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forum of diversity

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Photo by Gabriel Porras

Loneliness in the age of internet connection

by CURTIS SEUFERT

A recent study, co-authored by University of British Columbia (UBC) professor Yue Qian and Lancaster University lecturer Yang Hu, has revealed the importance of face-to-face interaction as well as the limitations of virtual communication when it comes to maintaining mental health among older adults (those aged 60 and above).

The study, which draws data from populations in the U.S. and U.K., shows that “frequent inter-household face-to-face contact” during the pandemic

was associated with “better general mental well-being” and that those engaged more frequently in virtual contact were “more likely to feel lonely during the pandemic, particularly if their face-to-face contact was limited.”

Michael Coffey, 62, a senior member of the Coast Mental Health Clean Street Team in the same age demographic as those in Qian’s study, shares some of his thoughts on face-to-face contact.

“It’s not like some jobs where they say, ‘well, it’s working, but do it from home.’ Well you can’t really clean the sidewalks from home. So just being around peo-

ple and being outside is, I think, healthy for all of us,” he says.

Virtual communications

Qian is a professor and researcher of Sociology at UBC with a research background spanning a range of topics including marriage, divisions of labour, migration and the role of family and work in shaping health and well-being. She says that there is a lot of research on the relationship between social interaction and mental health, research on the specific impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and social interaction of different population groups is still being researched.

“Prior research has shown that inter-household contact – that is, interactions with families and friends living in other households – shape people’s mental health. But we know less about how inter-household contact was associated with older adults’ mental health during a crisis setting such as the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Qian.

Among other things, Qian and Hu’s study focussed on what role virtual communication could play in bolstering mental health, either as an enhancement or a replacement for face-to-face contact. What they found is that while virtual communication is simply not enough on its own, it

was helpful as a supplement to more direct face-to-face communication.

“We find that face-to-face (F2F) contact is essential in helping maintain older adults’ mental well-being. Virtual contact is not qualitatively equivalent,” says Qian. “Although we find that virtual contact on its own is not beneficial, it enhances older adults’ mental wellbeing when used in combination with F2F contact. The implication for the future of digitization and ageing: digitally replaced older support does not look promising for the future but a digitally enhanced/assisted one can be.”

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beyond buzz
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promises many
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Queer films
come to town,
virtually
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Cultural Spotlight

The Hands of Knowledge: female perspective

by GEOFF RUSS

“The fact that these are women doing this work is great because look at the work, it’s phenomenal,” says artist Joanne Finlay. “It’s the knowledge that they carry, it’s the patience that they have.”

An exhibition curated by Finlay, titled *The Hands of Knowledge*, showcases, until Sept. 26, the work of six Indigenous women

Finlay. “So I thought, you know what, I should do something about that.”

According to Canadian Arts, Vancouver galleries dedicated to Indigenous artwork, the artists are often predominantly men with little representation for women. Finlay, however, says that women of the coastal Nations have always had the knowledge to paint and carve.

“Who do you think fed those artists when they were carving

tual and the supernatural. The stories of the artists involved are intimately linked to family and personal histories inherited from their parents and grandparents. Passing much of that knowledge down was once criminally prohibited in Canada.

“The potlatch ban was lifted in 1951,” says Finlay. “It has not been that long since we’ve actually been able to make our masks and sing our songs.”

A potlatch is a feast and ceremonial gift-distributing ceremony among the First Nations of the Northwest Coast. It is a vital event for the governments and communities for the Nations of the Northwest Coast. Starting in 1885, the potlatch was banned by the Government of Canada until 1951 when the ban was eliminated from the Indian Act.

“When we were not allowed to do anything, we had to sneak into the forest and secretly learn and carry on our culture,” says Finlay.

The inheritance of knowledge and craftsmanship was also endangered by epidemics that exacted a huge toll on the coastal Nations. Their cultural heritage was greatly endangered by the deaths of artists, weavers and elders who carried that knowledge.

“We still do our art today and we’re still practicing our culture today, in spite of everything that’s happened to our people in our history,” says Finlay. “We are still standing here.”

Selecting the six artists for the *Hands of Knowledge* exhibition was not random. Every artist comes from Finlay’s own Ts’msyen people or Nations they had relationships with in history and the present.

“All of the Nations represented in this show are Nations we traded with,” says Finlay. “That’s also a significant thing to me because we still have connections to those Nations today.”

Having herself enjoyed a long career in the arts world, Finlay is glad to be able to help the careers of the chosen artists of the exhibition.

“I love the fact that I could promote these artists,” says Finlay. “You never know where this work might take them.”

and making that canoe?” asks Finlay. “The women are always there.”

With the help of a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, Finlay ensured that the artists of the *Hands of Knowledge* exhibition were well-paid in recognition for their commitment. The curator has only praise for artists’ dedication to their art

“These women are the hands of knowledge today and they’re passing it on to the future generations.

Joanne Finlay, artist

at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art in Vancouver. Hailing from the Ts’msyen Nation, Finlay has spent over 25 years working in the arts world.

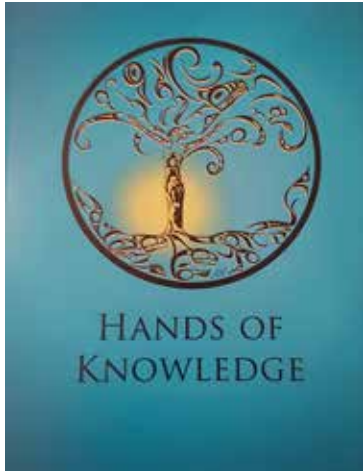
Knowledge and representation

Hands of Knowledge highlights the themes of past, present and future. Finlay consciously chose only Indigenous women for the exhibition.

“These women are the hands of knowledge today and they’re passing it on to the future generations,” she says. “That’s how I came up with the name.”

Making space for the works of Indigenous women was a motivation for the curator to organize the exhibition. Once when reading an arts publication, Finlay saw a graph showing Indigenous women made up a tiny percentage of the artists featured in galleries and museums across Canada. A 2015 Canadian Art article points out that women of colour made up only three per cent of artists displayed across the country while men made up 64 per cent of all the artists on display.

“If you’re a woman of color or an Indigenous woman, your real work really doesn’t get seen, that’s just wrong,” says



▲ Hands of Knowledge: Artist Gathering.

while balancing it with their personal lives.

“They all have children, they have husbands, they have jobs, some of them and they balance it all,” says Finlay. “They do it all.”

History and inheritance

Hands of Knowledge displays robes, paintings and carvings created by the six artists. The knowledge conveyed through their work speaks to the themes of sight, time, the spiri-

For more information on the *Hands of Knowledge*, visit www.billreidgallery.ca www.canadianart.ca/features/canadas-galleries-fall-short-the-not-so-great-white-north

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Beyond the buzzwords: conversations on diversity, equity and inclusion

by ISHA JAIN

“Over the past year, the Black Lives Matter movement [and] the Indigenous movement have both created an opportunity to publicly acknowledge systemic racism and have deeper conversations on it,” says Sangeeta Subramanian, founder of Chetana Consulting, a firm specializing in equity, diversity and inclusion.

There have been conversations around diversity and inclusion in Canada for a fairly long time, usually from a mechanistic lens. Those conversations are centered around the numbers, but Subramanian feels they tend to ignore the larger topic of systemic barriers to equity.

“The idea is no longer to bring more ‘diverse’ people into a space in hopes that things will sort themselves out. We need to take intentional and sustained action to identify and dismantle inherent power structures that

perpetuate inequity,” adds Subramanian.

She offers the example of a table: if there are 12 seats at the table, the older discourse on diversity ensures three seats belong to minority community members. However, the new discourse on diversity asks questions like: Could the table be an uncomfortable construct



▲ Sangeeta Subramanian, founder of Chetana Consulting.

to those members? Can these persons share their lived experiences authentically? Do they feel respected and welcomed? Is the table a safe space for them?

This is where the concept of safe spaces becomes crucial.

Safe and brave spaces: the what, why and how

A safe space is one where individuals can share their experiences without judgment, bias, denial or fear of retaliation.

However, Subramanian explains that sometimes the term ‘safe space’ falls short, and the term ‘brave space’ might be more suitable, as it acknowledges that certain conversations can be difficult or uncomfortable and therefore requires all involved parties to be courageous.

“Safe and brave spaces are built through trust, openness and empathy. They allow the people seeking equity and those with privilege to come together to a neutral space and have an honest conversation,” says Subramanian.

The idea is for such conversations to persuade people to critically examine the structures of oppression, understand where privilege is at play and to be able to counter the euro-centric narrative.

Diversity, equity and inclusion beyond the buzzwords

A lot of people find themselves lost with all the buzzwords surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion. While it can be intimidating to have these conversations, the last thing Subramanian wants is for diversity and equity concepts to seem complicated or too academic, so she strives to make these conversations accessible to all through her work.

“We need to break the myth that these are complex concepts; in fact, we should be able to have a conversation about diversity in simple words. I love to open up my discussions with interactive exercises,” she says.

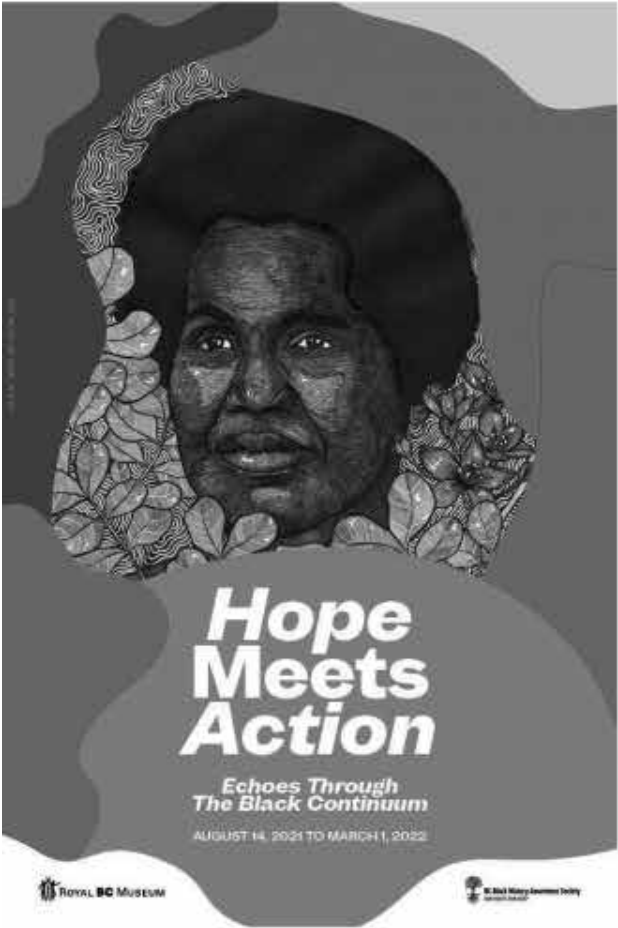
Subramanian offers a sample exercise for people who wish to

move the conversation forward: identify 10 people in your close circle. How many of them are of the same gender, race, age or sexual orientation. Your view of the world comes from a certain perspective. How can you open yourself up to people that are different from you?

Every step towards learning is a step in the right direction.

“These systems and structures of inequity were not created overnight, and therefore cannot be dismantled overnight. There needs to be intentional and sustained action that requires energy and persistence from all parties involved,” concludes Subramanian.

People interested in furthering the discussion can attend a webinar offered by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) titled Safe Spaces and Effective Conflict Resolution and hosted by Simon Fraser University (SFU) Aug. 19: www.sfu.ca/sfu-community/events.html#view/event/event_id/23364



stolen people on stolen land
...
in a space where our voices have long been suspiciously absent ...
pushing the socio-racial limits of our supposed liberation ...
hope for a refuge where we could unshackle ourselves
...
the untold history of those who acted outside the system to disrupt ...
we bear the responsibility to keep fighting ...

Hope Meets Action

Echoes Through The Black Continuum

August 14, 2021 - March 1, 2022

The BC Black History Awareness Society in partnership with the Royal BC Museum presents Hope Meets Action: Echoes Through the Black Continuum, the story of Afro-diasporic 'British Columbia' history past, present and future. Black 'British Columbian' history has long been whitewashed in the annals of colonial history. Against the backdrop of white-centring walls, this exhibit daylights the living and ongoing history of Black belonging, told in this manner by the Black community for the first time.

Monsoon Festival of Performing Arts Song & Dance

A workshop with multidisciplinary artist Krystal Kiran

by ISHA OHRI

Krystal Kiran says dance is her first language. The Canadian South Asian actress, singer, dancer and choreographer will be hosting an online workshop, Sunday Funday: Song & Dance with Krystal Kiran, as part of the Monsoon Festival of Performing Arts on Aug. 22.

“[These disciplines] are all forms of catharsis for me, with storytelling at the root,” says Kiran.

The seeds

The multidisciplinary artist who grew up in Penticton explains that juggling two cultures – Indian and Canadian – has allowed her to find a unique position in the Canadian arts scene. Music and dance were ways for her to find a sense of belonging in these cultures.

“Hearing AR Rahman’s music for the first time at eight years old was a deeply impacting moment for me,” Kiran recalls.

She finds it wild that 20 years later, she would have the opportunity to work with him several times.

At the age of 19, Kiran had the opportunity to audition and win a role for Bombay Dreams, the first South Asian musical on Broadway. She says she will never forget that audition; she found her best friends among the thousands of dancers who auditioned alongside her.

About her Broadway experience, she recalls her top three lessons.



▲ Krystal Kiran.

“Believe in the beauty of your dreams and work towards them. If you get into the habit of doing just one thing every day that works towards your dreams, that builds up over time to help you manifest them,” says Kiran.

She also realized that artists are just like athletes.

“Discipline,” she says, “in your artistic practice is king, and knowing when to rest and take time to refuel [or] refill your well with inspiration is queen. The only way you can figure this out is getting to know yourself and your energies.”

Thirdly, take risks.

“I got expelled from theatre school for attending the Bombay Dreams audition because it was against policy to audition for anything in the first year and a half of the program,” Kiran explains. “But I knew in my heart that I had been working towards that specific show my whole life up to that point. When you’re passionate about something, don’t be afraid of high stakes – let them motivate you.”

So far Kiran has had a plethora of opportunities, including the understudy role of the lead in Bombay Dreams where she worked with many stars.

“I hope that who I am as an artist is an amalgamation of all the people I’ve worked with,” she says.

Although Kiran has been able to grow her career into full bloom, she has faced her set of challenges. She has a stutter, and says it was a struggle to cope with as an actor and a singer. Never giving up, she focused on breathwork, singing, yoga, Pilates and meditation.

Other struggles Kiran has been dealing with include the inconsistencies of the entertainment business, which she feels resonates with many art-

ists, discrimination due to her ethnicity and, of course, the pandemic. She says the stress can take a toll on her health but being disciplined is still important. Her mantra is ‘everything in moderation, including moderation.’

Planting new seeds

Teaching is one aspect of Kiran’s artistic path, who adds that helping future generations find their way in the arts is very rewarding.

Working on the Maple project and creating scholarships for South Asian female artists at Emily Carr University has been an amazing experience for Kiran. The first ever recipient of the award, Tisha Deb Pillai, designed her House of Kiran (HOK) logo.

“I started HOK after realizing that unless I’m practicing my own agency as an artist, I will always be at the whim and mercy of who is hiring me, giving me work, etc.,” she says.

The artist will be pursuing her education and opening a studio in partnership with South Asian Arts later this year, as well as continuing her work as a performer.

“In art, as is in life, it’s all about the process. As an artist and educator, I’m curious to see how it will unfold with the intention of bringing self-expression, creativity and empowerment to the community,” Kiran says. ✍

For more information, please visit www.monsoonartsfest.ca

► “Loneliness” from page 1

For Qian, one of the factors to look at closely in the future is the level of accessibility that seniors have towards being able to fully engage with newer technology for the means of virtual communication.

“In preparing for the future, it is important to ensure that elderly people have equal access, affordance, knowledge, skills and even comfort level when it comes to the usage of digital tools,” says Qian. “It’s surprising that virtual contact is associated with greater loneliness and mental distress than no contact, but a wide array of research did document the digital burden, stress and reluctance experienced by some in the ageing population.”

Out and about

When asked about his thoughts on social media and virtual connectivity, Coffey says that he can relate somewhat to that tech-

nological disillusionment. Having gotten internet for the first time this February, he can imagine how his fellow senior peers might feel about a strict transition to virtual communication.

“I guess for young people, they’re used to virtual interaction, and it’s almost like a lateral move. Not so much with seniors. Seniors tend to isolate anyways – and people with mental health issues – and then this challenge drops on top of them. I could see some people just giving up on it,” he says.

However, Coffey’s mental health story has been one of stark improvement over the last year and a half. While for many people this timeframe has been a very difficult mental health period, for Coffey, it has coincided with a number of watershed mental health moments.

Having lived with undiagnosed mental health issues since an early age, Coffey was finally diagnosed in September of 2019

with major depressive disorder. The next three months would see a huge change in Coffey’s mental health due to a handful of different factors. In addition to being prescribed, successfully, with a mood stabilizer and other medicine and being fast-tracked to income disability assistance, Coffey also earned a position with COAST Mental Health’s Clean Street Team.

“Coast putting me to work was huge. I was an earner for many, many years. That was the only thing pretty much that kept me functional, was that I could earn. My life was my work, whatever I was doing,” says Coffey. “So to be back at work, even though this is something quite different from what I’m used to, right away I felt well about it.”

For Coffey, key factors including medical treatment, a transition from living in an SRO to City of Vancouver Housing and a job which combined face-to-face social interaction with tangible

and visible results all contributed greatly to his improved mental health and well-being. Indeed, while Coffey operates as a one-person team, he’s been able to maintain a great deal of face-to-face interaction, full-time, through his work.



▲ Dr. Yue Qian.

“There’s so many regular people that, you know, I know their names. They know my name. They’ll say, ‘thank you for doing this, I appreciate this, nice to see you again, what are you going to be doing this weekend?’ It’s a pleasant neighbourly experience. And [the area] is better off when I’m done than when I began, which is always a nice feeling. I’d almost take a bit of proprietorship to the sidewalks,” says Coffey.

Coffey’s mental health story, like anyone one else’s, is affected by more than just one or two variables. But what can be said is that, for Coffey, much like the seniors in Qian’s study, having consistent face-to-face interactions has proved to be an essential piece of the puzzle in one’s mental health. ✍

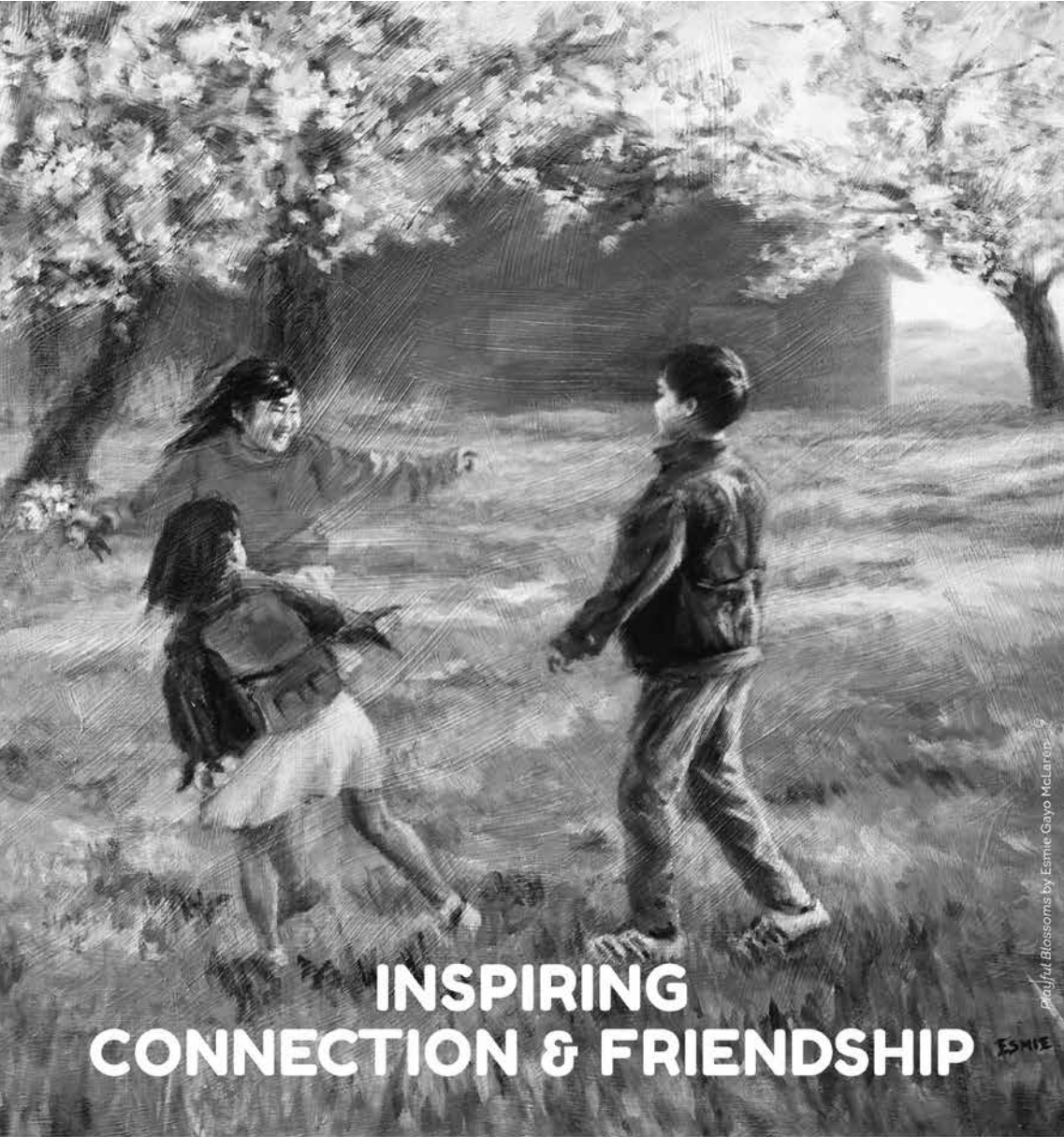
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Issues and Ideas

Indigenize the Senate

I agree with those who say this is an era of Matriarchs.

The appointment of Inuk leader Mary Simon as Canada’s 30th governor-general is a vital step towards recognizing the significance of Indigenous Peoples in Canada’s past, present and now future. A northerner with decades of experience and a woman grounded in culture, she represents a true shift in Canada, and beyond.

We are all celebrating. Just last week, the first ever woman, and 2SLGBTQ+, became Grand Chief Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer. And now Roseanne Archibald is the first-ever woman to be Assembly of First Nations National Chief.

These paradigm shifts give me hope, especially after a Canada Day unlike any other. There were fewer fireworks and less flag-waving. Orange shirts certainly outnumbered red ones. The nation took pause to reflect on the disturbing recovery of over 1000 buried children who have revealed themselves long after their deaths at residential schools. Indigenous people and allies took to the streets and social media and pressed for real change; municipalities announced their willingness to find new, more inclusive names for schools, streets and parks.

Canadians are at last recognizing the horror of their country’s deep rooted colonial past and have begun looking for and demanding remedies. Now is the time for change.

One place where significant and meaningful change is immediately possible is in the Canadian Senate. It’s time to Indigenize the Senate.

Canada’s Senate may be this country’s ultimate colonial institution. A remnant of the undemocratic legislative councils that governed the colonies before Confederation, the Senate was created both to represent the provinces, but more importantly as a check on elected government. Like the House of Lords in Britain, the Canadian Senate was created to safeguard the interests of propertied elites.

But the Senate’s best days may still lie ahead: Parliament is a ready vessel for the constitutional change Canada urgently needs. Deep rooted structural changes are required for real reconciliation and true changes – changes concerning how Canada is governed and power is shared.

In 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau wisely recognized the Senate could neither be elected nor abolished. Instead, and to the surprise of his party, the Prime Minister disbanded the Liberal caucus in the Senate. In its place, he vowed to appoint only independent senators recommended by the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments. The effect has been positive and already he has appointed 55 senators – a majority of its members – in this way.

Further Senate reform should be Trudeau’s next step. He can reform the Senate to be not only independent but also Indigenous.

Trudeau has the opportunity to fill as many as 12 vacant Senate seats before this autumn’s anticipated election. He should ask the Advisory Board to recommend only exceptional Indigenous candidates who are

well-regarded by recognized Indigenous communities.

This would be an immediate step towards an Indigenized Senate that makes modern sense.

Transforming Canada’s Upper House to truly reflect and include a majority Indigenous representation, for current and future Senators, would be a significant gesture towards reconciliation. It would have natural legitimacy as a custodial body safeguarding the land and all peoples. In using his discretion to establish this new convention, he would set Canada on a new and more equitable constitutional path.

This could be among the Prime Minister’s most consequential legacies.

Of course, Indigenous perspectives vary and not all will welcome a dedicated parliamentary chamber. An Indigenized Senate would grapple with adequately representing the diversity of Indigenous perspectives, Nations and interests while preserving Canada’s constitutional commitment to bilingualism and the representation of the provinces.

Though its ability to scrutinize and improve legislation would remain considerable, the Senate always has and would continue to defer to the House of Commons. At the same time, an Indigenous Upper House would place Indigenous perspectives at the heart of parliament and at the centre of our national conversation, exercising its responsibilities on behalf of all residents of this land – not only Indigenous ones.

With today’s 105 senators serving until age 75, the transition to an Indigenized Senate would happen over several decades. This would allow the Senate’s newest members to learn its traditions while also providing time for new practices to evolve.



Kluane Adamek.

In an interview before retiring from the Senate, Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner and former judge Murray Sinclair referred to his vision of the Senate as a “council of Elders,” ... as a thoughtful, conscientious body providing oversight of the government.” An Indigenized Senate takes Justice Sinclair’s vision at face value and to heart.

Ultimately, reconciliation will mean ceding and sharing power. The Prime Minister, acting of his own initiative, could and should demonstrate his commitment to Indigenous people with this act of political imagination.

KLUANE ADAMEK has served as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Yukon Regional Chief since January 2018. She is a proud northerner and citizen of Kluane First Nation. Regional Chief Adamek belongs to the Dak’laweidi (Killerwhale) Clan and comes from a diverse background with Tlingit, Southern Tutchone, German and Irish origins.

Photo courtesy of Senate of Canada

Photo courtesy of VQFF



Queer craving: a cinema of challenging narratives and stereotypes at VQFF

by RAFAEL ZEN

Anoushka Ratnarajah, artistic director of the 33rd Annual Vancouver Queer Film Festival, indicates that this year’s event can be a special place for learning and growth through experiencing art. She argues that because stories create profound opportunities for connection, it becomes important to have spaces for queer folks to experience that bond, to understand their histories, speak to their presents, and imagine their futures.

Running until Aug. 22, the festival is streaming a range of films that allow viewers to engage with these possibilities.

ings, community building, and artistic expression.

Invited to suggest her favorite titles to the audience, she mentions *Forgotten Roads* (screening August 12–18) and *Cured* (screening August 12–22).

“Forgotten Roads (Chile, 2020, by Nicol Ruiz Benavides) is one of my favourites — it’s so gratifying to see a nuanced, sexy and daring lesbian film featuring older women and directed by a queer woman. And in keeping with much of Latin American cinema, there are moments of true magic and mystery” says Ratnarajah.

In the story, 70-year-old Claudina finds herself swept into a delicious love affair, and a new awareness of herself. As she connects with her sexuality and finds

“ I think it’s important for our communities to see our successes celebrated...

Anoushka Ratnarajah, artistic director of the 33rd Annual Vancouver Queer Film Festival

“It’s incredibly important for there to be a queer focused film festival in Vancouver that continues to evolve and grow to meet the needs of our communities. It’s vital for us to continue to provide a platform for our local queer filmmakers and support their growth as artists,” says Ratnarajah.

She understands that filmmakers can have an incredible capacity to create empathetic opportunities through storytelling and transform culture as a result.

“Our festival is queer in the sense that we strive to serve and uplift as many narratives as possible from the diverse communities that identify under that umbrella,” says Ratnarajah.

What to watch? Tales of strong desire

The festival’s diverse program will explore this year’s theme – longing, a persistent desire or craving, especially for something, someone or some situation that is unattainable – through stories of love, sexual awaken-

a community of queers who find refuge in the local underground queer bar and cabaret, Claudina becomes enamoured not just by Elsa and her new friends, but also by the sense of freedom and autonomy.

“I also think *Cured* (USA, 2020, by Bennett Singer and Patrick Sammon) is a really important watch for our community,” she adds.

The film documents the fight to remove homosexuality from its classification as a mental illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). “I think it’s important for our communities to see our successes celebrated and to reflect on our histories,” she concludes.

How to watch? Experiencing the online festival

To Ratnarajah, going digital as a result of the pandemic has allowed VQFF to expand its reach to queer communities that haven’t been able to engage with the festival before because of geography and mobility.

Though digital, the festival will continue to bring viewers together around stories that speak to a plethora of queer experiences – challenging dominant narratives and stereotypes of queer people in film and showcasing works that are filmed through an experiential lens.

Throughout its program of more than 30 screening options, this year’s festival is really an event for all. ✨

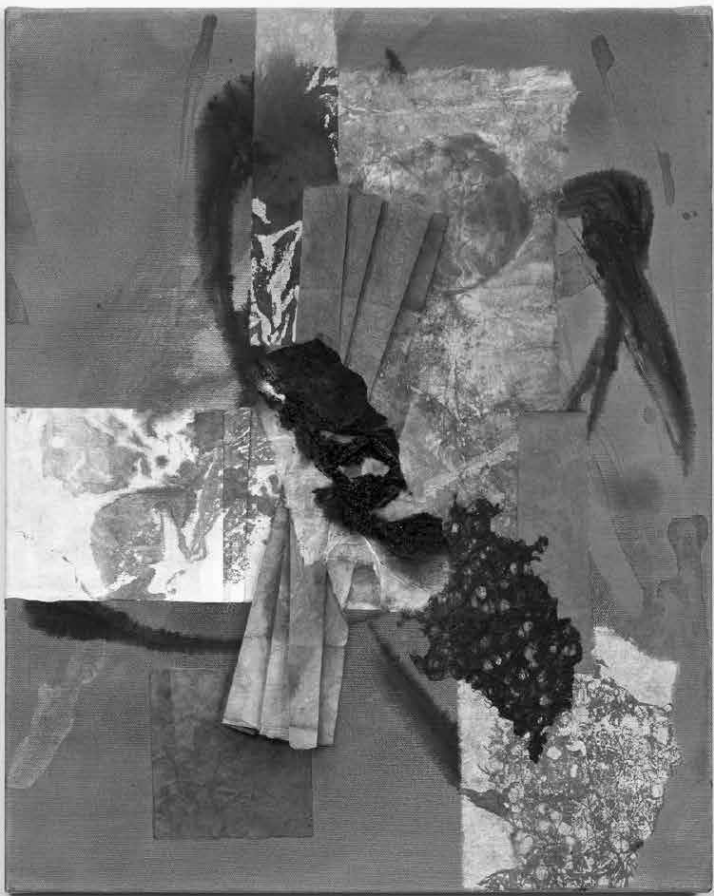
Viewers can access the full program and buy tickets for films being streamed at: www.outonscreen.com/vqff.

Photo courtesy of VQFF



▲ Cinema can act like a special place where learning and growth can be possible through experiencing art.

HEATHER MIDORI YAMADA



‘shards’

Shards are glimpses of becoming like ancient pottery, broken and split off, fragments of the past unearthed and brought to light now.

August 31 – September 19, 2021
Meet the Artist Thursday, September 2, 1:00–4:00 pm

www.artyamada.com

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Audio Metaphor – soundscape at your fingertips

by XI CHEN

Ever had any interest in hearing a birdsong, or perhaps the summer rain, or how about the ocean waves? Users can type in anything that comes to mind, and Audio Metaphor will generate a soundscape based on that query.

The soundscape generation system, developed by Philippe Pasquier and Miles Thorogood, is currently on exhibit as an interactive artwork at the online Sight + Sound International Digital Art Festival until the end of August.

Both creators are interdisciplinary artists and scholars who are working at the intersection of art, science and technology. Pasquier is an associate professor at the School of Interactive Arts & Technology at SFU and the director of the Metacreation Lab. Thorogood is an assistant professor at the Creative Studies Department at UBC's Okanagan campus.

A soundscape search engine

The inception of the project began nearly a decade ago, inspired by the ideas of memory, location and emotion according to Thorogood.

"Listening to the soundscape of a location brings on an emotive effect in me," he says. "I had the opportunity of traveling to southern

Mexico once, but I didn't have my sound recorder. Then I thought there are enough bits of sounds on the internet that can be brought together to have some sort of a representation of what that experience was like, so it became a sound design challenge."

With a background in sound design for theatre, he also recognizes that there are a lot of repetitive tasks in finding and matching sounds.

"What is the cognitive process whilst creating sound design?" Thorogood asks. "How can we model those cognitive processes by machines so they can simulate and carry out those tasks, leaving us more time for the kinds of things that we enjoy, such as coming up with ideas?"

Thorogood worked with Pasquier at the Metacreation lab, which specifically focuses on creative AI and generative systems, and the project came into being and is still being refined.

"We are working on boosting the database. There are 40,000 sounds in the database right now and we are multiplying it by 10. If you try the system in one or two weeks, there will be more sounds, and you can make crazier soundscapes," says Pasquier.

Thorogood adds that they have also linked it up with Twitter stream to access community-contributed audio database that is online and real-time.

Behind the simple appearance of a search bar, Audio Metaphor actually encompasses a pipeline of sophisticated computational tools for generating artificial soundscapes.

First, the text analysis algorithm identifies key semantic indicators to retrieve related sounds and optimize the results based on the combination of keywords. The results are then segmented into background and foreground

labelled sound segments and selects and arranges them into the final soundscape based on the overall mood of a mix.

Pasquier explains that there are also different versions of the model, one that is used as an interactive art project for the general audience and another one that is intended for sound designers to explore the creative process.

"Often in the lab, as in most of our projects, there is a continuum of pure scientific research and artistic creation. For some of the algorithms, we also work with companies that are making audio software,

to develop some of our solutions," he adds.

A promising future for creative AI

Both are excited about their research and the future potential of creative AI.

Leading the Metacreation Lab on multiple projects, Pasquier recently had a generative art exhibition in Istanbul that explores automatic video generation. He is also working on a house music album made with AI.

"Creative AI is booming. There will be a number of big changes in the industry because of algorithms. Sound and video editing are becoming the main types of repetitive creative tasks. We can certainly improve on the process," says Pasquier.

Thorogood says they have just built the Sonic Production, Intelligence, Research and Applications Lab at the Okanagan campus of UBC to further explore other aspects of sound design to enrich the space that AI can search and create within.

"Creative AI provides a fantastic opportunity to explore what it means to be human as a creative sentient being. We can explore more deeply, relate better to other people and build new tools to further the creative process and the cultural forwarding of our society," he says.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.easternbloc.ca/en/exhibits-events/sight-and-sound-festival-online>



▲ Philippe Pasquier, associate professor at the School of Interactive Arts & Technology at SFU and director of the Metacreation Lab.



▲ Miles Thorogood, assistant professor at the Creative Studies Department at UBC's Okanagan campus.

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csf.bc.ca

August 17–September 1, 2021

Cultural Calendar

by **SIMON YEE**
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I hope everyone has been having a great summer so far. The weather has been hot and sunny, perfect to go out and explore the bountiful nature the province has to offer. While there was a summer drop, where COVID seemed to recede into the background for a while, the fourth wave of the global pandemic is here in Canada. So stay safe and keep healthy and enjoy the rest of the summer!

Jan Wade: Soul Power
Now until March 13, 2022
www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

For over thirty years, Canadian artist Jan Wade has been creating mixed-media paintings, textiles and sculptural objects, drawing upon her lived experience as an African Canadian person and her mixed cultural heritage. *Jan Wade: Soul Power* brings together the artist's diverse body of work alongside new pieces made specifically for the exhibition. Personal experience and sustained research inform Wade's unique practice, which she conceptualizes as an ongoing journey – one that is philosophical, cultural, intellectual and embodied – as she explores the places and practices of her ancestors alongside contemporary political concerns and social issues. Visit the Art Gallery's website for more details.



▲ Prophecy, 1990–20, by Jan Wade.

Chilliwack Sunflower Festival
July 26–Sept. 6
www.chilliwacksunflowerfest.com

Take a stroll along numerous one-way and extra wide pathways on 15 acres of a 60-acre farm, brimming with floral beauty. This year at the Chilliwack Sunflower Festival, they have planted 42 gorgeous varieties of Sunflowers, including a stunning Sunrich Orange Sunflowers, Giant Sunflowers and three picturesque display gardens. For the third year, they will share a field of over 50 varieties of Dahlias, and, for the second year, eight varieties of Gladiolas for patron's enjoyment. For ticket admission and more information, check out the festival's website.

Shipyards Live
July 30–Sept. 18
www.shipyardslive.ca

Shipyards Live has been working diligently with local health officials to bring live entertainment back to The Shipyards, one of the most stunning event settings on the North Shore in British Columbia. Shipyards Live will feature

live music on The Stage at Shipbuilders Square, the Patio pop-up beverage garden, food trucks, artisan vendors and a splash park for kids of all ages every Friday and Saturday this summer! On hand will be a diverse mix of artists and entertainment that will appeal to a wide range of audiences. Shipyards Live brings a fun environment for the whole family to enjoy every weekend this summer at The Shipyards, in the heart of Lonsdale Quay.

Sixth Annual Monsoon Arts Festival
Aug. 1–31
www.monsoonartsfest.ca

The Monsoon Festival of Performing Arts is a multidisciplinary arts festival presented by the South Asian Arts Society. For the second straight year, the festival is once again being presented entirely online, with the Digital Edition of the festival running until Aug. 31. Check out an entire month of music and dance performances, panel discussions, a marketplace of visual art, dance classes, development workshops and more. Help nurture the creative power within our community by attending events, learning more about artists' processes and experiencing creative practices, investing and supporting the next generation of aspiring local artists.

The Magic Hour
Aug. 3–22
www.phtheatre.org

The Magic Hour is an immersive, walk-through theatrical experience; a light-charged story of finding beauty in small moments and possibility within domestic isolation. Created and conceived by award-winning theatre director Kim Collier with playwright Kendra Fanconi, the individual experience invites you to embark on a solo room-by-room exploration of familiar, yet-transformed spaces at Presentation House Theatre. The destination of this curious and magical journey is a reflection on an unprecedented year – and a step forward into a brave new world. The Magic Hour explores the routes of the imagination; the physical world meets the digital world, blending art, design, music and text in a multi-layer mixed-media feast for the senses. For tickets and more information, check out the theatre's website.

Wade Comer – Time Passages
Aug. 4–29
www.artscouncilnewwest.org

Time Passages by Vancouver-based visual artist Wade Comer is a continuing series of long-exposure photos. Using the technique of long-exposure photography from within, or upon moving vehicles, the exhibit relinquishes control of some of the aspects of photography, allowing chance to have an effect upon the outcome. Leaving the shutter open – often for up to sixteen minutes – turns the camera into a paintbrush, capturing blocks of time within a single photograph. The images created are beyond the anticipation of the artist's pre-visualization, and beyond explanation in their finality. Equivalent to the superimposition of a hundred parallax views within a single

photograph, the images are both reductive and additive, removing detail while adding texture.

Beneath Springhill: The Maurice Ruddick Story
Aug. 5–29
www.artsclub.com

Trapped. 4,000 feet underground. With no food, little air, and even less hope of survival. Remarkably and against all odds, the indomitable spirit and song of coal miner Maurice Ruddick served as a lifeline for his fellow miners over nine unimaginable days. This theatrical production being held on the Granville Island Stage is the inspiring true story of the African-Canadian "singing miner" that emerged from the 1958 Springhill, Nova Scotia, mining disaster. Journey with this award-winning one-person show that recalls the tense historic events and celebrates hope, courage and community. Visit the Arts Club website for tickets and more information.

18th Annual Richmond Maritime Festival Re-imagined
Aug. 21–22
www.richmondmaritimefestival.ca

Though it will be much smaller than past in-person editions, the Richmond Maritime Festival Re-imagined will bring to life once more the nautical history of Steveston and the Britannia Shipyards. Complementing this year's program, a new interactive online map will allow visitors to virtually explore the seafaring history of the national historic site and some of this year's performances. Britannia Shipyards is open to the public daily and some limited Richmond Maritime Festival programming (such as food trucks and roving performers) will be available on the site's Landside. Admission is free and a limited number will be available for walk-ups.

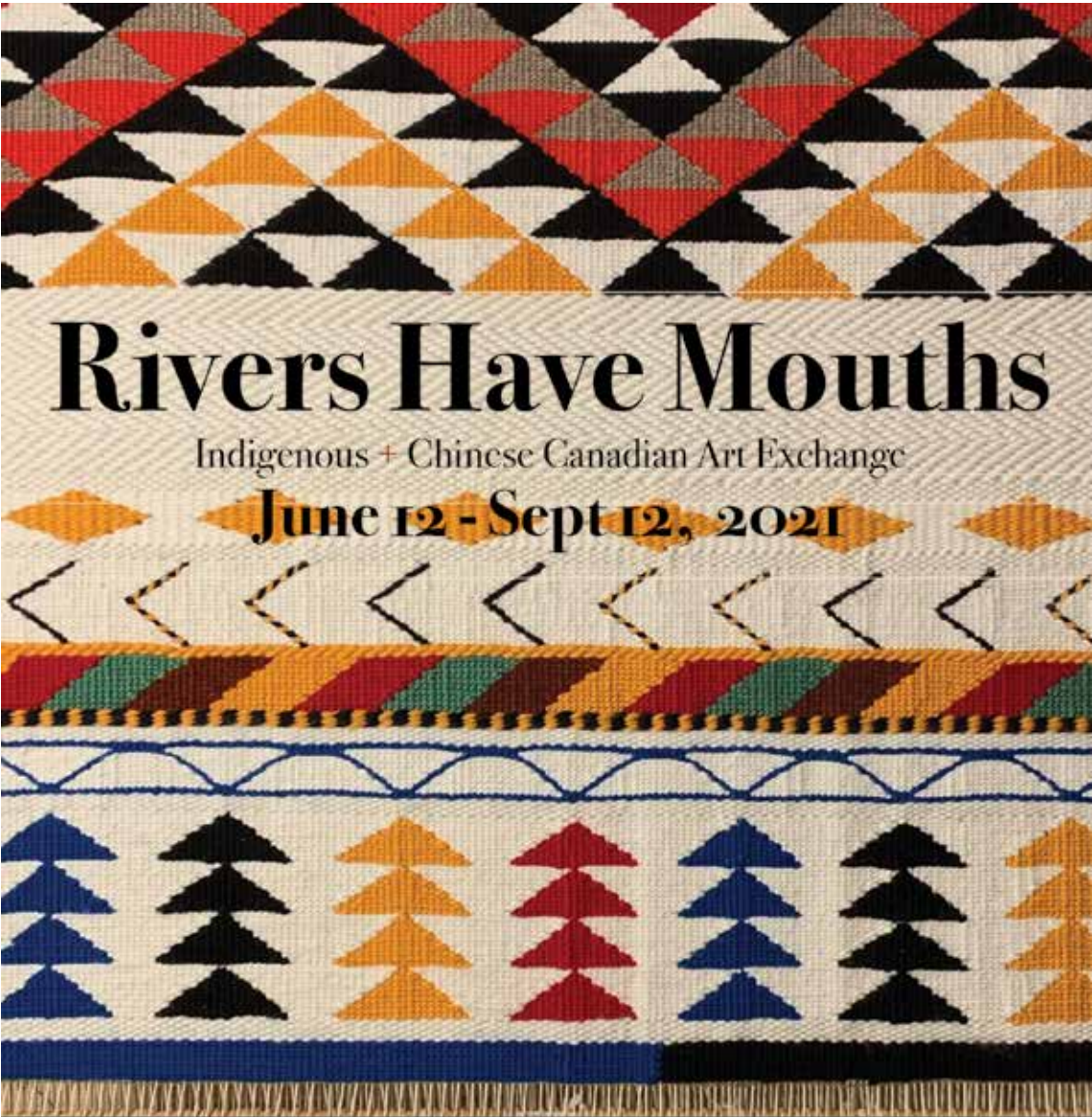
CREATE! Arts Festival
Aug. 21–22
www.createartsfestival.ca

CREATE! Arts Festival is a new community initiative of the Eastside Arts Society, bringing together local artists and the community to explore, learn and CREATE! art together through a series of affordable and accessible art workshops, and a public-participation art installation. At-

tendees of all ages will learn how to CREATE! art such as block printing, felt making, glass blowing, ceramics and painting from Eastside artists in a safe and comfortable outdoor space this summer. Check out the festival's website for details and more information.

Vancouver Latin American Film Festival
Aug. 26–Sept. 5
www.vlaff.org

The 19th edition of the Vancouver Latin American Film Festival (VLAFF) will take place from Aug. 26 – Sept. 5 as a hybrid festival with events both online and in-person. As one of the largest and longest running Latin American film festivals in North America, we will be presenting more than 60 films from 18 countries in 21 languages (always with English subtitles), with 52% of the films directed by women and non-binary directors. Most of the films will be available for viewing online throughout the festival dates with two feature film screenings each evening at The Cinematheque in Downtown Vancouver. Visit the festival's website for a complete list of films.




Rivers Have Mouths

Indigenous + Chinese Canadian Art Exchange

June 12 - Sept 12, 2021

Kelly Cannell - ʔə́yɣˑwətənaːt
Angela George - qˑwənat
Rick Harry - Xwalacktun
Laiwan - 朱麗雲
Sarah Ling - 凌慧意
Lam Wong - 王藝林
Cease Wyss - Tˑuyˑtˑtanat



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