

There is nothing like  
a cup of hot cocoa  
Page 4



# The Source

forum of diversity

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www.thelasource.com



Photo by Dale Northey

## Verbatim

Caring, loneliness  
and transformation  
are the three words  
that sum up my  
experience so far

by NADIA IMGHAREN

I arrived in British Columbia over a year ago, and I've been in Vancouver for nine months. Time flies. I had no particular expectations when I left Paris other than to improve my English, practice more yoga and live close to nature. I believe that all these objectives were successfully achieved: I became a yoga teacher, I can now watch *Friends* without subtitles and I have the impression that the house where I live is in a tree!

I did not know that expectations of which I was unaware would leave me bewildered and disappointed. I expected to find a culture similar to mine. I was convinced that what separated us was language. Big mistake. It took me a while to understand – and above all, accept – that the rules of the game are different here. The way people relate, the way people eat and work... there have been a lot of misunderstandings and adjustments to make. At first, I sometimes even felt rejected and was left with a strong feeling of superficiality.

I think that what has been the most complicated for me is the food. I don't understand the presence of GMOs, or overly processed foods in so-called "healthy" food. I don't understand why my body digests gluten less well here than in Europe and why fruits and vegetables are so bland. I don't understand why there is mayonnaise on sushi and pizza. And why do people eat alone?!

Once I got used to this new environment, I started to open up more and see this city as it is. Or at least, as I live it: an international city

See "Verbatim" page 7

# Women and girls in science – still an uphill climb

by DANIELA COHEN

Despite global efforts to engage women and girls in science over the last 15 years, they continue to be excluded from full participation. Less than 30 per cent of researchers worldwide are women and UNESCO data shows that "only around 30 per cent of all female students select STEM-related fields in higher education".

To recognize the crucial role of women and girls in technology and promote their full and equal access to and participation in

science, the UN established February 11 as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science in 2015. This day aligns with UNESCO's priority on gender equality and belief in the importance of expanding diverse perspectives and skills within science to assist in addressing the challenges of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

### Barriers to girls pursuing science

Sarah Johnson, Physics Lecturer at Simon Fraser University (SFU), highlights that only 20 per cent of undergraduate

students majoring in physics are women, and this has remained stagnant since 2000.

"Physics has a reputation problem," Johnson explains. "People see it as being difficult and very masculine and something that only geniuses can do. That you have to be like Sheldon Cooper on the Big Bang Theory to be a physicist, which is not true. So, I think girls don't see themselves as physicists. And then just in general, the public doesn't really know what physicists do and what you could do with a degree in physics."

These misperceptions cause many girls to drop physics in

grade 12, which limits them from pursuing careers in science later on if they choose, she adds. In 2009, Johnson and four other female SFU faculty members created the Girls Exploring Physics program.

"The main goal is to show girls how interesting and exciting physics is, to show them all the possible career paths they could pursue," Johnson says.

She adds that the program also tries to show girls that physics can be used to help society and is not "an isolated, lonely" pursuit. The one-day program is open to girls

See "Women in Science" page 4

## Also in this issue

Black women have  
strong local history  
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Exhibit focuses on  
cultural identities  
and histories  
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# Cultural Spotlight



## Embracing diversity in Black communities

by JASMYNE EASTMOND

**The African Arts and Cultural Society presents the Regional Black Canadians Forum, a community forum focused on the International Decade for People of African Descent, from Feb. 6-Feb. 7 at the Greater Victoria Public Library.**

As Black History Month approached, Founder of Victoria's African Arts and Cultural Society Pulchérie Mboussi sought the opportunity to enlighten her community on African culture and discuss socio-political issues affecting Black people of African descent.

For seven years, Mboussi has hosted events for Black History Month ranging from live music concerts to family-oriented activities. This year, however, Mboussi has been inspired by the International Decade for People of African Descent.

Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly and officially recognized by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, 2015-2024 marks the International Decade for People of African Descent – an opportunity to honour people of African heritage and promote anti-racist, anti-discriminatory recognition, justice and development.

"Here in British Columbia, it is difficult to bring Black communities together to discuss national issues," says Mboussi. "When it comes to these national issues, they need someone connected to the issues in both a national way and a local way."

### Including oneself in an inclusive environment

Originally from Cameroon, community leader Mboussi immigrated to Canada in the mid-1980s. Before promoting African

culture in the Greater Victoria area and starting the Victoria African Arts and Cultural Society in 2012, she acted as an advocate for African cultures in Quebec.

"I am always proud to tell people that I am originally from Cameroon, I am bringing a culture that I want to share," she says. "My goal is to encourage every single Black person to showcase their own culture because that is a way to be more inclusive."

Mboussi celebrates African and Caribbean voices, creating accessible spaces to broaden cultural awareness and initiating reciprocal exchanges of stories through what she calls "sustainable cultural sharing." The Regional Black Canadians Forum aims to provide a platform for these forms of engagement.



▲ Pulchérie Mboussi, founder of Victoria's African Arts and Cultural Society.

"We (Black Canadians) give up our own culture [to be] more inclusive. Canada encourages multiculturalism. Canada loves a mosaic culture. But you are not being inclusive by giving up one part of you," says Mboussi. "Being inclusive is acceptance, so you have to accept the other person the way they are to find a way to live together."

### A forum for many voices

The Regional Black Canadians Forum brings together both lo-

cal and national voices to encourage active advocacy and educate the public about worldwide humanitarian challenges. It encompasses the visions of The African Arts and Cultural Society and the deep-rooted objectives of Black History Month celebrations. The forum will welcome a panel of experienced, professional speakers, hand-picked by Mboussi to address the following topics: Black Ownership & Generating Wealth, Media Representation, Arts & Black Identity, Mental & Physical Health, Accessing Justice & Community Safety, Migration & Inclusion, Education, Democratic Engagement, Access to Affordable Housing and Shelter.

Mboussi's work continuously emphasizes diversity in cultural expression. She aims to highlight the variation found through the experiences of even those with similar descent and heritage. At her prior events (even in limited space), she has readily displayed the 54 flags of the countries of Africa and the 26 flags of the Caribbean to respectfully present and embrace the beauty and complexity of cultural heterogeneity.

"Black people are trying to fit in other people's shoes," says Mboussi, when asked about cultural assimilation and Black pride. "You have to find your shoes and wear your own shoes."

The Regional Black Canadians Forum will take place over the course of two days. Focus groups open to people of African descent will run on Feb. 6 to discuss the Canadian Strategic Plan in response to the International Decade. The events of Feb. 7 are open to all and will consist of brunch, networking opportunities, and discussions moderated by panellists and guest speakers. ✉

For more information and to register for the forum, please visit [www.eventbrite.ca/e/regional-black-canadians-forum-tickets-75224142435](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/regional-black-canadians-forum-tickets-75224142435) and the African Arts and Cultural Society's Facebook page.



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# Mining and morality: upcoming lecture at UBC's Green College

by CHIARA NONNI

**B.C.'s dependency on mining is set to increase in the future, creating a moral dilemma. The need to continue increasing the output of the mining sector for different materials, clashes with protecting the environment and culture of the areas where the materials are mined.**

Three associate professors from different schools within the university will come together for the lecture *Do We Have a Moral Duty to Protect the Environment? It's Complicated!* on Feb. 6 at the Coach House, Green College on the UBC Campus.

Emily Huddart Kennedy (School of Sociology), Fionn Byrne (School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture) and Nadja Kunz (School of Public Policy and Global Affairs and Norman B. Keevil Institute of Mining and Engineering) will discuss their perspectives on cases of contrasting morality as it relates to environmental protection from their areas of expertise.

## Mining

Kunz's focus will on water management and stewardship in the mining sector and its transition toward more sustainable operations.

"When many readers think of the mining and metals sec-

tor, their minds may drift to the negative social and environmental impacts that mining can cause," she says. "Sometimes it can be easy to forget the extent to which we rely on minerals and metals as fundamental building blocks of modern society, from infrastructure, vehicles, and electronics to soaps and medical devices."

The Glacier Media Group's site [www.mining.com](http://www.mining.com), agrees that our dependency on mining is set to grow in the future. By some estimates, electric cars may require about four times more copper than gasoline-powered vehicles.

Kunz says Canadians especially have an important role within creating sustainable change, as Canada continues to rely on materials produced through environmentally damaging methods.

"I would also argue that Canadians, and particularly British Columbians, have a moral duty to improve the sustainability performance of the mining and metals sector at a global scale. Not only are we consumers of mined products, but it is a key sector within our economy," she explains.

## Morality

In observing British Columbians' dependence on mined materials, Kunz points out the differing levels of environmental morality relative to public policy



▲ Nadja Kunz works to improve water sustainability practices across the mining industry.

Photo courtesy of Nadja Kunz

within the mining and metals sector.

"In my experience, discussions about environmental protection or sustainability as it relates to mining projects can quickly become polarized. A key challenge is that within our society, we may have different interpretations of sustainability and competing viewpoints about what ac-

tions are most important to get there," she says. "I feel a lot can be learned from listening openly to those who may have different moral values, and showing respect for one another as people."

## Community

Kunz has years of experience working in mining companies, communities, and govern-

ments around the world. Overall she has a positive outlook on the future of this industry and how Canadians can contribute toward more sustainable efforts moving forward. She recognizes the difficulty in shifting perceptions and actions within the mining community but is optimistic about creating systems and programs to alleviate environmental degradation.

"Community participation is so important! There have been some fantastic examples of how concerns raised by Indigenous rights-holders or community members have changed the practices of mining companies or, in some cases, prevented the development of projects in environmentally or culturally sensitive regions," she maintains. "We are also very lucky in Canada and particularly B.C. to have a regulatory framework that allows community voices to be heard during the environmental approval process of new mining projects."

Along with her fellow lecturers, Kunz plans on discussing these topics in more detail with an interdisciplinary approach that fosters awareness of local sustainability and morality. ✉

To learn more, visit the following sites:  
[www.greencollege.ubc.ca](http://www.greencollege.ubc.ca)  
[www.mining.com](http://www.mining.com)



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# Hot chocolate, anyone?

by RAMAN KANG

**“I wanted to create something that wasn’t your regular coffee shop,” says chef Elena Krasnova, owner of Mon Paris Patisserie.**

Krasnova’s shop will be participating in the Hot Chocolate Festival for the fourth time in a row. The Festival features 44 “Choc-stars” with 114 flavours. This year Krasnova is presenting hot chocolate lovers with three different flavours.

## Hot Chocolate three ways

For the festival’s 10th anniversary, Krasnova is presenting a very special drink called Mademoiselle



▲ Sesame hot chocolate.

Jasmine, the same one she served in her first year of participation along with The Ruby and Sesame Sesame.

A nod to her love of French patisseries, Mademoiselle Jasmine is composed of 64 per cent

dark Cocoa Barry chocolate (a type of chocolate Krasnova uses almost exclusively in her chocolate dishes) infused with strawberry and jasmine tea, served with whipped cream, a white chocolate flower and a chocolate-shaped strawberry.

The Ruby introduces chocolate fans to a different type of chocolate; after the classic milk, white and dark chocolates comes a fourth, and it’s red. Krasnova says this kind of Callebaut ruby chocolate was just invented in the past few years and is made from red cacao beans which are fermented, giving the chocolate a natural red colour.

“Not many people know this chocolate exists; I want to educate people, and I want people to try it,” says Krasnova.

That’s why she decided to use this chocolate in her second drink: the Ruby.

Krasnova explains that the Ruby has a really unique flavour profile, composed of ruby choco-



▲ Ruby hot chocolate.

late, raspberry puree and rooibos tea. The drink is served with a goji berry cluster, also made with ruby chocolate.

Lastly, Sesame Sesame is an Asian-inspired drink made with 64 per cent white chocolate, infused with black sesame seeds and matcha, served with black sesame tuile and whipped cream on top.

## From accountant to baker

“I’ve always liked working with my hands in my spare time as a hobby and at home I used to paint,” says Krasnova.

Krasnova moved to Vancouver from Russia 18 years ago with her family. After graduating from school, she became an accountant. However, her need for creativity took her into a different direction.

“Art is what made me relax and helped me through life,” she says.

About 10 years ago, Krasnova took her first cake decorating class and instantly loved it. She began volunteering at a local cake shop where she would help them decorate cakes.

“I really liked it. It was three-dimensional art as opposed to the paintings,” she says.

She eventually quit her job when an opportunity arose to attend culinary school in France. There, she studied French pastries and recipes and worked to get more experience so that when she came back to Vancouver, she knew she wanted to open up a French-inspired patisserie.

Back in Vancouver, Krasnova started out working from home, baking desserts for people she knew, but it wasn’t sustainable.



▲ Elena Krasnova in her shop Mon Paris Patisserie.

“There’s only so much you can do out of your home,” she says.

## Opening up shop

Three years ago, with the help of her family, she opened her first shop, Mon Paris Patisserie, a French-inspired shop with pink walls, beautiful tiles and an Eiffel tower that adds a certain *je ne sais quoi*.

In traditional French fashion, Mon Paris Patisserie doesn’t have a lot of seating because the desserts are meant to be taken away to enjoy.

“Family support is very important, especially in the beginning

when you can’t hire too many people,” says Krasnova.

Krasnova’s mother started working at the shop to help support her daughter and still works there today.

Mon Paris Patisserie has all kinds of pastries, macarons, chocolates, cakes and desserts that are baked fresh daily and even classes for those unable to travel all the way to Paris.

“All of my recipes are traditional French but with a modern twist,” says Krasnova. ✍

For more information, visit [www.hotchocolatefest.com](http://www.hotchocolatefest.com)

## ► “Women in Science” from page 1

in grades 9 and 10. Participants engage in hands-on activities, have lunch with some students and faculty, receive a campus observatory tour and a presentation about various career possibilities in the field. Johnson reports that a higher proportion of the girls who attend the workshop take Physics 12 than the general population of girls.

## Challenges faced by immigrant women

Sweta Rajan, an immigrant scientist originally from India, faced bullying in her first laboratory position in the US. Her experience with isolation and cultural barriers ultimately led her to co-develop Immigrant and International Women in Science (IWS Network) to support other women going through similar challenges.



▲ Sweta Rajan.

Rajan notes that a critical challenge in coming to a new country is a lack of support networks.

“The biggest challenge for me was because I was out of my own cultural context, I had no idea whether the experience I was going through was normal or not,” she says. “It was only after I came out of that experience and started talking to others about it, that I realized that it was not normal and that I was actually being bullied.”

She highlights the systemic impacts of bullying and discrimination in a workplace environment, not only on the psyche of the person affected but in loss of productivity and consequent financial cost for the organization. And although Rajan’s experience happened almost twenty years ago, she notes that these kinds of experiences are unfortunately still prevalent today.

Started in 2018, IWS now has nine sister chapters across Canada: Vancouver, Ottawa, Saskatoon, Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Mississauga, Charlottetown and Calgary. Rajan sees the core of the work as creating safe spaces where people can share their experiences and receive support. The collective wisdom of the group provides a pathway towards solutions.

“I remember clearly one of our members saying, ‘I am in psychology, this is so cathartic for me that I can share this and I know that it didn’t happen just to me, and I’m not alone,’” shares Rajan.

A recent Statistics Canada report highlights the barriers to employment that immigrants



▲ The Van de Graaff electrostatic generator is one of the many hands-on physics experiments girls can experience at the workshops.

face, stating that only 39 per cent of immigrants with a bachelors in STEM are employed in their field of expertise. Rajan emphasizes that IWS Network’s membership reflects “people with exceptional skill sets [who] face the ‘no Canadian experience’ challenge, and a lot of untapped talent and experience is lost, costing the Canadian economy billions of dollars,” according to a 2019 Vancity report.

## Potential pathways forward for Canada

Johnson believes science needs diverse teams with different viewpoints.

“There are lots of examples, especially in engineering, where things have been designed by only men and they didn’t take the female perspective into account and they missed important things,” she notes.

She recommends that Canada adopt the US STEP UP Program, which focuses on providing high school teachers with awareness

of bias and the skills to break down stereotypes which may discourage girls from pursuing physics as a career path.

Rajan highlights the ongoing lack of women in leadership roles and the dependence on being granted permission to speak where it should be the norm. She invites the Canadian government to create grant programs where companies can take on an immigrant at low risk and see firsthand how capable they are. She urges companies to engage with immigrant communities to see what they can offer and begin to utilize the wealth of existing untapped talent. According to BDC, given that over 45 per cent of small- to medium-sized companies in BC are struggling to find talent, hiring immigrants creates a win-win situation. ✍

For more information, please visit [www.iwsnetwork.ca](http://www.iwsnetwork.ca) [www.sfu.ca/physics/outreach/girls-exploring-physics.html](http://www.sfu.ca/physics/outreach/girls-exploring-physics.html)

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## Public Service Announcement: February 2020 Free Community Activities

### Cook and Connect International Kitchen

In this 6-sessions cooking series, you will learn how to use kitchen appliances and tools, learn kitchen safety. Meet new friends and try international recipes.

- 🕒 Fridays, January 10 – February 14, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
- 📍 Brentwood Community Resources Centre, 2055 Rosser Ave., Burnaby
- 📞 Shaima or Joy 604 254 9626 || sjaff@mosaicbc.org or jjhocson@mosaicbc.org

### Canadian Citizenship Preparation (English with Mandarin support)

Join us for a two-day workshop to prepare for Canadian citizenship! The sessions will be facilitated by MOSAIC staff. We will talk about topics such as Canada's history, symbols, government and geography, as well as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Free service. Registration required.

- 🕒 February 10 & 13, 5:30 pm – 8:30 pm
- 📍 Tommy Douglas Burnaby Public Library, 7311 Kingsway
- 📞 Tim 604 438 8214 ext 114 || tchow@mosaicbc.org

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Join us for a two-day workshop to prepare for Canadian citizenship! The sessions will be facilitated by MOSAIC staff. We will talk about topics such as Canada's history, symbols, government and geography, as well as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Free service. Registration required.

- 🕒 February 20 & 21, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
- 📍 Renfrew Branch, Vancouver Public Library, 2969 E 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave
- 📞 Tim 604 438 8214 ext 114 || tchow@mosaicbc.org

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- 🕒 February 21, 2:00 pm – 8:00 pm
- 📍 Port Moody Public Library, 100 Newport Drive
- 📞 Fadia 604 636 4712 ext 107 || fhwaijeh@mosaicbc.org

### NEW in 2020: MOSAIC 1-1 Settlement Services in Port Moody

A Settlement Worker will be at Port Moody Public Library offering 1 on 1 settlement services once a week from January to March 2020. By appointment or drop-in. Email for an appointment or information.

- 🕒 Wednesdays, January 8 – March 11, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
- 📍 Port Moody Public Library, 100 Newport Drive
- 📞 Email: settlement@mosaicbc.org

### Housing Forum

BC Housing and Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre (TRAC) will talk about:

- Rights and responsibilities of tenants and renters
- Rights and responsibilities of landlords
- How to apply for rental assistance and subsidized housing
- 🕒 February 14, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- 📍 Douglas College Surrey Learning Center, 13769 104 Ave
- 📞 Fairuz/Aida 778 591 9334 ext 121 or 122 || Mustafa: mahmad@mosaicbc.org

### Power of Attorney and Healthcare Agreements Workshop for Seniors

Power of Attorney and Healthcare Agreement is the key legal document for personal and advance care planning. Learn about the purpose of the Power of Attorney and Healthcare Agreement in this workshop and

- 🕒 February 3, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- 📞 Daisy 604 254 9626 || daisyau@mosaicbc.org

### English Conversation Circle

Increase your vocabulary, learn how to make small talk, answer simple questions on the phone and improve your spoken English skills. Make new friends and learn about the community and Canadian culture.

- 🕒 Tuesdays, August 22, 2019 – February 27, 2020, 12:15 pm – 1:30 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC #200A-7134 King George Blvd., Surrey
- 📞 Aida or Fairuz 604 318 6971 or 778 591 9334 || ajadallah@mosaicbc.org or fzenati@mosaicbc.org

### English Conversation Circle for Refugee Claimants

Practice your English and learn more about life in Canada in a friendly, welcoming environment! Childminding available. Every Tuesday from 6:00-8:00 pm, make connections and become more comfortable speaking in English through activities and conversations. Open to all refugee claimants, any English level welcome.

- 🕒 Wednesdays, January 15 – February 26, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- 📞 Katherine 604 254 9626 || kgriffin@mosaicbc.org

### Drop-In English Conversation Circle for Work Permit Holders

- Learn effective communication skills and practice workplace English
- Familiarize yourself with Canadian workplace culture
- Meet new people and have meaningful conversations
- 🕒 Mondays, January 6 – March 9 (excluding statutory holidays), 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- 📞 Rey 604 438 8214 || rblasco@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.*

# Decolonized voices: celebrating Canadian Black HERstories

by THERESA K. HOWELL

**Contributions through academic and artistic performance are celebrated at UBC's Museum of Anthropology with the Black Canadian Women, a series with poetry, discussion and music for Black History Month (Feb. 6).**

"If they are reaching out to shift this paradigm of race and culture in this city, I'd love to be part of that support," says Nan-yamka Lewis, founder and director of BlackArt Gastown, talking about her involvement as co-curator of the event, *Decolonizing Voices: A Celebration of Canadian Black HerStory*.

### Black HerStories

Strong Black women have a long history here in Vancouver. In 1972, feminist and community leader Rosemary Brown was elected into British Columbia's provincial legislature, becoming the first African-Canadian woman to ever be a part of a parliamentary body in Canada. In 1975, she ran for the NDP leadership race getting all the way to the 4th ballot but lost to Ed Broadbent.

Further back in 1858, before Confederation, one of the first Black American families to reach the shores of the West Coast were the Starks. Sylvia Stark, a true pioneer, lived on Salt Spring Island before most people inhabited the island community. Later, she became a living legend at 106 years old; many people would often gather to hear her tell stories of her child-

and advocacy to her Trinidadian parents.

"Both my parents' careers involved acts of service. My father was director of Arts and Culture while my mother was a social worker," says Lewis.

### Evening's event

The lineup for the evening features Adelene da Soul Poet (aka Bertha Clark), a celebrated local spoken word poet and activist. Her rhythmic words shine a light on the rich history of herself and the Black community of Vancouver in Hogan's Alley, one of her famous spoken word anthologies.

"My writing reflects the wisdom, humour, positive spirit and the strong will of my mother. As an adult, when I write, I feel a deep spiritual connection coming from a source before my time. I feel the spirit and soul of the people. I write under the name of Adelene in honor of my mother," says Clark.

Clark hopes the audience will glean an uplifting message from the poetry as she narrates through spoken word on her family's history. Reflecting back on past family reunions, she recalls how it was always such a joy-filled event.

"There was always laughter. These are the memories I have from my childhood," says Clark.

Following Adelene da Soul Poet, Chantal Gibson, an artist, award-winning educator and poet, will read from her poetry book, *How She Read*. This will pre-empt a book signing of this most recent publication.

"The book is a celebration of Black womanhood; it explores



▲ A historical image of Bertha Clark's relatives.

hood and her journey across the United States to Salt Spring Island.

"It is traditional in the African diaspora to start any ceremony or event with an acknowledgment of those that came before us," says Lewis, co-curator of the event.

When Lewis was approached to be part of this celebration of black culture and black people, it was an obvious fit. BlackArt Gastown was one of her first major community acts initiated back in 2017.

"It came out of desperation to put Black Art and Culture at the forefront for the upcoming generations," says Lewis.

Lewis, originally from Toronto, attributes her dedication to community involvement

our representation across the Canadian cultural imagination. It is the book I wish I had in school," says Gibson.

To complete the evening, multidisciplinary artist, musician and arts facilitator Tonye Aganaba will perform at Haida House. Aganaba's debut performance at MOA draws from their new album, *Something Comfortable*, noted as one of the best R&B recordings to come out of Vancouver.

"Decolonizing Voices is the concept of being in control of our own narrative, which is nothing new. There is such a thing as the Black Canadian experience," says Lewis. ✍️

For more information:  
www.moa.ubc.ca

# Vancouver for Beginners

## The city through a poetic kaleidoscope

by KRISTY DOCKSTADER

**“Poetry gives you the opportunity to describe things as they really are, in a heightened way, to bring out what is actually there,” says Alex Leslie, author of the new book *Vancouver for Beginners*.**

Leslie has always loved to read and write. As a child she found herself amazed with the tales by authors like Jules Verne and Agatha Christie. This love of stories and story-telling grew

poems describing 55 fictitious cities through parables on different aspects of the human experience. By the end of the novel the reader learns that each city described is actually just different aspects of a single city, Venice.

“He wrote about Venice in quite a kaleidoscopic way,” she says.

Leslie loved this idea and began writing her book about Vancouver. She has worked in the field of social work and has been involved with community volunteering most of her life.

“Parts of the book are about disorientation. I grew up here and Vancouver has changed completely in my lifetime. It’s a disorienting feeling watching your home change before your eyes.

*Alex Leslie, author of Vancouver for Beginners*

with her as she aged and has led her to write multiple books of her own, including *Vancouver for Beginners*, *We All Need to Eat*, *The things I heard about you* and *People Who Disappear*.

### A literary world expands

As she reached her teenage years, Leslie found the world of poetry and short stories and by her early 20s, she already had her work published in literary journals. Her work has also been nominated for multiple awards

This has offered her a unique perspective not only of the city, but also of the humanity that lives here.

“Parts of the book are about disorientation. I grew up here and Vancouver has changed completely in my lifetime. It’s a disorienting feeling watching your home change before your eyes,” she explains.

The book explores alternate possible futures and touches upon the extreme stratification between the rich and the poor that she feels has become more apparent within Vancouver over the years. She also explores the power that nature has over the city; being surrounded by ocean and forests plays a big role in making Vancouver the city it is.

*Vancouver for Beginners* is available for purchase on



▲ Alex Leslie, author.

and she has won the Dayne Ogilvie Prize as a top Canadian LGBT Emerging Writer.

For the last 6 or 7 years, Leslie has been writing poems about the many diverse facets of her hometown of Vancouver. She has used a mixture of realism and surrealism to take readers on a journey of Vancouver, one piece at a time.

“I hope that people have the experience of relating to the city when they read *Vancouver for Beginners*. I hope that they think, ‘Oh yeah! I recognize that tree on top of the building,’” she says.

The inspiration for *Vancouver for Beginners* came about after Leslie read the book *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino. *Invisible Cities* is a book of prose



▲ Leslie was inspired to write *Vancouver for Beginners* after he read the book *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino.

Book\*hug Press’s website and Leslie will be appearing later this month as a featured author at the Jewish Book Festival on Feb. 10 at the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver. ☞

For more information, please visit the following sites:  
[www.jccgv.com](http://www.jccgv.com)  
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### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

20<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SHAKTI AWARDS GALA

The Shakti Awards were founded in 2000 to recognize and honour women who have displayed Shakti - strength and energy, in their community, locally and/or globally. Shakti is the mother Goddess, the source of all, the universal principle of energy, power and creativity. Shakti is responsible for creation; she is also the agent of all change. Similarly, the Shakti that resides within every woman is a force to reckon with and to celebrate.

Do you know a woman who deserves to be recognized as a leader, advocate, artist, visionary or a source of strength? This is your opportunity to have her celebrated by nominating her for the Shakti Award. The women who have displayed Shakti amongst us represent an inspiring account of positive social, cultural and economic change in the world. The Shakti Awards are an opportunity for us to recognize these women, quite often the unsung heroes, and share their vibrant stories. If you would like to nominate a woman that embodies Shakti, please use the information below and email your nomination to [shaktisociety2000@gmail.com](mailto:shaktisociety2000@gmail.com) no later than February 23rd, 2020.

The Shakti Awards will be presented at the Shakti Awards Dinner Gala on Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at Bollywood Banquet Hall at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$50 each. For tickets, donations and sponsorship enquiries, call 604-307-8796.

Please note that nominations must be submitted via email. Submissions sent through other means, (social media, in-person or phone/text messages will not be considered). Ensure that the description of the nominee's accomplishments reflect the category in which she is being nominated and provide clear examples of how the nominee has excelled in the specific field and why you feel she deserves the Shakti Award in that specific category.

#### Categories:

- ♀ Academic Achievement Award (High School or University/College student)
- ♀ Public Service/Volunteer Award
- ♀ Business Entrepreneur Award
- ♀ Artistic Achievement Award
- ♀ Sports and Recreational Award
- ♀ Resilience Award - A woman who has overcome adversity and has used her personal journey in a way to inspire and motivate others to be positive despite challenges and setbacks.

#### Nomination Information:

- Name
- Age
- Address, phone number(s) and email
- Name, phone number and email of nominator
- Brief summary of reason for nomination - how the nominee's accomplishments relate to the stated category, the impact of their role, and why they should be chosen to receive a specific award.
- Identify how the nominee will contribute to Shakti: Empowerment of Women, Children and Families Society

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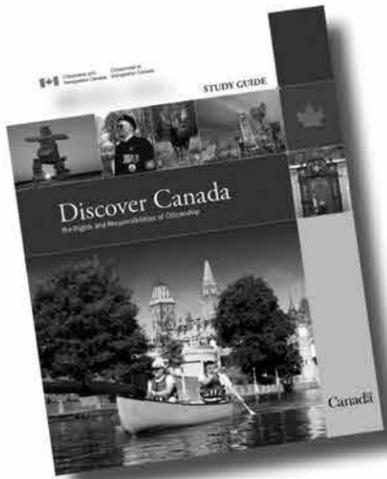


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Source: Madeans.ca, Photograph by Brian Howell

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**Raihan Akhter**  
Group Orientation Coordinator  
604-547-1369  
rakhter@dcrs.ca

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# A closer look at emotions

by JAKE MCGRAIL

**The world is as soft as a volcano: a moving composition is one of the two recently opened exhibitions at Chinatown's Centre A gallery.**

A collection of works by local artist Lam Wong, the pieces on display are varied yet connected, abstract yet highly personal. The exhibition runs until Mar. 14.

#### Personal abstraction

While there are some multimedia aspects to the exhibition – including a photograph light box and a volcano made of cedar mulch and charcoal – the majority of the pieces are paintings that focus on the theme of emotions.

“First there is a series of abstraction works,” says Wong, “paintings depicting emotions as if under a microscope. Then, there are some smaller works I started painting last year called the *History of Emotions* series; more somber, darker paintings with muted colours.”

Wong describes himself as a tool or medium or vehicle, channeling something higher than himself. He sometimes refers to his paintings as experimental rather than conceptual, and likes to work in more abstract styles.

“The abstraction allows me to express myself intuitively,” says Wong. “I call it attacking the canvas: I enter into a boxing ring with the canvas and deal with it. There is one painting I re-painted three or four times, and some come out naturally.”

On top of the first two series, there is a third that lends a very personal weight to the exhibition. It includes one of the few non-abstract works: a large portrait of Wong's mother, who tragically died a decade ago. It took a long time for Wong to be able to create pieces about her, much less share them with the public, but he feels that their addition adds a powerful dimension to the exhibition.

“I think the personal themes are what make the show special,” he says. “The pieces really reflect what I feel, especially in the current moment, here in 2020.”

For Wong, using painting as a medium to express his own



Photo by Lam Wong

▲ Artist Lam Wong researches the notion of ‘emotional refuge.’

emotional journey was an obvious choice, as he sees art and the process of making it as one of the most sacred secular parts of our world.

“Making art – it's one of the most spiritual things one can do,” he says. “Your mind has to be fully present, free from any kind of distraction. Once you tap into that creativity, there's nothing like it.”

#### Continually changing

In the main exhibit area are a couple of Wong's acrylic paintings immediately to the left, and the light box to the right. But not for long, as the positions of the artwork will change weekly. That is where the “moving composition” part of the exhibit's title comes into play, an idea initially put forward by Centre A curator Henry Lu.

“It's like a live exhibition, always breathing and moving,” says Wong. “We're incorporating the art into a sort of performance.”

The pieces are presented somewhat unconventionally: some in a corner, some not

exactly at eye-level, generally not laid out how a visitor might expect.

“The works are quite dynamic and not confined to a particular subject matter,” says Lu, who was named the gallery's curator in July. “So I thought it would be interesting to literally make the works move, as [Wong] dictates, to create different dynamics and feelings.”

Wong describes the exhibit as continually evolving. He carefully considers how each piece speaks to one another, and how they relate to their neighbours while on display. For Lu, the “moving composition” speaks to the individuality and expressiveness of this exhibition.

“I find that his works are highly personal,” says Lu, “and abstracted in a way that is very affected by his ways of knowing the world. To me, the project is expansive, not confined to a singular display of art objects.”

For more information, visit [www.centrea.org](http://www.centrea.org)

#### ► “Verbatim” from page 1

where a lot of people are just passing through, where nature in all its beauty is very present. It is a city of entrepreneurs, where people work hard – a dream location for lovers of the mountains and yoga. Vancouver, in fact, offers its residents a fairly pleasant quality of life, provided you have the means, because it is a very expensive city for what it

has to offer. Oops, I've gone off track!

What is certain is that I learn about the local culture every day, but I believe, in my heart of hearts, that my exploration is very selfish. In the end, it is my own self that this experience is allowing to be revealed. I did not know my own culture or my thought patterns before I settled here. I didn't know how attached I was to food and all its rituals

or the importance of intimacy and connection with others in my life. In the end, I knew very little about my attachments, my habits or everything I took for granted.

On the other hand, I also didn't know that I was going to fall in love with the freedom that this lifestyle offers. Freedom that you came with its share of loneliness. In that way I learned to like loneliness and today I cherish it. We feel freer to say no or “I don't feel it anymore”. We allow ourselves to respect our needs first and in this way we learn to practice kindness towards ourselves and, indirectly, with others.

Living here transforms me every day and it becomes more and more complicated to stay connected with my previous life. We learn to break away, to choose, to lighten up and to live in the present. To be continued.



▲ Vancouver is a city where a lot of people are just passing through.

Translation by Barry Brisebois

# Labour's Trace: a history of cultural identities

by TINA QU

**Labour's Trace, a two-person exhibition with artists Karin Jones and Amy Malbeuf showcasing pieces that reflect ideas connected to labour, livelihood and histories of colonization, will run from Feb. 15-Apr. 11 at the Richmond Art Gallery (RAG).**

The exhibition is based on the idea that notions of labour thread through works grounded in concepts of livelihood. Jones and Malbeuf are makers of objects who transform traditional and contemporary materials into works of art centered around cultural identity and historical narratives. Through their own labour, they confront historical misrepresentations with expressions of pride and strength, and teach their audience other ways of knowing history.

"I've long admired Karin and Amy's work," says Nan Capogna, RAG curator. "Karin lives in Vancouver, and Amy, who was born in Alberta, now lives in Halifax. They both bring intelligence and a strong sense of materiality to their works."

## The artists

In this installation of eight works, Jones draws on her African-Nova Scotian heritage when examining the impact of historical narratives that shape identity. Drawing from extensive metalsmithing experience, Jones created the works as objects of adornment, with deliber-

ate references to restraints used during the period of the enslavement of African peoples in North America. Made from found objects – leather horse tack, hominy (corn) kernels, human hair – and combined with handcrafted components of steel, silver or brass, the pieces are fabricated to fasten around the neck.

Métis artist Malbeuf presents a dozen individual works, bound together by a firm observance of traditional Indigenous practices adeptly shaped to reflect contemporary ideas and concerns. Malbeuf uses tarpaulin as she might have customarily worked with animal hide for clothing: stretching, beading (Tarp 2017) or creating fringe (Outer Seam 1-3). In many of the works, she employs beadwork and animal hair tufting, skills learned from other women sharing their cultural knowledge working side by side. Hair tufting has become an important part of Malbeuf's art practice and, like beadwork, it is labour intensive, requiring a deep commitment to the art form.

Malbeuf has exhibited her work nationally and internationally in over forty shows at venues such as the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Alberta and the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts. She has also participated in many international artist residencies, including the Melbourne Institute of Technology, The Banff Centre and The Labrador Research Institute. Malbeuf has been the recipient of the 2016 Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging



Photo by Anthony McLean

▲ Choke, 2017 (detail). Handmade steel chain, corn, brass, handmade brass mount on wood panel. W 61 cm, H 122 cm, D 30.5 cm.

Artist Award, the 2016 William and Meredith Saunderson Prize for Emerging Artists in Canada from the Hnatyshyn Foundation and the 2017 REVEAL award from the Hnatyshyn Foundation.

## An opportunity for learning

As a curator, Capogna is always working with and learning from

different artists. She believes that the *Labour's Trace* exhibition is a great event to attend in order to learn about different cultures.

"The exhibition presents an opportunity for our Richmond community, many who were born outside of Canada, to learn more about Indigenous and

African-Nova Scotian histories through an art experience," says Capogna. "These are histories that have been absent or misrepresented and it is important to bring works like Karin and Amy's to a public art gallery."

For more information, please visit [www.richmondartgallery.org](http://www.richmondartgallery.org)

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Don Li-Leger, *Counting the Steps of the Sun*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 80.3 x 80.3, image courtesy of Don Li-Leger

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Photo by Wolfgang Vogt

## Itamar Erez weaves music beyond borders

by XI CHEN

**Recently nominated for Instrumental Solo Artist of the Year at the Canadian Folk Music Awards 2020, Vancouver-based Israeli musician Itamar Erez is a composer and a performer with great versatility and eclectic style.**

A talented soloist who is highly skilled in both piano and guitar, Erez will be performing with his trio at Pyatt Hall on Feb. 7, sharing his music in a quartet at Performance Works on Feb. 23 and touring in a Tango 3 trio in British Columbia early March, including a stop in Vancouver.

“We will play some pieces from my album (*Mi Alegria*) at the Pyatt Hall show. We will make some new arrangements for the pieces and also play some new pieces. It is exciting; there will be a lot of improvisation on stage,” Erez says.

His latest and fourth album, *Mi Alegria*, released last June, is a combination of solos and ensembles. According to Erez, this album features his piano playing more prominently and has a more significant jazz flavour than his previous recordings.

### Early influence

Born and raised in Israel, Erez says that spending his formative years there from age 15 to 24 instilled world music in him early on.

“Israel is like a melting pot of all kinds of cultures; the music is very diverse. If you turn the radio on, you can hear Arabic music or the Beatles,” says Erez. “My father was also a pilot with an eclectic taste in music, and he would bring records from everywhere.”

Erez started playing the piano at age six and quickly realized he had a talent for it. He also took up the guitar when he was 15, and after that music became an inseparable part of his life.

Having perfect pitch and inspired by just sounds, Erez says music follows him everywhere in his head when he is working on a new piece.

“I like sounds so I may sit by the piano and improvise and discover something that sparks my imagination. Over the next few weeks, I keep trying to solve the puzzle,” says Erez, talking about his creative process.

### Exploring new horizons in music

Classically trained and having initially studied music composition, Erez’s musical journey is a constant exploration of new horizons.

“As a composer, there is a difference between music on paper

and how it sounds in the end. Improvising is really important for me, so at some point, I decided to express my own musicality,” he says.

He also made a major shift away from the classical world when he first moved to Vancouver around 2002.

“I was missing home (Tel Aviv) a lot, so I started incorporating music from where I came from as well as jazz to create something personal. *Desert Song* was created in Vancouver in 2006,” recounts Erez, referring to his debut album with his Adama Ensemble.

In the ensuing years, life has taken him and his family back to Israel where he joined Turkish musician Omar Faruk Tekbilek’s

“It is exciting to meet someone from a different background, and you become friends through music.”

*Itamar Erez, musician*

ensemble. He had to adjust his guitar playing for Turkish music and got deeper into Middle Eastern music. He also added flamenco music and Brazilian choro to his repertoire and released two more albums, *Hommage* (2010) and *New Dawn* (2013), before moving back to Vancouver again in 2015.

Despite the complicated political situation in the Middle East, Erez feels that in the common language of music, communication is always easy.

“It is exciting to meet someone from a different background, and you become friends through music,” he adds.

His next project will be a duet album with Persian-Canadian percussionist Hamin Honari who he has collaborated with for a few years.

Aside from composing and performing, Erez also teaches music. He is a faculty member at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra School of Music and has written a book, *Exercises & Etudes* – an Advanced Method for the Fingerstyle Guitarist.

“I am excited about getting people excited about music. If you understand more about music, it can really open up your horizon,” Erez says.

Learn more about his work at [www.itamarerez.com](http://www.itamarerez.com)



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# Cultural Calendar

February 4–18, 2020

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Welcome to February - one month down in the new year, 11 more to go! Some of the events happening this month include Family Day, Valentine's Day and Black History Month! Celebrate them with your friends, family and loved ones by exploring the many dancing performances, roundtables, film fests, theatrical plays and operas happening throughout the city.

\*\*\*

## Black History Month at VIFF

Feb. 1–29  
Vancity Theatre, Vancouver  
[www.viff.org](http://www.viff.org)

Curated by Barbara Chirinos in partnership with VIFF Vancity Theatre's Tom Charity, the Black History Month film series is a significant contribution to Vancouver's cultural diversity. This year's series provides a wide range of black experience and creativity, from Fela Kuti's radical Afro-beat to Toni Morrison's haunting literature, it includes a history of horror movies and the new (Academy Award-nominated) Underground Railroad historical drama, Harriet, as well as an all-ages \$5 animation show, a Queer Night and a tribute to the late writer-director John Singleton, with Boyz n the Hood.

\*\*\*

## Dana Michel

Feb. 6–8, 8 p.m.  
Scotiabank Dance Centre,  
Vancouver  
[www.thedancecentre.ca](http://www.thedancecentre.ca)

The audacious and original works of Montreal-based dance artist Dana Michel have earned international attention and prestigious awards including the Jardin d'Europe Award at ImPulsTanz (Vienna), and the Silver Lion for Innovation in Dance at the Venice Biennale. At the Scotiabank Dance Centre, Michel will break through conventions with her daring choreographies, rejecting stereotypical physicality and identity and creating a liberated world of shape-shifting metamorphosis, incorporating elements ranging from sculpture and comedy, to psychology and social commentary. There will be a post-show talkback on Feb. 7.

\*\*\*

## Genevieve Robertson: Looking Through a Hole in the Earth

Feb. 6–Mar. 22

Burnaby Art Gallery  
[www.burnabyartgallery.ca](http://www.burnabyartgallery.ca)

Over the past four years, interdisciplinary artist Genevieve Robertson has developed a studio practice that involves extensive physical and material exploration, engaging with the complexities of our relation to land and water in a time of large-scale industrial exploitation and climate precarity. Drawing with found materials, her work links biology, geology and environmental studies with contemporary drawing. The exhibit presents three series of recent explorations: works on paper composed with bitumen and seawater; forest-derived charcoal and graphite; and silt, seaweed and limestone. Robertson's practice of drawing and painting with found materials - whether harvested, collected or dug up from the ground - is a way of implicating herself directly in the process of landscape representation, and of learning about the entanglement of non-human life forms and geologic landforms that coexist in our biosphere.

\*\*\*

## Between Roots and Rings

Feb. 8, 12:30–5:30 p.m.  
Maplewood House,  
North Vancouver  
[www.northvanarts.ca](http://www.northvanarts.ca)

The cedar tree is strong and grounded, bringing hundreds of years of wisdom. Indigenous mixed media artist Melanie Rivers, Tiyaltelwet, will lead the Between Roots and Rings workshop, which will center around the qualities and medicines of the cedar tree. Participants will spend time outside by a cedar tree and write down all that they experience (sounds, colours, textures, smells, emotions). Participants will then create their own 11x14 mixed media painting of a tree person using collage papers, book pages and acrylic paints. No previous art experience is needed.

\*\*\*

## Nikkei Mubi

Feb. 8, 2–3:30 p.m.  
Nikkei National Museum and  
Cultural Centre, Burnaby  
[www.centre.nikkeiplace.org](http://www.centre.nikkeiplace.org)

The Nikkei National Museum has digitized over 40 historical home movies from its moving image collection. These fragile 16mm, 8mm and Super 8 films can now be safely placed in long term storage, and its digitized versions will

soon be available online. At this screening, get a glimpse into the personal and public lives of Japanese Canadians from the 1930s to the 1970s on the west coast, throughout Canada, and abroad. Nikkei Mubi presents a unique perspective on Canadian history highlighting generations of the Japanese Canadian community and their resilience in a time of discrimination.

\*\*\*

## What Aborigines Sang: Aynu, Yukar and Some Problems in Japan Studies

Feb. 10, 6:30–8:30 p.m.  
Asian Centre Auditorium at UBC,  
University Endowment Lands  
[www.asia.ubc.ca/events/event/2019-20-john-howes](http://www.asia.ubc.ca/events/event/2019-20-john-howes)

The John Howes Lecture in Japanese Studies is an annual public lecture for prominent scholars from around the world to speak to the university community and alumni on topics in Japanese Studies. On Feb. 10, University of Chicago professor James Ketelaar will draw on his most recent research into the concepts of the barbarian and the frontier in the construction of Japanese national identity and history; coupled with this, he will examine something of the roles and meanings of emotion in the construction of the historical imagination in Japan.

\*\*\*

## Ghost

Feb. 12–15  
Historic Theatre at The Cultch,  
Vancouver  
[www.thecultch.com](http://www.thecultch.com)

This February, six of Montréal's best street dancers will immerse themselves in the mysterious mechanics of breathing, and interpret its life-giving rhythm, at the Historic Theatre at The Cultch. Combining elements of contemporary dance, hip hop and martial arts in a physical score that echoes the subtle pulse of respiration, Tentacle Tribe approaches the body as a musical instrument with infinite possibilities. Inhalations and exhalations sculpt the group's gestures, movement and rhythm as interconnected bodies form striking human structures that shift, alter and evolve in synergy with the music.

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## The Barber of Seville

Feb. 13–23  
Queen Elizabeth Theatre,  
Vancouver  
[www.vancouveropera.ca](http://www.vancouveropera.ca)

Chase away the February blues with *The Barber of Seville*, a feast of frivolous fun, playing at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre this month. Enjoy Figaro's mischievous escapades as he assists Count Almaviva in prising the beautiful Rosina away from her lecherous guardian, Dr. Bartolo. Italian composer Gioachino Rossini's comic masterpiece fizzles with memorable melodies in an entertaining production that proves that the road to true love is paved with theft, lies, bribery, brawling - and wicked comedy. Check out the Vancouver Opera's website for tickets and more information.

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## Fan Expo Vancouver

Feb. 15–17  
Vancouver Convention Centre  
[www.fanexpovancouver.com](http://www.fanexpovancouver.com)

The Fan Expo Vancouver is a three-day pop culture convention at the Vancouver Convention Centre. The convention is a wonderful celebration of all things nerdy, with tens of thousands of attendees celebrating all that pop culture has to offer. Attendees can shop hundreds of vendors and exhibitors, check out panels and workshops, meet their favourite stars and creators and celebrate what makes them geeky with thousands of other fans in cosplay. For tickets, show information and more information, check out the expo's website.

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## Family Day in British Columbia

Feb. 17  
Various venues around  
the Lower Mainland  
[www.childrensartsfestival.ca](http://www.childrensartsfestival.ca)  
[www.cypressmountain.com](http://www.cypressmountain.com)  
[www.museumsassn.bc.ca](http://www.museumsassn.bc.ca)

The Family Day holiday in British Columbia happens on Feb. 17 this year and there are many Family Day events happening around the Lower Mainland. Some of the events happening on and around Family Day include the Cypress Mountain Family Day weekend, the Richmond Children's Arts Festival and local programming at many municipal community centres, museums and galleries.

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