

Program teaches
children about
human rights
Page 6



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Verbatim

Vancouver, the livable city

by JOSEPH LOPEZ

My first months as a newbie in Vancouver were spent trying to establish myself, find a job and a suitable longer-term home. And just like any excited tourist, I was imbibing all that the land had to offer. The backdrop of the North Shore Mountains beyond the Burrard Inlet is always panoramic. And if you drive the Sea to Sky Highway to Whistler, then you are in for a magnificent treat. Unless someone tailgates you too close, which seems to be dangerously a common habit in BC.

Looking for work for most immigrants in their profession has been well-documented as a wall much higher and more vertical than the Squamish Chief with steeper, narrower trails. A foreign degree is not given the same respect as a local degree. I wonder why: when achievements and successes are born throughout the world, many in non-English speaking countries. You only have to read an issue of *Canadian Immigrant* magazine to hear the disappointment from newcomers all over, and I mean all over the world. The doorman or security guard could be a medical doctor. The bar is higher for foreign-degree medical school and engineering graduates. You only have to read the local papers to see that technical and medical errors are committed by Canadian degree holders. What if the rest of the world had the same attitude? How would Canadians be able to work elsewhere?

I was surprised to learn that there is a certificate program for people wanting to be a janitor, to be an assistant to a legal assistant and so forth. To increase your chances of cleaning a classroom or an office, you can study for eight weeks and receive what one

See "Verbatim" page 5 ➤

Freedom of speech – a tool for some, a deterrent for others

Photo by Jennifer Moo

by FLORENCE HWANG

Louis Jung is keen on free speech. So keen that the international student founded the University of British Columbia (UBC) Free Speech Club.

Jung feels that Canada, North America and Europe are world renowned for their censorship culture. He doesn't like that. He says that while in the military in South Korea, he could freely express himself there and no one would take offence.

"I really like that culture where you can express yourself

even if people disagree. They will politely disagree with you. They'll be curious why you believe something instead of just outright calling you names, like racist, sexist or homophobic. It seems the list of different insults is growing nowadays," he says.

Making waves to get the conversation going

Jung, who recently came to Canada from South Korea to study architecture, decided to start a freedom of speech club as a backlash to political correctness. The club, he says, has 250 members signed up, but only 30 or so stu-

dents show up for the events. One controversial event he held was the "Make Canada Great" campaign. He got corporate sponsors to print big and bold hats with "Make Canada Great Again" on them. Before the election in the United States, he says, everyone looked down on Donald Trump.

"If I were to give a counter argument, they would call me a racist, sexist, or some kind of bad name," he says, noting that the baseball caps they themselves wore during their campaign they now consider iconic.

Two types of people responded negatively to this campaign,

says Jung: those who just yelled at them and called them names and walked away, and those who tried to argue with them. According to Jung, the latter was the best reaction the club could hope for.

"That's the best part of it [the discussions]. That's how I know I'm making a difference. If everyone is apathetic about it, I know for sure I'm just wasting my time," Jung says.

"I believe that open discussion, open debates lead to a healthy society, a healthy community, a healthy democracy. I hope

See "Freedom of Speech" page 9 ➤

Also in this issue

Tunics tell stories of resilience
Page 8



Prayers and protest underlay shadow installations
Page 10



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Community Profile



Photo by Tosh Kitagawa

Giving voice to our history

by BETTY SHEA

A panel of Japanese-Canadians will share their firsthand experiences of losing their homes, internment and separation from their family.

Landscapes of Injustice (LoI) will present “Memories of Internment and Dispossession” on Jan. 14 in the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library (VPL).

Stanger-Ross, professor of history at University of Victoria and project director of LoI, explains how the project started.

“I began research of the real estate market in east end Vancouver, and had started to do some research on the forced sale of Japanese-Canadian owned property there. And, as often happens in research, that led me down avenues that I haven’t anticipated,” he says.

Conversations to engage in

The project’s first panel was held earlier this year at LoI’s Spring Institute, in Victoria, an annual conference that brings its geographically dispersed researchers together under one roof. Michael Abe, a third-generation Japanese-Canadian and project manager of LoI notes that outside of the Japanese-Canadian community, there is little awareness of this episode of dispossession in our history.

“For some students, [the panel] was probably the most moving part of their experience at the Spring Institute. They haven’t heard the Japanese-Canadian story before and they hear firsthand from people who’ve lived through it,” he says.

Kaitlin Findlay, who is completing an MA in history at the

University of Victoria, will participate in the poster session after the panel speaks. She enjoys her involvement in LoI both from an academic and personal standpoint.

“I can see my research as being part of this larger conversation about people’s families,” she says.

This prompted her to create a forum that fosters conversations among research assistants.

“The forum is created to grapple with the question of what engaged scholarship and activism means,” says Findlay. “For me, it is a way to learn strategies to think about the ramifications of my work.”

Stanger-Ross believes this thoughtful approach is one way that the project furthers national dialogue.

“Culture is a noisy place with lots of other voices,” he says. “But we do want to be a genuinely contributing part of the conversation

“Because of my heritage, I’m very interested in seeing some of the research that goes on, putting the links together and watching it evolve,” he says.

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, most of the project’s budget goes towards employing around 25 student researchers yearly. Students generally spend two years with the project. By the end of its seven-year mandate, the project’s collective membership is expected to be sizeable.

“The project has a built-in turnover. People’s time in the project is considered an opportunity for advancing their skills,” Findlay explains.

Stanger-Ross agrees.

“I do think that we’re equipping those students to be better informed activists, to be democratic citizens, to be people who have a range of skills that would benefit the workforce. It’s the



Photo by Tosh Kitagawa

▲ Panel at the 2016 Spring Institute with Tosh Kitagawa, Mary Kitagawa, Art Miki and moderator Gregor Craigie of CBC Radio’s On The Island.

that occurs as Canadians think about the challenges of our times, this intermingling of questions around security, perceived insecurity, international migration, racial and religious differences.”

From research to outreach

Abe, who was recruited by Stanger-Ross as project manager, is active in several community organizations and uses his network to strengthen the project’s ties with the community. His interest in the project is also personal.

best teaching that I’ve done in the course of my career,” he says.

LoI has also produced teaching material for elementary and secondary schools, museum exhibits, newsletters and forums. In the next two years, the project will be transitioning from the research phase to the outreach phase and will increase its efforts to engage the larger Canadian community.

For more information, visit www.landscapesofinjustice.com.

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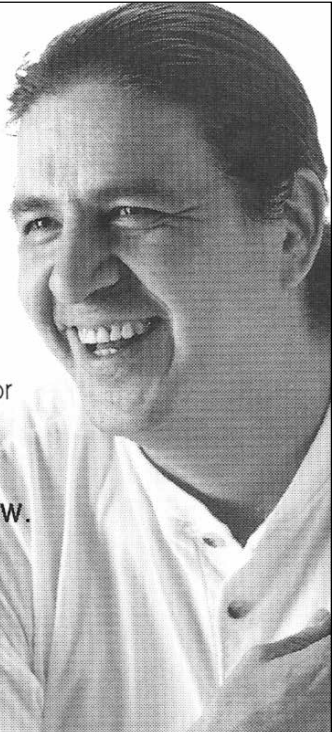
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SFU students counter extremism through competition

by NAOMI TSE

SFU professor Richard Frank decided to run his fourth year Advanced Issues in Cyber-crime class a little differently last semester. Instead of the usual lectures, presentations and papers, the class was structured around participating in a counter-extremism competition hosted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Frank completed a PhD in Computing Science and during his studies, was involved in working on crime data, which sparked his interest in criminology. He pursued another PhD in Criminology and eventually took an opportunity to teach cybercrime at SFU.

"I love programming. This job allows me to program, research,

ing. There is the direct approach: extremists glorify what they do through videos and on social media. The other way is through third-party advertisements via people who have already bought into the beliefs of the extremist group and attempt to recruit more members by sharing the radical ideas.

After the class spoke to various community leaders and law enforcement personnel, they decided that the theme of their campaign was to target the silent majority. Frank explains that the majority of people are accepting of immigrants, but we don't hear from them.

Matty Taghipour, a student in Frank's class, says that through their research, they learned how important a sense of community was in preventing people from turning to violent extremism.

"People go into violent extremism because they don't have a

“What we want to do is embrace everyone’s similarities, show that we’re not so different from one another and that we don’t have to hurt one another.

Matty Taghipour, student in Advanced Issues in Cybercrime

have students conduct analyses and write ups, and it's the perfect field for me," says Frank. "I get to work in crime, but at the same time my passion for computers is possible."

Voices against extremism campaign

Frank explains that the goal of the competition was to have university students design and implement digital initiatives to combat extremist groups that recruit online. Before the fall semester started, Frank was worried not enough students would enroll for the class; he began advertising to potential students with the prerequisites about the competition over the summer.

"The people [in the class] knew what they were getting into and they were quite enthusiastic about it, which was very welcome to see," says Frank.

sense of community and they turn to a wild extremist group," says Taghipour, 23. "It comes down to building a connection. What we want to do is embrace everyone's similarities, show that we're not so different from one another and that we don't have to hurt one another."

Taghipour says that the goal of the campaign is to encourage the silent majority to take a stand and tackle extremism in their own communities.

Making it to the finals

As a result of the class' efforts, they made it to the finals of the OSCE's competition. Taghipour, four other team members and Frank were able to travel to Hamburg, Germany to represent Canada. According to Taghipour, over forty teams had applied and the SFU team was chosen as one of the top three. The team



▲ OSCE competition members.

The students put together a website, Voices Against Extremism, to showcase all the activities they were doing for the campaign. This included an interview series titled "Stories of Resilience" and also an art gallery at HiVE.

"The purpose of the art gallery was to attract people to the campaign and showcase how different cultures viewed Canada," says Frank.

The silent majority

According to Frank, there are two ways that extremist groups recruit through online market-

had to give two presentations and placed second in the competition.

"It's been a whirlwind experience and something that I will remember for the rest of my life," says Taghipour.

Taghipour says that various members of the class are now working on forming a non-profit organization based on the campaign so that they can continue with other projects and events that they have in mind. ✎

For more information on the campaign, please visit www.voicesagainstextremism.ca.



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DERRICK O'KEEFE

Left Bank



Want to stop Trumpism spreading to Canada? Support public education

In just a few days, Donald Trump will be sworn in as the President of the United States. It's really happening. Feelings of anxiety, despair, and disbelief are hard to shake. As the northern neighbour of a declining empire now led by an erratic and uncouth bully, what can we do in face of this surreal new political reality?

There's actually a lot we can do, starting with offering our unqualified solidarity to those endangered by Trump and the rise of the atavistic and xenophobic far right. We should take this terrifying moment as an opportunity to build stronger links with groups south of the border fighting for migrant justice and LBGTQ rights. After all, if Washington state alone had decided the U.S. election we'd be celebrating the inauguration of President Bernie Sanders. (Bernie won a landslide in the state's Democratic primary.)

For people in B.C., our immediate southern neighbours in Washington share progressive values and arguably have better organized movements for social justice and equality. Trump and everything he represents is anathema to the vast majority of people in Seattle, and their municipal government has made it clear they will remain a "sanctuary city" for migrants.

There's a long-held Canadian tradition of getting smug about U.S. politics, especially when there's a Republican in the White House. With Trump starring in a reality TV remake of Idiocracy it will be hard to resist the temptation of smugness, but we should because it's misplaced and unproductive.

The cultural and political swamp of neoliberalism from which Trump emerged is present throughout North America, and we'd be foolish to think the virus of Trumpism can't spread north. By neoliberalism I don't just mean the deregulation, privatization and regressive tax changes that have for decades systematically transferred wealth from the working classes to the rich and super-rich; I'm also thinking of our culture, which has made the accumulation of wealth an unquestioned virtue. Our society treats billionaires like the ancient Greek gods, worshipping them despite their capricious, self-indulgent behaviour (and not infrequent transgressions against women). Celebrity Apprentice, and indeed the Trump presidency, is what happens when for decades a society treats Gordon Gekko's favourite line – "greed is good" – as a motto instead of a warning. When you worship oligarchs and the super-rich, it's only a matter of time before one of them descends from their Olympus (or their tower on Fifth Avenue) to take on formal political rule over us lowly mortals.

There have been countless post-mortems analyzing how Trump defeated Hillary Clinton (though let's not forget of course that he lost the popular vote), but amongst the recriminations many have missed the bigger conclusion: Democracy and billionaires are incompatible. If you want to know why Hillary Clinton lost, just look at that ridicu-

lous photograph of the Trumps and Clintons laughing it up at The Donald's last wedding.

Back to Canada: What can we do stop Trumpism? Of course we should resist the Conservative leadership candidates selling cheap knockoff versions of Trump's xenophobia (Kellie Leitch with her immigrant screening proposals) and bombast (Ayn Rand acolyte Kevin O'Leary).

More importantly, we should champion our institutions that promote knowledge and equality. At the top of that list is our embattled public education system. Here we should pause to thank the BC Teachers Federation, who recently won a long battle against the BC Liberal government. In 2002, then Education Minister Christy Clark and the Liberals stripped teachers of their right to collectively bargain on issues like smaller class sizes. In 2011, the Liberals' bill was ruled unconstitutional. The Liberals' passed another bill in 2012, which was once again deemed unconstitutional. After a landmark Supreme Court ruling in November, this month the government finally conceded defeat.

Last week, Education Minister Mike Bernier announced \$50 million for "priority" hiring of new teachers and support staff. "This new funding will help to kick-start the changes we all know are required following the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision," Bernier stated. The BCTF welcomed the emergency funding infusion, but estimated the Court ruling means that approximately \$300 million a year of funding will be needed. Teachers, parents, and the courts should never have had to spend 15 years to make this government do the right thing for public education.

High quality, free education for all is the bedrock of a democratic society. In fact, a society in which educational opportunities are grossly unequal is bound to produce monstrosities like Trump, who never misses a chance to rhetorically wave around his degree from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, part of the "Ivy League" where the children of the elite are sent to reinforce their class-based sense of superiority.

Ultimately we should extend fully accessible public education beyond kindergarten to Grade 12. There's no reason we can't have affordable pre-K child care and free post-secondary education for all.

Society can afford equal education for all, but only if we stop worshipping the billionaires and start taxing them properly instead. Trump has refused to release his tax returns, but he's openly boasted about taking advantage of loopholes that allowed him to pay little or no federal taxes for many years. And there would be no President Trump if he hadn't inherited a fortune and a head start on his real estate empire from his father.

Trump is a giant billboard advertising the need to increase income and wealth taxes on the super-rich. Billionaires aren't gods, and they shouldn't be our masters.✂



MOSAIC

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Public Service Announcement Free Community Activities January 16-31, 2017

How to Take Fun Pictures Using Your Smart Phone 55+

🕒 January 20 – February 24 Fridays, 12:30 pm–3:00 pm

📍 MOSAIC Brentwood Learning Centre, 101-1899 Willingdon Ave, Burnaby

☎ Tim 604 438 8214 ext 114

✉ tchow@mosaicbc.org

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🕒 January 16 & 17 Monday & Tuesday, 1:00 pm–4:00 pm

📍 MOSAIC Language Center, 2730 Commercial Drive, Vancouver

☎ Joy 604 438 8214 ext 211 or 604 254 9626 ext 484

✉ jjhocson@mosaicbc.org

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🕒 January 21 Saturday, 10:00 am–4:00 pm

📍 Brentwood Community Resource Centre, 2055 Rosser Ave, Burnaby

☎ Eliza 604 438 8214 ext 209 or 604 292 3907

🕒 January 20, Friday, 2:00 pm–4:00 pm

📍 Tommy Douglas Library, 7311 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Angel 604 438 8214 ext 104

✉ echan@mosaicbc.org

✉ atse@mosaicbc.org

Citizenship preparation class (English with Chinese Support)

🕒 January 24 & 25 Tuesday & Wednesday, 6:00 pm–9:00 pm

📍 Tommy Douglas Library, 7311 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Angel 604 438 8214 ext 104

✉ atse@mosaicbc.org

Fall Prevention Mobile Clinic (Need pre-registration) English with language support

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🕒 January 20 Friday, 45 minutes (between 9:30 am and 4:00 pm)

📍 MOSAIC Burnaby Centre for Immigrants, 5902 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Daisy 604 254 9626 or 604 438 8214

✉ daisyau@mosaicbc.org

Navigating the Health Care System (Mandarin with English)

Learn about the BC Health Care System, available medical services, what you can expect from these services and how to communicate effectively with health care providers

🕒 January 24, Tuesday, 10:00 am–12:00 pm

📍 MOSAIC Burnaby Centre for Immigrants, 5902 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Daisy 604 254 9626 or 604 438 8214

✉ daisyau@mosaicbc.org

Canadian Tax System (English with Farsi/Dari)

Participate in the workshop to increase your knowledge on the tax system in Canada.

🕒 January 18 Wednesday, 10:30 am–12:30 pm

📍 Tommy Douglas Library, 7311 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Rafi 778 837 8529 or Sara at 778-990-5150

Settlement and Adjustment (Arabic)

Participate in the workshop to increase your knowledge and share information on the settlement process in Canada.

🕒 January 20 Friday, 10:00 am–12:00 pm

📍 MOSAIC Moving Ahead Office, #310-7155 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Amal 604 726 9757, Shwan 604 368 8676, Ali 604 715 9772 or Suhair 604 365 7254

Canadian Tax System (Tigrinya and Amharic)

Participate in the workshop to increase your knowledge on the tax system in Canada.

🕒 January 20 Friday, 10:00 am–12:00 pm

📍 Edmonds Resource Centre, #208-7335 Canada Way, Burnaby

☎ Tigist 604 306 3307

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🕒 January 20 Friday, 3:30 pm–5:30 pm

📍 MOSAIC Moving Ahead Office, #310-7155 Kingsway, Burnaby

☎ Noor at 604 779 1398 or Sara 778 990 5150

Free Legal Clinic for Low Income Temporary Foreign Workers with Access Pro Bono Lawyers

Register for a free 30-minute legal consultation with Access Pro Bono lawyers on issues related to Temporary Foreign Workers on immigration, such as renewing/extending your work permit, applying for permanent residency, etc. This service is for low-income migrant workers including low-skilled workers, live-in caregiver program, agricultural workers etc. Please register at least a week in advance.

🕒 January 23, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 1720 Grant St, Vancouver

☎ Girilly 604 254 9626 ext 487

✉ gcumberland@mosaicbc.org

I Belong Support Group

A free refugee program for LGBTQ immigrants and refugees that values diversity and determination. You know what is best for you; we are here to listen to what you have to say, not to tell you what to do. All activities free of charge and with language support available upon request.

Free Counselling Support Group

Meet new people, make friends and participate in fun activities.

🕒 January 30, 6:30pm – 8:30pm

☎ Darae 604 254 9626

✉ ibelong@mosaicbc.org

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

Questioning boxes, borders and invisible lines

by SUSAN HANCOCK

Curators spend time collaborating with communities to ensure each object accurately reflects the community of origin’s national history.

“The public doesn’t question the ways in which objects are displayed in museums – visitors don’t see how borders of identity are fluid, and not always divided into neat little boxes,” says Allison Adler, a UBC graduate student from the faculty of anthropology.

Adler will share her research findings at the Resident Members’ Series hosted by Green College, an interdisciplinary residency at UBC, on Jan. 23. Her talk *Questioning Boxes: Migration, Transnationalism, and Cultural Fluidity in the Museum* looks at the colonial perspective of museum exhibitions.

“I’m interested in traditional ethnographic displays in museums, and the borders that are created in these exhibits,” says Adler.

Questioning boxes

Adler believes that exhibits like the National History Museum in New York present an outdated view of cultural identity.

“We live in a globalizing world with fluidity, porous borders, migration, and because of the Internet, even collapsing borders,” she says.

As an anthropologist, Adler is keen to critique the effects of traditional museum exhibitions on cultural identity, and the societal benefits of creating exhibits that express a global perspective.

Born with mixed heritage, Adler is curious about how borders impact a society’s frame

of reference. From an early age, she observed the difficulties people had in accepting her heritage.

“Because you’re white, you’re not Hispanic enough, or you’re Hispanic and not white enough,” she says.

“I’m interested in traditional ethnographic displays in museums, and the borders that are created in these exhibits.

Allison Adler, graduate student in anthropology.

Adler explains that these criticisms create invisible borders, which prevent her from moving between her cultural identities. Through these personal experiences Adler formed her research goals.

“I’m interested in adding to the conversation of curators and progressive museums like MOA [Museum of Anthropology], who are interested in creating exhibits that demonstrate a global perspective of cultural identity,” she says.

Museums influence cultural identity

In 2003, MOA embarked on a renewal project called The Partnership of Peoples. “The idea was to make the museum more welcoming and accessible for people’s belongings held in the museum,” says Dr. Jennifer Kramer, MOA curator, First Nations Pacific Northwest. “Instead of a museum being a place where the community of origin feel as though their belongings have been taken and used without their control, MOA

wanted to make sure that we returned the control, or at least, recognize the historical wrong and work towards a decolonized future,” says Kramer.

More recently Adler assisted Kramer with a temporary exhibit called *Layers of Influence*:

lets her explore ideas with other graduates and post-doctoral students. About a hundred students are selected each year from different faculties at UBC. Residents are expected to build interdisciplinary networks with other students across campus.

“As a university, we have a responsibility to ensure faculties and students talk to one another,” says Mark Vessey, PhD, principal at Green College. “We don’t just want brilliant physicists; we want physicists who are talking to philosophers,” he says.

Adler is one of two anthropologists who reside at Green College.

“Living here is teaching me to articulate my ideas to a wider audience of academia,” says Adler.

Presenting at the public lecture series at Green College is another opportunity for Adler to engage her peers and receive feedback on her research. She hopes attendees find her presentation thought-provoking. “Eventually, I’d like to contribute to the conversation on how we want to display cultural issues in light of migration and globalization,” says Adler.

For more information, visit www.greencollege.ubc.ca.



▲ Allison Adler presents at the Green College Residence Members’ Series.

Photo by Susan Hancock

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► “Verbatim” from page 1
college calls a “Building Service Worker” certificate. Shouldn’t training be done in-house specific to the building’s equipment and detergents? This would save on enrolment fees.

I was surprised at how many mothers take their baby strollers on public transit. I rarely see this in the US. In fact, I don’t recall seeing one, which leads to a major reason why – cars are more expensive to purchase compared

Chilliwack and Hope significantly lower than Vancouver, Surrey or Burnaby?

Under a supply management system, a euphemism for fair returns for farmers through price control (milk, eggs, meat), higher grocery bills are heavily shouldered by minimum-wage workers and families. Even if one factors in exchange rates, mileage and duty fees, cross-border shopping is often money-saving. That is if you have a car. When market forces are tightly



▲ High gas prices a factor in transit use.

to the US as reported by Canadian TV. What compounds this is the lack of car parking, even in strip malls in Vancouver. In addition, car insurance, monopolized by ICBC, means premiums are double or triple the amount of other countries. This policy severely chokes movement, and consequently, the economy.

Or perhaps it’s the gas prices? Blame it on provincial tax, the number of oil refineries working or world supply. Why is it that despite a global oil glut, gas is still drastically cheaper in Blaine, WA? Why are the pump prices in Quesnel, Lillooet or even Abbotsford,

controlled, the first casualties are the poor who cannot wait for a GST refund.

Canada claims to be a polite society, yet we hear the f-word and the s-word as frequent as a phone “ting” notification, if speech is considered one manner of showing good manners. A recent study found that Canadians are no more polite than Americans. So the US can claim to be a polite society too by Canuck standards. Vancouver is often rated as one of the most livable cities by *The Economist*. I wonder who *The Economist* talks to. Not a good representation of working-class folks, for sure.

Photo by Bob Carter

Teaching children human rights through play

by ANNA-MARIE MIRFIN

The Britannia Community Services Centre recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of *Play It Fair!*, an educational program developed by Equitas, a Canadian non-profit organization whose mandate is to promote equality, social justice and human rights throughout Canada and the world. The *Play It Fair!* Toolkit aims to teach children aged six to 12 human rights values through experiential learning, or play.

Tom Higashio, Recreational Programmer for Youth at the Britannia Community Centre, has been involved in implementing the program as part of Britannia's day camps since its first formal pilot at the centre in 2006.

"As soon as I saw how effective it was and how easy the Toolkit was to use, I was hooked," he says. "I have always been a human and children's rights advocate but the installation of the program really excited me. I knew it was something I wanted to be involved in."

Experiential learning opportunities for children

The *Play It Fair!* Toolkit takes games that children know and love and adapts them in order to provide an informal educational experience in human rights.

Higashio gives the example of musical chairs. Typically this game is about exclusion and competition but a *Play It Fair!*

adaption of the game has the children co-operate and develop strategies to get everyone onto the chairs. The game ends with a discussion about the inclusion and exclusion involved in the games and how these concepts may apply to real life.

Every *Play It Fair!* game is followed by a discussion. For Higashio, this is one of the most vital components of the learning experience.

"If anything, the discussion's the most important thing. You can go through the activity and experience it but unless you actually know why you're experiencing it you're not really learning," he says.

Higashio says they're seeing results in the children's behaviour.

"There's a lot more natural empathy," he says.

He says the Toolkit's activities, used both proactively and reactively in the day camps, have successfully been used to reduce bullying and help the children deal with anger in real life conflicts.

Program extends beyond children

Higashio says staff members at Britannia have also been influenced by their involvement with *Play It Fair!*. Some staff have gone on to become human rights journalists, educators who use *Play It Fair!* in their classrooms, or human rights advocates in their communities, both formally and informally.

"It may have started at Britannia but it's expanded so much more than that," Higashio says.



▲ Left to right: Celine McCaughran Contreras, Emma Carrigan, Jamie Smith, Ricky Tu and Alicia French.

Ela Esra Gunad, Regional Program Officer of Equitas B.C., says that some organizations like Britannia have gone as far as to integrate the principles of the program into their hiring process and have even started to involve children in the development of the programs that they will ultimately be affected by.

"In the end, all these small changes are leading to a very big change at the community level," Gunad says.

It is through the result of its visible success that *Play It Fair!* has spread across organizations, Canada and even internationally after the program first began

in Montreal ten years ago. The program is now practiced in 48 communities across Canada and has been used in the Middle East, Jordan, Africa and Latin America, reaching an estimated 700,000 children across the world.

Through programs such as this, Equitas aims to provide human rights educators with the concrete tools they need to implement the principles laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a mission that spurred the establishment of the organization in 1967 when it was founded by a group of scholars and social activists including John Humphrey, co-drafter of the UDHR.

Higashio sees tools like *Play It Fair!* as instrumental in creating a society where acceptance of diversity and human rights are normalized.

"In the end, we want to have a respectful community that's really accepting of everyone, where people value everybody for who they are just naturally. It's where we all want and need to be," he says.

Both Higashio and Gunad hope that *Play It Fair!*'s influence will continue to grow and that it will one day be implemented at a curriculum level across Canada. ✍

For more information, please visit www.equitas.org.

Town Choir: translating text messages to song

by JAKE MCGRAIL

Theatre Replacement's Town Choir will open on Jan. 22 at the Woodward's Atrium as part of the 2017 PuSh Festival. Town Choir is the newest iteration of the group's Town Criers project, where everyday or potentially mundane observations are presented as newsworthy, with the writers potentially hundreds of kilometers away from the performance.

Town Criers has been a Theatre Replacement project for two years, with shows across Canada and overseas. It pairs a writer—who is somewhere far away from where the performance is taking place—with a crier, who is on stage. The writer records observations about their immediate environment and sends them to the crier via text message, whereupon the crier relays these observations to the public. Town Choir is a furthering of this idea, with four writers across Canada and a full choir, Vancouver Youth Choir, translating their texts into song.

The show

Town Choir doesn't have a specific script, as the point of the show is spontaneity and reflection. Rather, the writers work within a structure, an outline that is fed to them from the stage.

"The structure that we give to them is fairly simple and broad," says Maiko Yamamoto, Artistic Director of Theatre Replacement. "For example, we ask

them to write ten observations about the place that they're in, ten statements that start with 'one day,' something that gave them pause."

Yamamoto says guiding a thought process for someone who is alone far away from the stage is the challenge. He says keeping the messages simple but meaningful so can be funnelled through text and then filtered to a public is the key.

"We ask them to write lists about themselves, a paragraph about their everyday expertise,

some to the choir onstage, who then figure out exactly how they're going to perform it.

"It's quite immediate," says Yamamoto. "The choir will take one thread or thought or story and they sing it. They have their own structure as well, with each section of the performance having its own flavour."

Yamamoto says given the number of writers and the amount of text it would be impossible for the choir to sing all of it. But the audience will get to absorb all of the messages received via the four TV screens facing them, each constantly rolling with the threads the writers send in.

"At Theatre Replacement we have been really investigating biographical and autobiographical stories," says Yamamoto. "I think the everyday observations of people and turning that into performance – it feels like a really important thing to do. It's

about reflecting the lives of everyday people."

A writer's perspective

Kim Barlow, a musician and songwriter based in Nova Scotia, is one of the four writers for Town Choir. She wrote for a previous performance of Town Criers, and will again be sending messages across the country to the West Coast.

"Some of the stuff, like the longer stories, I write beforehand, but most of it is all pretty spontaneous," says Barlow. "There's a lot of descriptions of the place around me, what it looks like, what it smells like; it gives me a sense of place and physical context and the whole thing evolves from there."

While Barlow might have some idea of what the show looks like she'll never see the end product, and doesn't have contact with any of the other writers while the show is taking place.

"It's fascinating to me because I can't see what it looks like," says Barlow. "It's a strange idea, but it's been really fun."

And while she'll be writing about places and objects hundreds of kilometers away from the audience, Barlow knows there are plenty of things that bind people together.

"There's a lot of things people are worried about in the world, and a lot of mundane things that people think about. Some of my thoughts and fears are fairly universal – I hope that I can relate to some people." ✍

For more information, please visit www.theatrerplacement.org.



▲ Maiko Yamamoto.

ten fears, a story of something that happened to them earlier," says Yamamoto. "They're meant to be both thoughtful and personal."

The messages are only part of the performance, however. Once the messages are received, someone backstage will filter through all the text and send



▲ Kim Barlow.

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Announcing the UBC School of Music 2016–2017 Concert Season

Vancouver - The **UBC School of Music** announces the 2016–2017 season of performances and special events by our ensembles, faculty, and guest artists. The following are selected highlights:

The **UBC Symphony Orchestra** and **UBC Choirs** will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the opening concert of the Chan Centre with a very special performance on April 8, 2017 to honour and thank the Chan Centre and Chan family for supporting student performance and excellence at UBC. A *Song of Joys* by composer and UBC faculty member **Stephen Chatman** will be featured along with Mozart's final masterpiece *Requiem Mass in D minor*. Chatman wrote *A Song of Joys*, with words from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as a companion piece to Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*. It was this symphony, with its iconic "Ode to Joy", that was performed by UBC music students in the spring of 1997 as the gala opening concert of the Chan Centre.

Internationally-renowned composer **John Corigliano** will be in residence at UBC in November. The **Corigliano Festival** will culminate November 19 with a spectacular evening at the Chan Centre featuring performances of his music by the **UBC Symphonic Wind Ensemble**, **UBC Choirs** and **UBC Symphony Orchestra** with violin soloist and faculty member **David Gillham**. Works include *Fern Hill*, *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra*, and *Symphony No. 3: Circus Maximus*. The festival and residency will also include a talk and discussion with excerpts of Corigliano's opera *The Ghosts of Versailles* performed by the **UBC Opera Ensemble**. All events in the Corigliano Festival are part of the Master Mind Master Class Series presented in partnership with Alumni UBC.

The **UBC Opera Ensemble** presents three fully staged productions:
November 3–6 Menotti *The Consul* at the Old Auditorium
February 2–5 Tchaikovsky *Eugene Onegin* at the Chan Centre
June 22–25 Strauss *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Old Auditorium
For more information about each production, visit music.ubc.ca/opera.

Music on the Point: Concerts with Personality featuring faculty artists and guests:
October 21 Brahms chamber music with **David Gillham** violin, **Eric Wilson** cello, and **Chiharu Iinuma** piano
November 25 In Praise of Bach! **Miranda Wong** piano
January 20 **Archytas Quartet** with quartets by Bartók and Beethoven
Dale Barltrop & **David Gillham** violins, **David Harding** viola, **Ariel Barnes** cello
March 3 **Oskar Morawetz** Centennial Celebrating his life in music
The **Music on the Point** series is presented in partnership with UTown@UBC.

The School's ever-popular **Wednesday Noon Hour** series begins September 21. Highlights include: **Microcosmos Quartet** with works by Dutilleux and Bartok (Sept 29); A late '60s blue note modal bag with the **Steve Kaldestad Quartet** (Oct 12); "Sanglots" Chansons of Love and Loss with **Patrick Rafferty** tenor and **Terence Dawson** piano (Jan 25) and Bach's *Musical Offering* with the **PBO Chamber Players** (Feb 8).



▲ Erdem Taşdelen, *Wild Child*, two HD videos, 42'05" and 20'59", 2015.

Identities redefined
unidentifiable

by THERESA K. HOWELL

Erdem Taşdelen takes society's obsession with titles and gives it an abrupt shake.

In his upcoming exhibitions, running from Jan. 13–Mar.17 at the Contemporary Art Gallery (CAG), *Wild Child* and *The Quantified Self Poems* redress our pre-occupation with labeling. "The two projects are conflated in some ways," says Taşdelen.

Wild Child

Always curious, the Emily Carr University graduate approaches his ideas through research – first through the subjects that interest him, followed by his analysis of the desired artistic process. This is how *Wild Child* came to be. Taşdelen decided to look into the premise of feral children.

"There is no such thing as a feral child. They are mostly hoaxes, myths or misunderstood cases," he says after doing some extensive research. However, in one slightly unique case based on An Historical Account of the Discovery and Education of a Savage Man by Jean Marc Gaspard Itard (1798), the author provided care to a person he thought to be feral. Itard, a physician, believed the boy needed to be "civilized"; however, developmental psychologists have established that this was possibly the first documented case of autism. "Realistically, he was most probably a child abandoned by his family, left on the side of the road, due to his autism," Taşdelen says.

Intrigued by the story, Taşdelen decided to explore this concept of "othering" with a video production. Once he decided on the medium, he approached the Contemporary Art Gallery. Shaun Dacey, curator at the CAG. "These works speak to a broader context of ideas around the human condition. I'd known of his practice for quite some time and hoped that we could work with him," says Dacey. Shortly after that Taşdelen approached them for support to produce *Wild Child*.

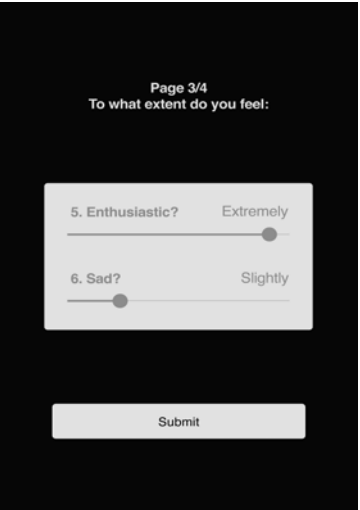
Taşdelen had developed a script to do a full-scale video production and he needed support to make it happen. "A big aspect to what we do at the CAG is supporting local contemporary practices," says Dacey. Taşdelen, a Turkish-born artist, exhibits internationally which contributes to his global perspective. Subsequently, it speaks to a broader audience while being produced within the context of Vancouver. They then commissioned the work and brought on

Cineworks, another local institution that works in experimental video productions.

The Quantified Self Poems

Being proactive agents of the arts, both inside and outside the gallery space, CAG also wanted to open their external window spaces to Taşdelen. Twelve of the artist's screen prints, *The Quantified Self Poems*, were chosen for these showcases. In these spaces, he explores a societal obsession of integrating technologically-based applications into daily rituals. Prompted by a discussion from a UBC scholar on the "quantified self" movement, Taşdelen produced poems based on a lifestyle application called "Emotion Sense."

Taşdelen started to use the app up to three times a day. What was it like to engage in this process? "It was really strange because I started to think about how I felt and how I could categorize the feeling," he says. Before stopping to think about these questions, he realized this action itself was somewhat unnatural. But then it became a game, asking "how do I feel?" "why do I feel this way?" "is this



▲ Erdem Taşdelen, *The Quantified Self Poems*, series of 12 silkscreen prints, 26" x 40" each, 2016.

really how I feel?" If the feeling was negative "how negative is it?" It also became an exercise, as the artist tried to quantify these emotions. "[It became] the push and pull in the project, which is the mechanical versus non-mechanical," Taşdelen says. Working with poet, Daniel Zomparelli and programmer, Ali Bilgin Arslan, the concept started to materialize. The resulting art piece juxtaposes manual screen prints based in an analog realm from their original digital foundations. With this, the perception of a particular sensory-based reality shifts.✂

For more info, visit www.contemporaryartgallery.com.

Making peace with Aboriginal history through art

by WENJIE SHEN

Tunics of the Changing Tide, a painting by First Nations artist Marianne Nicolson, has transformed the Dzawada'enuxw Nation's history and story into artwork. Nicolson's work will be exhibited at the Walter C.Koerner Library at UBC from Jan. 13– Apr. 9.

In the summer of 1980, at the age of eleven, Nicolson moved to Kingcome Inlet from Vancouver with her mother, a member of the Dzawada'enuxw First Nations, a tribe of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nations of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Her father was Scottish.

Staying close to the land of her ancestors dramatically changed Nicolson's life. She believes these days spent in Kingcome Inlet really helped her become who she is today.

"Tracing the push and pull of world views through the materials she uses, Nicolson's work is part of a contemporary resurgence of Indigenous cultural practice and a means to resist its political and social assimilation," says Lorna Brown, who works as the executive director of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery.

Revitalizing Indigenous culture

In Nicolson's paintings, two back views of tunics are placed on black- and grey-bordered backgrounds. A tree with thunderbirds and mink is portrayed on the tunics. Nicolson says that she did a lot of research within her own community while creating her artwork.

The artist was looking back at the Indigenous history when First Nations culture was strong

son's aunt and uncle had no choice but to follow in the same footsteps. After witnessing the depression the family suffered from, Nicolson became an activist. She describes herself as being 'blunt and honest.'

"I wanted to do what I could to help, and I think bring an awareness to these issues is great. I am politically engaged in revitalizing our culture at home and in our traditional political structure as well," says Nicolson.

Recovering the ancestors' footing

From Nicolson's perspective, First Nation's ways of understanding the world have been suppressed. She now uses her art practice as a way of keeping it alive. Consistently working on her art for the past twenty years has helped the artist in her quest for her people's recovery.

"[I] work for helping my own people to recover their footing and to gain their strength back," says Nicolson.

Nicolson completed a massive painting on the cliff located at the front of Kingcome Inlet in 1998, which was created to acknowledge the connection between the Dzawada'enuxw People and their territory. The painting is of a large copper – a shield-shaped symbol – over 50 feet high and 32 feet wide, making it a highly visible piece of art. She was doubting herself the whole time when she was working on it.

"I was terrified the whole time that [the cliff painting] was gonna be crap. I am gonna live there the rest of my life, everybody else is gonna live there too," Nicolson says, laughing. "Thank God [the cliff painting] turned out to be great."

Nicolson was five years old when she decided to become an artist. Although she had no idea what the exact definition of artist was at that time, she still made up her mind to pursue that career.

"I really pursued it and there [was no thought] that being an artist is wrong," she says.

Although Nicolson completed a PhD in Linguistics, Anthropology and Art History at the University of Victoria, she sometimes still felt a little doubtful while she was working on the artwork.

"Marianne Nicolson will further graphically explore the symbols – stars, otters, suns, buttons, coins, eagles – that feature in the heraldry of nations such as Britain, Canada, Kwakwaka'wakw and China to investigate the historical and contemporary economic relationships they signal," says Brown. "In the context of treaty negotiations over many unceded territories, Nicolson points to the differing meanings of symbolic representation across cultures as an indication of divergent values and attitudes toward land and resources."

"I was thinking of this revitalization of cultural forms, a symbol of a time when we were strong enough to absorb the influence. That's the symbol of changing tides," says Nicolson. "We really work hard to revitalize the cultural forms, our ceremony, our language, all these things. There is a change in the tide. That's what these tunics represent."



▲ Tunics of the Changing Tide: Kwakwaka'wakw Histories (back).

Nicolson's mother had been sent to residential school. Nicolson's

For more information, visit www.belkin.ubc.ca.

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January 10–24, 2017

by SIMON YEE

Welcome to 2017! I hope all of you had a great holiday season, and I wish all the best to everyone for a prosperous year! Start off the new year right by checking out the many festivals, exhibitions, talks, plays and expos throughout the Lower Mainland this month. Check out French Canadian culture at Fort Langley or take in an engaging theatrical play. And make sure to warm yourself up this winter by enjoying a cup of delicious steaming hot chocolate!

The Fighting Season

Jan. 10–21
Bleeding Heart Theatre,
Vancouver
www.thecultch.com

The Fighting Season, a critical favourite from the 2015 Vancouver Fringe Festival, returns to the city this month at the Bleeding Heart Theatre. Written by Sean Harris Oliver and directed by Evan Frayne, this play examines the Afghan war through the eyes of a Canadian field medic, a doctor and a recovery room nurse. The play was inspired by Oliver’s father’s real-life experiences as a military surgeon in Afghanistan. For showtimes and tickets, check out The Cultch’s website.

**The Suitcase:
Intergenerational Healing
through Traces of the Past**

Jan. 13, 6:30 p.m.
Liu Institute for Global Issues,
University of British Columbia
www.liu.arts.ubc.ca

Join Liu Scholars Lyana Patrick and Ashli Akins on Jan. 13 as they discuss their current exhibit *The Suitcase*, on display until Jan. 31 at the Lobby Gallery at UBC’s Liu Institute for Global Issues. Patrick and Akins’ interests lie in intergenerational memory and the power of art to palatably convey the themes of collective memory, intergenerational knowledge transmission and intergenerational storytelling. Their multimedia exhibit examines the life of Patrick’s Gramma Aloo explor-

ing the themes of intergenerational healing and reconciliation through the written word through the lens of the B.C. Carrier Nation. A reception will be held after the talk. For more information, check out their website.

**TedXLangleyEd:
Courage and Curiosity**
Jan. 14, 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m.
Chief Sepass Theatre, Fort
Langley
www.tedxlangleyed.com

This independently organized TED event returns for a third year to bring together speakers and presenters dedicated to discussing the future of learning, education and educational pedagogy at Fort Langley’s Chief Sepass Theatre on Jan. 14. Speakers will touch on many topics including empathy, community building, inclusion, imagination, reconciliation and perseverance. For further information, check out their website.

Gluten Free Expo
Jan. 14–15
Canada Place, Vancouver
www.glutenfreeexpo.ca

The Vancouver Convention Centre at Canada Place will be hosting the Gluten Free Expo on the weekend of Jan. 14, 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 pão de queijo (Brazilian cheese puffs), cinnamon buns, feta rolls, perogies and more. For tickets and further information, please check out their website.

Meryl McMaster: Confluence
Jan. 14–March 19
Richmond Art Gallery
www.richmondartgallery.org

The Richmond Art Gallery will be hosting photographic artist Meryl McMaster’s latest exhibit



Photo courtesy of Meryl McMaster and Katzman Contemporary

▲ Aphoristic Currents by Meryl McMaster, on exhibit at the Richmond Art Gallery.

Confluence from Jan. 14 to March 19. An artist of Plains Cree and Euro-Canadian heritage, McMaster explores the dimensions of her own sense of identity and the complex history of the photographic representation of Indigenous peoples. Join the artist and curator Heather Anderson at the opening reception on Jan. 14, 3–5 p.m. For more information, check out their website.

**PuSh International
Performing Arts Festival**
Jan. 16–Feb. 5
Various venues
www.pushfestival.ca

For the 13th time, the PuSh Festival returns to Vancouver to showcase innovative and transformative art from artists representing 11 countries. There will be 27 performances spread over three weeks, featuring staggering spectacles, immersive encounters, theatrical adaptations and more. Catch a Korean performance piece about sexuality and technology, an African adaptation of MacBeth, an Australian aboriginal music band and more at PuSh. For more shows and event details, please visit their website.

Moved by Portraits
Deer Lake Gallery, Burnaby
Jan. 16–Feb. 6
www.burnabyartscouncil.org

Deer Lake Gallery will be hosting a group exhibition, *Moved by*

Portraits, featuring the work of Yue Baoyu, Bill Edmonds, Jeremy Henrickson and Louise Solecki-Weir, who have infused the portrait art form with creative new life. Baoyu combines Chinese and European portraiture traditions into his work. Edmonds’ work explores the themes of anonymity and the Internet. Henrickson uses watercolour, acrylic, inks, oils and collage to explore the nature of persona. And Solecki-Weir uses clay to create connections between art, healing and forensics. The gallery will host an opening reception on Jan. 16, 2–4 p.m.

Sam Sullivan’s Public Salon 27
Jan. 18, 7:30 p.m.
Vancouver Playhouse
www.publicsalon.org

The Global Civic Policy Society will be hosting their 27th salon featuring notable individuals who have contributed to the civic well-being of the city through their profession or research. This salon will feature presentations from an addiction physician, a comedian, an entrepreneur and architects, among others. For tickets and further information, check out their website.

The Nether
Jan. 18–28
Firehall Arts Centre, Vancouver
www.firehallartscentre.ca

Come on down to the Firehall

Arts Centre to take in one of the Vancouver Fringe Festival’s critics’ favourite productions, *The Nether*. In the near-future, the Internet has evolved into the *Nether*, a next-generation network featuring virtual-reality realms. Directed by Chris Lam and featuring David Bloom and Lissa Neptuno, this detective story explores the nature of virtual realms, fantasy and morality and raises questions about ethical behaviour, both online and offline. For tickets and showtimes, check out the Firehall Arts Centre website.

Seventh Annual Hot Chocolate Festival

Jan. 19–Feb. 14
Various stores
www.hotchocolatefest.com

Warm up this cold winter with a cup of delicious hot chocolate at the Hot Chocolate Festival, returning to Vancouver for the seventh time. Local chocolate makers will come together to create some of the most unique, flavourful and delicious hot chocolate beverages for your drinking pleasure. Previous years’ concoctions have included 60 different flavours like butter-nut squash almond milk with a smoked oyster on the side and additions like hazelnut Crown Royal whiskey marshmallows. For this year’s menu, visit the festival website.

**Vive les Voyageurs – French
Canadian Winter Festival**

Jan. 21–22, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Fort Langley National Historic Site
www.facebook.com/
FortLangleyNHS

Bring the family down to take in the sounds of French Canada with the folklore and culture of 19th century voyageurs and fur traders at Fort Langley’s National Historic Site. Workshops, dancing, food and music of the French Canadian voyageurs will be on full display at this Canada 150 Anniversary event. For further information, check out their website.

►“Freedom of Speech” from page 1
that the club can prevent laws against free speech being passed like what happened in Korea or what happened in China because I’ve seen this first-hand,” says Jung.

The club is not intending to influence politics, says Jung. They want to influence culture.

“But the end goal is to prevent a culture that would stand idly by while an anti-free speech law is passed. I want a culture where it is the societal norm to believe that I may disagree with your viewpoint but I will risk my life

to defend your right to say it,” he says.

Double standards

Mohammed Jafar Bhamji, managing editor of Al-Ameen Post, a Surrey-based publication that serves Metro Vancouver, says there is a fine line between free speech and hate speech, which most media understand. Mentioning the use of caricatures (cartoons) in Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical weekly magazine, he says that most Canadian media didn’t republish them after the terrorist attacks on

the Charlie Hebdo office, not because they were afraid of being attacked, but in order to maintain peace. He feels that Charlie Hebdo had nothing to do with free speech.

“The media that covered it [here] under the guise of free speech are actually trying to prove a point to the rest of Canadians. It gives them an opportunity to propagate hate against a community that is completely ill-equipped to defend itself,” he explains.

Bhamji also feels there are double standards and hypocrisy for publishing – one set for Muslims and one set for the rest.

“The media outlets that did decide to publish the offensive cartoons would never publish material that denigrate or even stereotype Blacks, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, or Christians or poke fun at the Germans for the Holocaust or Canadians about their dark history with the aboriginals native Indians (sic),” he says.

Shahzad Mansoor, a member of the editorial board of Al-Ameen Post, also says there is a double standard – specifically within western society’s inter-



Photo courtesy of Al-Ameen Media

▲ Mohammed Jafar Bhamji, editor of Al-Ameen Post.

pretation of “freedom of speech” as well as “political correctness.” “Although [religious organizations] are guaranteed under the Charter to exercise their beliefs freely, without condemnation or retribution, and they are not misquoting anything from their texts, or crafting their own narrative based on their whims, they are still seen as abusers [for speaking

out against issues like abortion or LGBT]. Their ‘freedom of speech’ has been silenced in favour of ‘political correctness,’ favouring ‘political will’ or the direction politicians have taken in order to garner votes. These groups exercising their ‘freedom of speech’ are seen as going against the popular belief or trend, thus automatically become the targets,” Mansoor says.

On the other hand, Mansoor feels that when the same right wing groups speak out falsely on some right wing agenda, or propaganda against Islam and Muslims, it is considered acceptable because they are exercising their “freedom of speech.”

He thinks that freedom of speech is more liberal in Canada and the United States, adding that there seems to be no direct consequences to individuals expressing their opinions and views against the political establishments. However, he feels that there can be indirect consequences if an individual or the media does not toe the line in accordance with the whims and desires of the political leadership. ☞



A spotlight on shadows

by EIJA JIMENEZ

Maya Ersan and Jaimie Robson, the duo behind Mere Phantoms, use paper prints to create miniature cities. Hand-held lights are shone upon the paper structures to bring the shadows to life on the blank walls of the room. Their exhibition, *Three Cities: Prayer and Protest*, will be on display at the Grunt Gallery from Jan. 12 to Feb. 18, 2017.

The exhibition focuses on three cities: Istanbul, Vancouver, and Montreal. Ersan initially grew up in Turkey before moving to Vancouver to study art. It was there she met Robson. Together they've travelled from city to city before settling in Montreal where they create their shadow installations as well as run their ceramics studio.

The commonalities between all three cities are the protests and outrage caused by factors such as police violence, gentrification, and tuition hikes which ultimately lead to losing access to city art spaces. Through their work, Mere Phantoms is able to create a live experience for their audience to immerse themselves in the piece.

Shadow installations

Ersan and Robson formed Mere Phantoms in 2012. Using paper cutouts of buildings, animals, and everything in between, Mere Phantoms create miniature cities. Each display includes a light that illuminates the city from below, but with the addition of handheld lamps, shadows come to life on the walls.



Photo courtesy of Mere Phantoms

▲ Mere Phantoms explores commonalities between three cities.

"The audience takes a light and moves through the work which creates the shadows as they go," says Ersan. "With more than one light source, [the scene] gets layered and you end up manipulating each other's shadows."

With the combination of multiple shadows in the room layered upon one another,

viewers become a part of the exhibition. It also forces them to be included in the shadows that another guest is making so the audience can see all different perspectives at once.

"It makes the viewer contemplative instead of trying to decipher something that you're seeing in front of you which is our frustration with contemporary art in general. You're either well-informed enough to get it or not," says Ersan,

No knowledge is needed with Mere Phantoms' shadow installations. With the shadows of the city looming on the blank walls of the gallery and seeing the bodies of the guest moving through the city, it allows for an immersive experience.

Three cities, one room

Mere Phantoms' shadow installations are playful in design, but the *Three Cities* exhibition provides a more powerful statement that this particular medium of art is able to capture. Using iconic reference points that media has circulated about Istanbul, Vancouver and Montreal, the exhibition highlights the tension between the general populace and a higher authority.

"All three cities have a history of prayer and protests that are very individual to those cities," says Glenn Alteen, program director of Grunt Gallery. "To highlight these differences in a shadow play is an innovative use of the medium."

The exhibition stands on three separate table tops to depict each city. Istanbul represents the police violence that occurred after an overpopulation crisis. Vancouver depicts the gentrification of urban areas with animals running wild on the streets and overtaking construction cranes. Montreal recalls the Pots and Pans protest where students took to the streets every night banging on their kitchenware to cry out to the government about tuition hikes. In the end, the ultimate goal of these protests had one thing in common: speaking out against injustice.

Where protestors make their presence known with volume, Mere Phantoms use the visual. Guests join in on the act by using their shadow installations to put the viewer back into that frame of time and become part of the protest and prayers.

"The similarities between praying together and protesting against this invisible enemy or god or government is that we're trying to make our voices heard," says Ersan. ✍

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

Street Photography by Denis Bouvier



The Resistance and The Empire

Here we have the image of Carrie Fisher, as the famous Princess Leia in the original *Star Wars* film first presented in 1977. The image is displayed on today's state of the art Telus building in downtown Vancouver, in some ways as futuristic as some structures seen in *Star Wars*. It's an image that brings bittersweet memories of the acclaimed actress and writer. Her death epitomized a year of loss of many famous actors, singers, writers, statesmen and journalists who significantly impacted our lives in the 20th and 21st century.

Star Wars can be seen as an entertaining sci-fi fantasy or can be viewed as a comment on past and present political situations. The references to Nazi Germany abound in the *Star Wars* series, and the current version: *Rogue One* epitomizes the brutal, repressive, militaristic police state of The Empire. Today, this type of state is defined by having a leader who acts as a dictator suppressing opposing views, especially liberal democratic tendencies, and imposes a strict economic and social order that benefits mainly those in power. Often there is racism, homophobia and repression of women and minorities. In *Rogue One*, it's noteworthy that The Resistance is made up mainly of actors of colour with a female hero.

We have growing examples in today's world of states that promote these repressive practices. What's shocking is the current rise in western democracies of these autocratic governments. What's truly shock-

ing are how these practices are on our doorstep south of the border. People argue these elements have been there all along, but until the transition period of the new Trump administration have been kept somewhat in check. What's new is the blatant disregard for truth and basic democratic values. The public is constantly lied to with such disdain illustrating the total arrogance of power. As well, there is the petty retribution towards those who disagree. Meanwhile, the new administration promises the public everything in the name of economic prosperity but here are a few examples of the true cost as illustrated with some Trump nominees to key positions in his government.

The new head of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as a state attorney general, has been suing the EPA for excessive regulation. Perhaps there will be more profits for polluting industries but our health and environment will be severely taxed and neither may easily recover.

The new Education Secretary prefers school choice in more privatized schools which many feel advocate running schools like a business to pass standardized multiple choice tests. This privatization threatens the diversity of the public system where teachers and their unions are being demonized. This will produce a more shallow and controlled education with teachers doing "the right thing" with no recourse to complain or protest.

This works well with the new Secretary of Labour who is anti-union!

Recently the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) has been protesting the appointment of the new Attorney General for his allegedly racist leanings, voter suppression of minorities and repressive immigration policies.

The new Secretary of State, as an Exxon Mobile Executive, has close business ties with Russia. Doing business with dictators is nothing new in US government policy, but this is treading on thin ice when we realize making concessions with Russia may endanger NATO and the European Union, not to mention interference in the electoral process of the US and other countries.

And let's not forget the new US Vice President who is anti-gay, anti-abortion and anti-labour but deeply religious. It's always handy to have God on your side.

In the new Trump administration, perhaps there will be more economic prosperity and some new jobs created. But who will prosper – certainly not the labourers with no union protection working at low wages.

Trump may be "draining the swamp" but it appears the purpose is just to build another "golf course" that will enrich the chosen but banish most from this elite club.

Canada, with all its faults, is still a beacon of light for democratic values compared to its foreboding southern neighbor. Let's hope The Resistance is prepared when The Empire looks North!

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