Jan 15th–Jan 26th:

Top 9 Audition Videos are selected for the VGT Finals and remaining Top 20 for the People's Choice Competition.

Jan 27th–Feb 3rd:

Variety's 'People's Choice' competition on The Province's website.

- o Public votes for their favorite video of the remaining Top 20 audition videos.
- o The competitor with the most votes will win a spot in the VGT Finals.

Friday, Feb 8th (10:30am–4:00pm):

VGT Boot Camp at Tom Lee Music Granville St

- o 10 VGT Finalists receive performance, singing, and stylist coaching from industry professionals.

Saturday, Feb 9th (7:30pm–10:00pm):

VGT Finals at the River Rock Theatre

- o Top 10 Audition Videos & the Variety 'People's Choice' winner will each perform a song.
- o The panel of celebrity judges include: Bruce Allen; Steve Darling, Global TV morning news anchor; Stuart Derdeyn, The Province arts columnist; and more
- o Tickets for the VGT Finals are \$10 plus service charges, and will be available Jan 6th at www.varietysgottalent.ca.

The VGT Prize:

- o Rising Star Music Package (\$600 Tom Lee gift certificate, songwriting lesson with Colin Wiebe, and TBD).
- o Appearance on the Variety Show of Hearts Telethon on Global TV BC on Saturday, Feb 16th.

Established in 2011, Variety's Got Talent attracted hundreds of submissions from singing talents across the province in its first year. The inaugural winner, Shylo Sharity from Langley has continued to pursue her singing career and opened for Wynona Judd. Last year's winner, 16 year old Asha Diaz, just released her first CD *Jumpin' Off*.



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Please call 604-324-7733,
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to find out how we can best help you.



Diverse views of Gastown

Gastown is Vancouver's oldest neighbourhood. It is home to many bars, businesses, shops and restaurants. The diversity of the neighbourhood has contributed to it becoming a tourist's delight as they search for souvenirs, art, and snap a quick picture.

Year after year the area is host to thousands of people from around the world. The view of North Vancouver from outside of Steamworks Restaurant, and the faux heritage steam clock at the corner of Water Street and Cambie are just two examples of places to see. Photographer Ana Chi has captured the essence of this famous neighbourhood through her lens.



▲ Aboriginal artists practise their craft along the streets of Gastown. Local artists offer alternative souvenirs to tourists.



▲ Some of the diverse stores in Gastown: Gassy Jack Cigars (top) and La Casita Mexican Restaurant (bottom).



▲ German tourists take souvenir pictures near Waterfront Station.



▲ Chinese tourists take a picture of the famous Steam Clock.



▲ The cobble streets of Gastown guide the way for all tourists.

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Newcomers merge Canadian gift-giving traditions with their own

by ANNE-LAURENCE GODEFROY

Claudia Moser, 32, strolls along the aisle of a craft shop, holding tiny organza bags and Christmas stickers in her hands. Though she will be away from friends and family this holiday season, Moser is one of many Vancouverites who hail from afar and are determined to maintain their native gift-giving Christmas traditions.

For Moser, who traces her roots

to Germany, this means making an Advent Kalender for her boyfriend.

"There are not many German gift shops in Vancouver," Moser says as she pays for her items. "So I went for the Canadian-style craft store."

Traditionally, Christians use Advent calendars to count down

to Germany, this means making an Advent Kalender for her boyfriend.

“As an artist, I aim at sharing my Chinese background in the mainstream culture and create a hybrid identity here.

Gu Xiong, artist and UBC art professor

to Germany, this means making an Advent Kalender for her boyfriend.

"There are not many German gift shops in Vancouver," Moser says as she pays for her items. "So I went for the Canadian-style craft store."

Traditionally, Christians use Advent calendars to count down



▲ Claudia Moser holds newly purchased holiday items.

and celebrate the days in anticipation of the day of Jesus' birth. Many Germans craft the calendars themselves and offer them to family members. Claudia's calendar will feature 24 little gift bags containing various sweets and presents, strung together by a ribbon and a Christmas tree branch.

But items for her calendar are scarcer in Vancouver than in her hometown of Münster, so Moser – like many other immigrants – finds that following her own traditions is not always as easy as she would like.

With one in five Canadians born overseas and about 90 per cent of British Columbians having a non-Canadian ethnic background according to Statistics Canada, there is a real mix of cultural celebra-

tions and gift-giving traditions in Vancouver.

But some ethnicities are luckier than others: with about 56 per cent of landed immigrants arriving in Canada each year coming from Asia, Chinese, Japanese and other Asian cultural traditions are easier to maintain here.

Given the history of Chinese immigration in British Columbia, Chinese customs have deep roots in Vancouver and are reinforced

constantly by the 30,000 new Chinese immigrants that arrive in Canada every year.

As a result, authentic gifts such as Red Envelopes – containing money and offered to non-married young people on birthdays, funerals, new years and weddings – are popular and easy to purchase in the city. In fact, most Canadian banks give them away to their customers on Chinese New Year.

While Christmas is not traditionally celebrated in China – only about four per cent of Chinese are Christians – many Chinese Canadians have adopted the celebration after stripping it of its religious significance.

UBC art professor and artist Gu Xiong explains that Chinese families see Christmas as a great opportunity to reunite in addition to traditional Chinese holidays.

Xiong strives to keep a balance between his heritage and Western customs. In fact, he believes that a hybrid culture is expanding in Vancouver, where East meets West.

"It was great to discover a new culture and learn a new language, but I felt like it was time for me to recreate my culture," he explains. "As an artist, I aim at sharing my Chinese background in the mainstream culture and create a hybrid identity here. That is what I enjoy the most."

Embracing this hybrid identity, Xiong celebrates both Christmas and Chinese New Year with his family.

Vancouver's large Japanese community also benefits from the widespread availability of traditional gifts and customs.

However, Makiko Hara, curator of the Vancouver Internation-

al Centre for Contemporary Art, admits Japanese gift protocol isn't always easy to maintain. In Japan, not only the choice of the object is important, but also its wrapping and the timing of the exchange.

To her, Japanese and Canadian cultures are blending for the best. "Gift-giving in Japan is rather a costly tradition," she says. "Canadians have a more practical side."

For other communities, gift-

giving customs can be trickier to maintain, if they are possible at all.

Moser struggles to find authentic German material to make her calendar. She has an advantage: there is now a German Christmas market in downtown Vancouver. Unlike most craft markets which focus on local products, it features exclusively German and Polish-German arts and crafts.

"I might just go there and buy a calendar," she laughs. ☞



▲ Christmas trees and Chinese dragons – Christmas in Vancouver.

Photo by Anne-Laurence Godefroy

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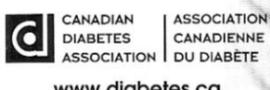
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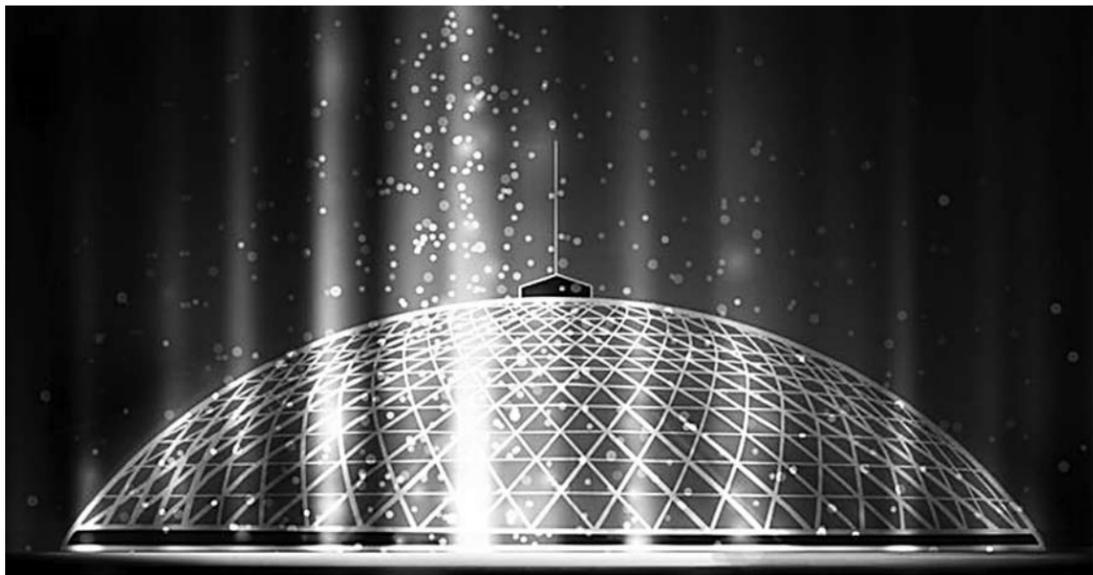
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Cultural Calendar

December 11, 2012–January 8, 2013



▲ The Bloedel Conservatory lights up for the holiday season until January 1, 2013.

by PHOEBE YU

Enjoy your holidays with Holiday Choral Music, Breakfast with Santa or the Bloedel Conservatory's Jewel Box of Lights. Other notable events: Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada and The End of the World Part III.

An Evening at the Penthouse Nightclub

Tuesday, December 11
Tours: 6:00 p.m., 6:45 p.m., 7:30 p.m.
The Penthouse
1019 Seymour St., Vancouver
604-683-2111
hvs-penthouse.eventbrite.ca

Brought to you by the Heritage Vancouver Society, owner Danny Filippone hosts an evening of stories, dining and drink along with a "behind the scenes" tour of this historic business, established in 1947. Tickets \$25 members, \$30 non-members.

Holiday Choral Music

Friday, December 14
1:30 p.m.–2:30 p.m.
North Vancouver District Public Library
3675 Banff Ct., North Vancouver
604-929-3727
www.nvdpl.ca

A special holiday performance courtesy of the Sherwood Park Elementary School Choir. Open to the public.

John Adams' El Niño Vancouver Bach Choir

Saturday, December 15, 8 p.m.
Orpheum Theatre
884 Granville St., Vancouver
604-696-4290
www.vancouverbachchoir.com

The choir's seasonal presentation is a retelling of the birth of Christ through music and poetry. Composer: John Adams, Conductor: Leslie Dala. Tickets \$25 to \$59.

Breakfast with Santa

Saturday, December 15,
10 a.m.–1 p.m.
Thunderbird Community Centre
2311 Cassiar St., Vancouver
604-713-1818
www.thunderbirdcc.ca

A family event with Santa featuring a pancake breakfast, crafts, games, pictures with Santa and more. See website for details. Tickets \$4.

Vancouver Farmers Market Holiday Market

Saturday, December 15
10 a.m.–4 p.m.
Croatian Cultural Centre
3250 Commercial Dr., Vancouver
604-879-3276
www.eatlocal.org

With over 85 local vendors offering a selection of the finest food, arts and crafts and home accessories, there's no excuse for giving a run-of-the-mill gift to anyone this year. Silent auction, free coat check and gift wrapping (pay by donation). Open to the public.

Luminescence: The Silver of Peru

Until December 16
See website for hours
UBC Museum of Anthropology
6393 NW Marine Dr., Vancouver
604-827-5932
www.moa.ubc.ca

Discover the silverwork of pre-Columbian Peru in this exhibit featuring treasures from before the Spanish conquest to the present day. Tickets \$16.75 adults, \$14.50 students/seniors, group rates available.

International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers

Monday, December 17
8 p.m.–10 p.m.
Prophouse Café
1636 Venables St., Vancouver
604-733-5665
www.nakedtruth.ca

Show your support while enjoying poetry, singing and other performances. Organizers will be collecting coats, gloves and umbrel-



▲ Vancouver Bach Choir.

las to distribute to street-based sex workers after the event. Open to the public.

Winter Solstice Sacred Drum Circle & 2012 Ceremony

Monday, December 17
7:30 p.m.–9 p.m.
The Lion's Den
770 Commercial Dr., Vancouver
778-855-9957
www.carolweaver.com

Drum circle in celebration of the winter solstice. Open to all skill levels and types of drums. Suggested donation of \$13 (pre-register), \$20 at door.

The End of the World Part III

Friday, December 21
8 p.m.
H.R. MacMillan Space Centre
1100 Chestnut St., Vancouver
604-738-7827
www.spacecentre.ca

Experience the end of the world in the Space Centre's 360° planetarium with a screening of the movie 2012, the final part in a series of discussions about the Mayan civilization's prediction of earth's final days. Tickets \$10.75, members free.

Jewel Box of Lights at the Bloedel Conservatory

Until January 1, 2013
4:30 p.m.–9 p.m.
Bloedel Conservatory
4600 Cambie St., Vancouver
604-257-8584
www.bloedel.wordpress.com

Enclosed in a triodetic dome, the park houses over 500 species of exotic plants, flowers, koi fish and more than 100 free-flying birds. At this time of year, the park will be decorated with lights and poinsettias, with holiday music playing in the background. Tickets: adults \$7, senior/youth \$5, children 12 and under \$3.50.

Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada

Until January 20
See website for hours
Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby St., Vancouver
604-662-4719
www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

The exhibit tracks the impact of conceptual art in Canada, with curated works by both prominent Canadian and international conceptual artists. Tickets: \$17.50 adults, \$12.50 students/seniors, \$6.25 children (5 and older), group rates available.

Street Photography by Denis Bouvier

I Live Multiculturalism



Here's some colour and inspiration for this dark time of year with short days and rainy weather. This is the "Multiculturalism Tree" placed in Robson Square from November 18–24. People were able to express their thoughts on how they live multiculturalism by writing on paper maple leaves attached to an actual maple tree.

The third week of every November in B.C. is Multiculturalism Week. EmbraceBC hosted this interactive public art installation. It's meant to symbolize our widespread cultural roots that unify in a beautiful way under a common Canadian icon.

The tree itself is a 20 year old Globe Norway Maple that was pruned to fit in the Robson Square location. It has now been permanently moved to Brockton Point in Stanley Park where it was planted and is expected to grow another 20 feet.

EmbraceBC is federally and provincially funded. Since 2008, they have provided tools and resources to foster the understanding of diversity and to engage communities in anti-racism and multicultural projects. Many of their resources can be ordered free, so it could be worthwhile to visit their website: embracebc.ca

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Don Richardson



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