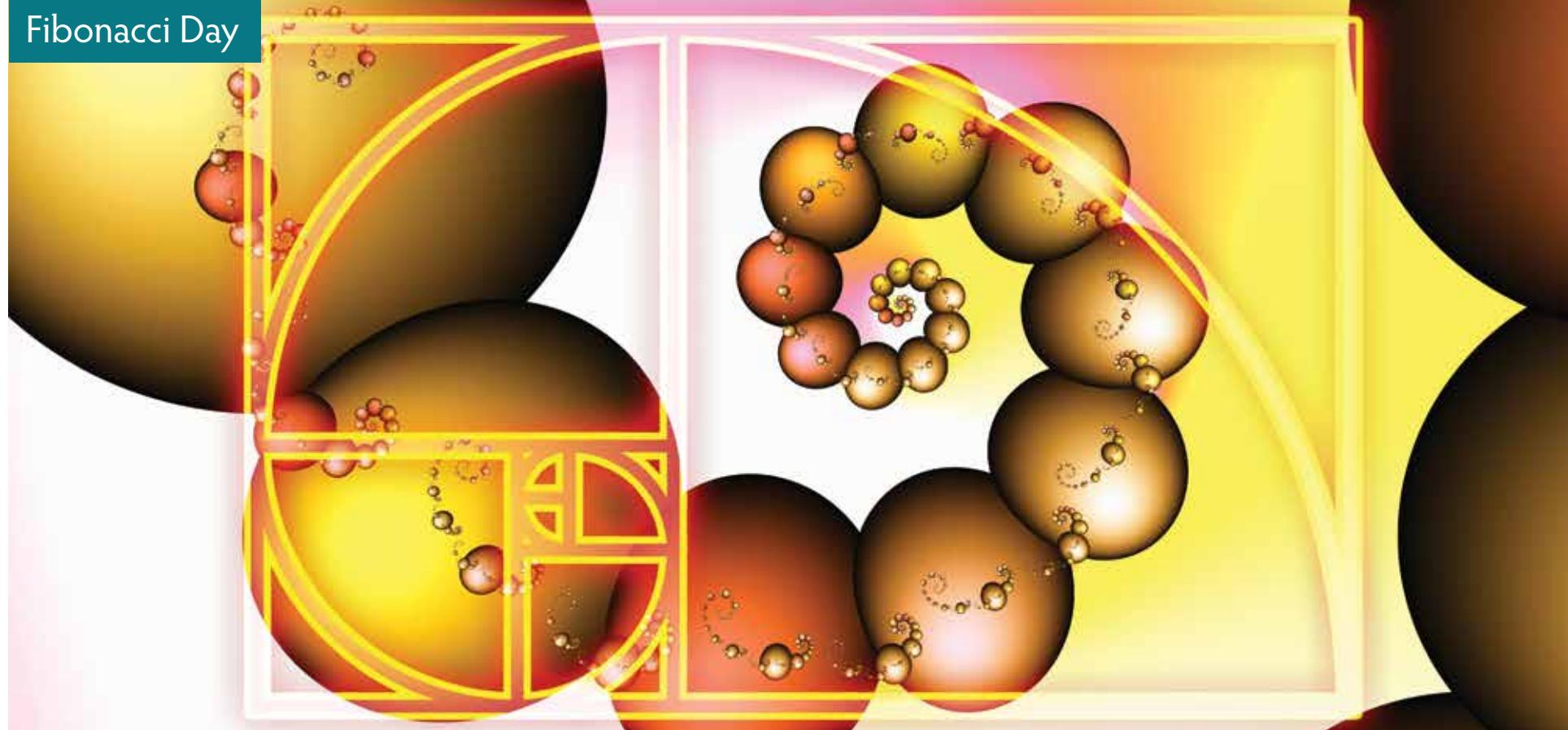


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Fibonacci Day



## Appreciating the elegance of math and nature

by XI CHEN

November 23 is celebrated as Fibonacci day because when the date is written in the mm/dd format (11/23), the digits in the date form a Fibonacci sequence: 1,1,2,3.

The sequence displays a simple pattern: every two numbers, when added together, equal the following number. Another uncanny pattern is that the ratio of any two sequential Fibonacci

numbers approximates the value of 1.618, which is also commonly known as the golden ratio phi ( $\varphi$ ).

### Nature's order and mystery

From the shape of the galaxy to the eye of a hurricane, from a nautilus shell to a flower petal, various arrangements of natural elements follow surprising mathematical regularities related to the Fibonacci sequence. For example, it plays a vital role in phyllotaxis, the study of the

arrangement of branches, leaves, flowers or seeds in plants.

In fact, the very program of life itself – the DNA molecule – contains the golden ratio. The DNA molecule measures 34 angstroms long by 21 angstroms wide for each full cycle of its double helix spiral. Both 34 and 21 are Fibonacci numbers and the ratio 34/21 is a close approximation of phi.

"There is something to do with optimality in nature. For example, flower petals grow up in these

spirals to avoid overlapping and the Fibonacci patterns allow an optimal way to space them out," says Nahid Walji, lecturer and research associate at the Department of Mathematics at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

He adds that the Fibonacci sequence also shows up in the study of fractals, a relatively recent branch of mathematics that is also abundantly found in nature.

"Something that nature seems to do in general, it is this idea of

self-similarity. Self-similarity in my opinion is a way for nature to create complexity from simplicity. You are encoding something in the genetics that is easy to encode, but that creates complexity. Because complexity is important to nature to survive and to evolve, and that is a beautiful notion."

Despite the widely observed patterns, scientists and mathematicians don't have an exact explanation why. There is still

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The story of  
Pauline Johnson,  
a visionary Six  
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# Cultural Spotlight



## The Indo-Fijian story in the Lower Mainland

by GEOFF RUSS

**The Indo-Fijians: Surrey's Pocket of Paradise**, the largely untold story of the Indo-Fijian community in the Lower Mainland is open to the public at the Museum of Surrey. The exhibit, created by Rizwaan Abbas, was, he says, inspired by his father and his community.

"What I really wanted to do with this exhibit was to reintroduce our history and heritage to the Indo-Fijian population," says Abbas. "I wanted to instill some ownership and pride in who we are."

Born and raised in Sparwood to an Indo-Fijian family, Abbas was trained as an archaeologist and has worked as one for almost two decades.

He began tilting his career towards museums after completing a museum studies course at the University of Victoria (UVic). Abbas volunteered at the Museum of Surrey where he was invited to pitch an exhibit to the museum's administration. He pitched the idea of an



▲ Rizwaan Abbas captures the history and heritage of the local Indo-Fijian community in current exhibition.



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Indo-Fijian exhibit in Surrey which is one of the world's largest Indo-Fijian diasporas.

Two months later, Abbas was informed the museum liked his pitch and he could go ahead with creating it. Abbas got to work.

### A diaspora within a diaspora

Indo-Fijians have lived on the South Pacific island country for hundreds of years. Fiji became a British colony in 1874. The British brought thousands of people from colonial India to Fiji as agricultural labourers, Abbas' family among them.

The unique Indo-Fijian culture was formed by the experiences of Indian people in Fiji and their interactions with the Indigenous Fijians and the land itself.

"We're kind of similar to traditional Indian culture, but there's enough of a difference that we have our own distinct language, food, dress and music," says Abbas. "This culture was beginning to spring up and this new middle-class of people were emerging and they were mainly Indo-Fijian."

Along with the new prosperity of the Indo-Fijian community came resentment from Indigenous Fijians that endured after British rule ended in 1970.

"There's always been a racial tension between the indigenous and the Indo-Fijians, and the racial tension has come to a head on many occasions," says Abbas.

Coups, he says, and other political unrest in Fiji are directly related to tensions between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians. As a result, thousands of Indo-Fijians emigrated to places like Canada. Abbas' father immigrated to Canada in 1973.

"Until recently, anyone who was born and raised in Fiji of Indian descent was not allowed to call themselves a Fijian," Abbas adds. "That's like me saying I'm not allowed to call myself Canadian, even though I was born and raised in Sparwood. That would be appalling."

There are still religious tensions within the Indo-Fijian

community itself that Abbas had to navigate. When gathering material for exhibit, a Hindu who had initially agreed to help Abbas stop communicating with him when he found out he was Muslim. Luckily it was an isolated incident.

"That aside, everybody else has been completely positive and the reception has been amazing with this exhibit," he says. "I've had indigenous Fijians come up to me and be appreciative."

### Telling their own story

Abbas drew inspiration from Indigenous peoples in North America taking control of their own stories with their own words. One example he pointed out was a visit to Mayan ruins in Mexico where an Indigenous Mayan tour guide was the one showing visitors around their historic sites. He pointed it out as an example of how communities should be the ones telling their stories.

Abbas made sure that his exhibit would be an accurate representation of the Indo-Fijian community. That included giving more representation to the Hindu religion practiced by the majority of Indo-Fijians, than his own Islamic faith. Abbas also included Indigenous Fijian tapa designs for the exhibit.

"If I'm going to do an exhibit for the Indo-Fijian people then it has to be for all," says Abbas. "Without the Indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijian people wouldn't be who we are."

"I started this exhibit to honour my dad and I've been able to find so many like-minded individuals out of it," says Abbas. "I've been able to be exposed to so many great Fijian people here in the Lower Mainland thanks to this. It's been amazing."

For more information on the exhibit, visit [www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/museum-of-surrey/exhibitions/indo-fijians-surreys-pocket-of-paradise](http://www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/museum-of-surrey/exhibitions/indo-fijians-surreys-pocket-of-paradise)

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## The Charming Taste of European... Cinema!

The Charming Taste of Europe is a special project that introduces exquisite items to the United States and Canada, such as Italian and French wine and fresh fruit from Greece, that showcase all of Europe's charm, beauty, culture, history, art, heritage, and unmistakable tastes. When it comes to... charm, the European Union's filmmakers know exactly all about it!

### Supporting the European Union Film Festival

The Charming Taste of Europe campaign, proudly supports the European Union Film Festival (EUFF) in Canada. The three festival presenters in Canada (in Ottawa, Vancouver, and Toronto), along with the Delegation of the European Union to Canada and the EU Member States, have decided to bring you another exciting virtual version of the EUFF in November 2021.

Founded in 1984, the European Union Film Festival (EUFF) is an annual showcase of the best of contemporary cinema produced in the European Union. The Festival brings a wide selection of award-winning films to Canadian audiences from the 27 European Union member states.

For the second—and hopefully final—time in the long history of the EUFF, the Festival online and, also like last year's edition, making it available not only in Ottawa, Vancouver, and Toronto, but all across Canada! The festival releases one or two new films every day from Nov. 12 to 28. All films will be available for 48 hours after their scheduled start date.

Many of the greatest names in the history of world cinema have been represented over the decades of this extraordinary event. This year is no exception, as showcased are both brilliant emerging talents as well as the latest work of master filmmakers. There is drama, comedy, action, and documentary; something for everyone! As in the 2020 edition, the festival includes recorded interviews with filmmakers to many of the screenings. While these European filmmakers are not able to be present in person, they will connect online to share their artistry and their approaches to filmmaking.

Once again this year, tell everyone you know – from Victoria to Iqaluit to St. John's – not to miss the screenings of EUFF! We wish you an eye-opening, thought-provoking, and entertaining European Union Film Festival.

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and cherries from Greece, and the melodious French golden wines produced with the artistry of agricultural traditions, this campaign will awaken the senses and a new culinary consciousness by connecting food, cultures, and territories and will undoubtedly bring European charm into the lives of many.

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## The Media Girlfriends

# Starting a podcast company during the pandemic

by JUSTIN LEE

**The Media Girlfriends** is a podcast company led by Nana aba Duncan, Hannah Sung and Garvia Bailey, three women of colour who use storytelling and journalism to present and honour the voices of those who were historically misrepresented.

The Media Girlfriends is participating in the Fourth Annual Vancouver Podcast Festival to discuss the process of starting their podcast company during the COVID-19 pandemic. The festival celebrates podcasting as a medium with great potential and introduces audiences to local podcast creators. This year's events focus on providing workshops and panels to help the podcasting community.

"We were asked to be part of the podcast festival to be on a panel about starting a podcast company in the midst of the pandemic, which is exactly what we did," says Bailey.

### Creating a podcast production company with friends

Prior to creating the company, the trio of friends was mainly

employed with media companies or freelancing as writers, producers and voice talent. During the pandemic, they were well aware of the popularity of podcasts.

"As freelance podcast producers, when the pandemic hit, we got busier than we ever did working for other podcast companies," says Bailey. "We knew the work was out there, and we knew that people were listening at home or while going for walks. The podcast realm exploded during the pandemic, and we received a lot of interest in what we were doing."

The prospect of using their talent and experience to create their own podcasts inspired the trio to start their company.

"This year, while we were talking, we thought, 'Hey, you know what, we are really good at doing this for other people as podcast producers. Why don't we come together as a team and do it together with all the values, care and all of those elements that we really wanted to see in the companies that we worked for?'" says Bailey.

The process of starting the company was aided by their abil-

ity to collaborate and communicate with one another.

"I think, pandemic or not, it's going to be challenging to start a business with your friends," says Bailey. "We really went into this thinking about all of the things that will make us into the company that we want to work for and be the heads of. We are constantly talking to each other about the values of the company and the kinds of work that we wanted to do."

### Podcasting as a unique voice

Bailey believes that podcasting has strengths that make it distinct from other forms of media.

"I worked in radio for quite a long time. It's a similar kind of feeling to radio in that it's intimate; it's generally a voice that's in your ear, which gives an opportunity to be close to the story and the storytellers," she says. "Podcasts give you the latitude to tell a story in its full-



▲ The Media Girlfriends, created by women of colour, defines its own brand of podcasting.

ness, whether it's news, investigative or narrative. You can spend half an hour to weeks on end with a podcast host on one story, and that's rarely something that you can do with a long form documentary."

In addition, Bailey indicates that everyone is capable of podcasting due to its easy entry.

"For me, it's an exciting medium because the barriers to access are lower with a podcast. Everyone is capable – have a microphone, headphones, a recording device and you put it together," Bailey says.

er. People who have great stories are able to enter into the media this way," she says.

When asked about tips for starting a podcast company, her answers are straightforward.

"Have a great team around you. Gather together the people you need, the skills you need and do it well," she says. "Get a great plan as to what your mission is and what sets you apart."

Given that there are many podcast companies out there, Bailey adds, it is important to stand out from the crowd and form a company that has unique value that people can relate to.

"We got a lot of people interested in us because we are three seasoned journalists who are women of colour, so our perspectives and the way we do things are different from some of the other companies, and one of our values is doing the work with care," Bailey says.

The Media Girlfriends' panel discussion will take place on Nov. 20. To register, visit: [www.vanpodfest.ca/event/why-we-started-podcast-company-pandemic-media-girlfriends](http://www.vanpodfest.ca/event/why-we-started-podcast-company-pandemic-media-girlfriends) [www.mediagirlfriends.com](http://www.mediagirlfriends.com)

### ► "Fibonacci" from page 1

a lot of ongoing research and even an entire scientific journal, The Fibonacci Quarterly, dedicated to topics related to the Fibonacci numbers.

Sujatha Ramdorai, mathematics professor and Canada Research Chair at UBC, acknowledges that mathematicians sometimes don't have an answer for nature's mysteries.

"Mathematics is the language in which God has written the universe," she says, quoting Galileo Galilei. "We just have to go with an open mind and try to investigate why something is happening and try to give reasoning or philosophy to understand the bigger picture. Along the way, we usually come up with other questions and more interesting connections to other areas."

### The appeal of the golden ratio

Just as fascinating as the golden ratio's appearance in nature is its wide applications in art, architecture and music.

The ratio has been linked to beauty and elegance and is found embedded in the dimensions of many ancient monuments. It is speculated that the Parthenon in Athens, built between 447 and 438 BCE, was constructed based on the golden ratio.

The genius renaissance man Leonardo Da Vinci has also long been associated with the golden ratio. Da Vinci created the illustrations for De Divina Proportione (On the Divine Proportion), a book about mathematics written by Luca Pacioli around 1498. In the book, Pacioli writes specifically about the mathematics of the golden ratio and its application in art and architecture. Da Vinci's use of the divine proportion is evident in some of his own artworks such as The Last Supper and Mona Lisa.

The golden ratio can also be found in classical music. Mozart, for instance, based many of his works on the Golden Ratio – especially his piano sonatas. Mo-

zart arranged his piano sonatas so that the number of bars in the development and recapitulation divided by the number of bars in the exposition would equal approximately 1.618.

"A lot of times we see patterns in science, and we want to see if it will work in music. I still see people using Fibonacci to make music – it is very beautiful, it is really beautiful to see the echo of the Fibonacci in all facets of life," Walji says.

### Who really discovered the sequence?

In the west, the Fibonacci sequence first appears in the book Liber Abaci (1202) by Leonardo of Pisa, known as Fibonacci.

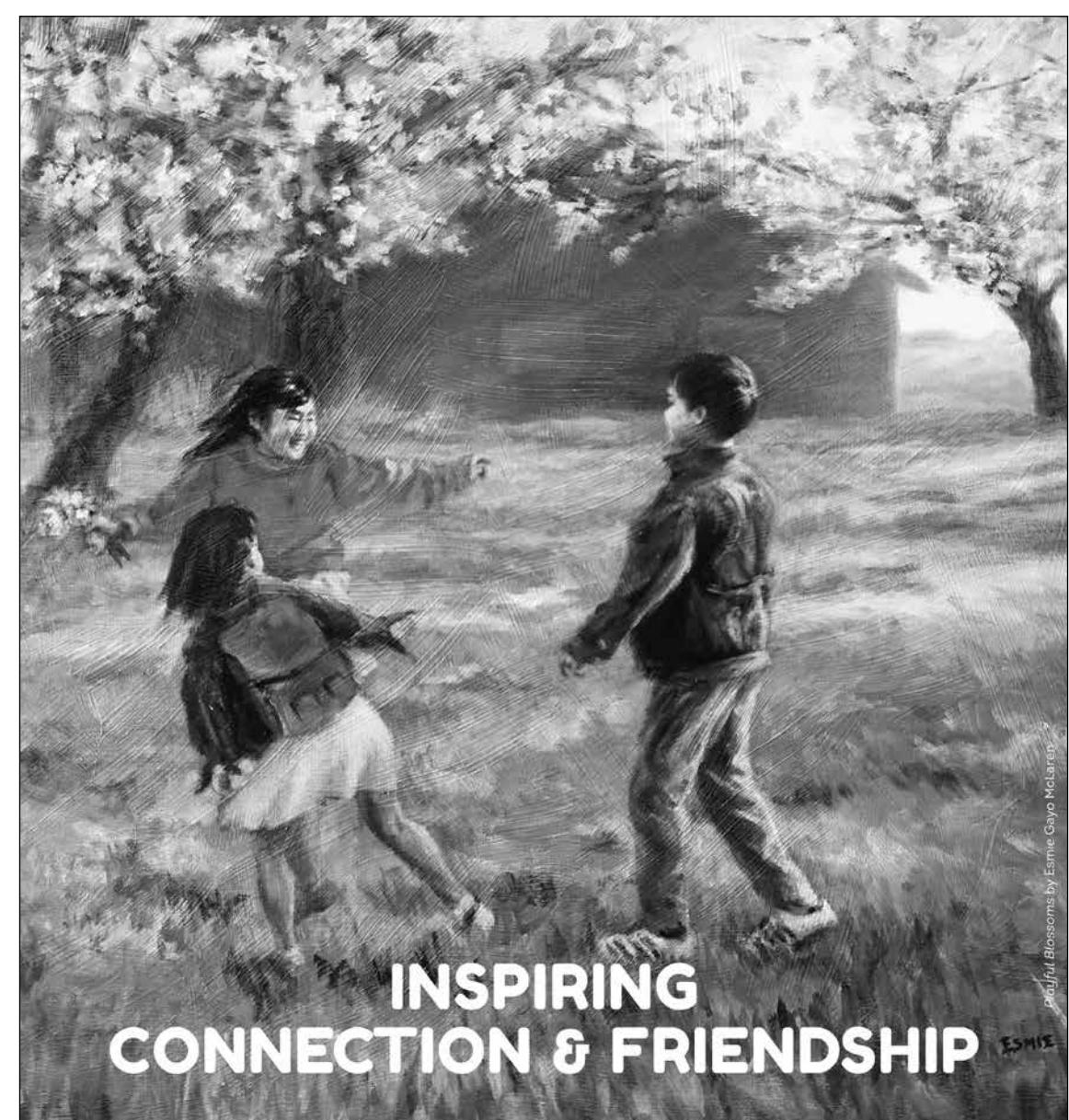
Though clear evidence has shown that the sequence has already been described much earlier in Indian mathematics, as early as 200 BC in work by Pingala on enumerating possible patterns of Sanskrit poetry formed from syllables of two lengths. Pingala's work was central to the understanding of the composition of the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.

"With math that is this old, there is always some uncertainty where it originated and from which culture," says Walji. "There is clear evidence that it was in India before. But maybe there are other cultures that came up with it as well and got lost in the midst of time as well."

Ramdorai adds that there is also more evidence that Fibonacci was also known in the African civilization earlier from the patterns and constructions of their textile, architecture and music.

"This is what I like to call cultural mathematics. Some believe that everything was discovered during the renaissance. I feel people should learn more about how different civilizations have all contributed," she says.

For more information, visit [www.nationaldaycalendar.com/fibonacci-day-november-23](http://www.nationaldaycalendar.com/fibonacci-day-november-23)



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## Racial bullying in schools – a grim picture

by EGEMEN DOĞUKAN ONGUN

An estimated 58 per cent of Canadian youth (12–18 years old) declare they have seen kids bullied based on their race or ethnicity at school, according to an August 2021 survey data, in partnership with the University of British Columbia (UBC), from the Angus Reid Institute.

"The reason for the survey was anti-Asian violence in British Columbia and [in] Ontario. We wanted to see if it is also happening in high-schools. It's surging in high-school. We don't have any previous data to compare with, but it is obvious that it is rising dramatically by social experiences," says Henry Yu, an associate professor in UBC's department of history and a National Forum planning committee member.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint anything definite from the survey, says Yu, he feels bullying is stemming from students' households.

### Looking forward: resolving conflicts from within

The survey also indicates 14 per cent of respondents say they, themselves, have experienced bullying. Visible minority children were three times as likely, and Indigenous children twice as likely, as white children, to attest that they have faced personal abuse.

"The question is not to find out where it comes from, but how to solve it. The solution approach doesn't differ depending on the response, racism is out there," says Yu. "We should work on our response to it, instead of working on the reasons."

Putting forth a couple of solutions to racial bullying on school grounds, Yu proposes teachers first need to be better equipped to deal with racist incidents because if students don't believe their teacher can solve the issue, they will not be inclined to confide in them.

"[There] you face many different, diverse people," he says. "But when you think of schools, museums? It is not really considered as diverse. It is usually Caucasian ethnic majority working there. How would this affect our kids' thinking?"

### The Canadian curriculum: how constructive is it?

The survey's results confirm the summary findings from the June 2021 National Forum on Anti-Asian Racism: Canada has a national problem with ignoring or denying racism.

Questioned about the effectiveness of the current school curriculum in combating bullying, Yu says the answer is no. Schools are simply not teaching enough.

**“It is important that they also learn about “racism” in school.**

*Henry Yu, associate professor of history*

"If you don't know what happened in the past, then you don't know how Canada evolved and improved such regulations," he says.

The survey showed that one-third of the students say they never learned anything about slavery in Canada; half say they weren't taught about the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War; three-in-five say schools didn't talk about the head tax on Chinese immigrants; and four-in-five say the Komagata Maru ship was never mentioned in their classrooms.

"It is important that they also learn about “racism” in school,"



▲ Racism in school should be addressed within schools, says Henry Yu.

"Since high school students are the future, this problem will not just go away. It has to be solved by us for a better future, our society has a negative reflection on our children," says Yu.

A common understanding, he says, should be reached in schools where students can rely on their teachers, and be sure that these problems will get resolved within the school borders.

Yu also suggests diversity among school staff. "Students can't genuinely believe in racial diversity if they can't see it from the school executives and teaching associates," he says.

Yu points out hospitals or retail stores are the only places that reflect any racial diversity.

says Yu. "They should not look at the situation as it never happens these days. They should understand the background of the problem and current possibilities that could cause negative consequences for Canadian society."

The survey also found children in more diverse schools were notably more likely to say they have learned about racism in Canada's history, Indigenous treaties, residential schools, and multiculturalism.

For more information please visit:  
<https://news.ubc.ca/2021/10/19/half-of-canadian-kids-witness-ethnic-racial-bullying-at-school>  
<https://angusreid.org/canada-school-kids-racism-diversity/study/>

# Challenging the status quo: Inequities in a pandemic

by KATY THOMPSON

**A better world has at its foundation the return to values learned in childhood, says academic-activist Manjeet Birk, PhD.**

"These values are interconnected to larger issues of social justice, like the ongoing effects of colonization, the environment and racial justice," says Birk.

As an instructor of a newly developed critical race studies minor program in women's and gender studies at Carleton University, Birk focuses her research on the lived experiences of racialized and indigenous women in Canada.

## Discrimination shoots up COVID fatalities

Birk's latest research project examined systemic racism, education, and Māori ways of knowing in Aotearoa, New Zealand. With only 26,000 COVID cases and 26 deaths to date, New Zealand has been considered one of the world's safest places during the pandemic.

New Zealand has kept cases down by rigorous government strategies, a compliant population, and swift action during lockdowns. White settler descendants, known as Pa-keha-, comprised the majority of cases during the initial lockdown in April 2020 as they returned from trips abroad.

Ever since, community outbreaks have disproportionately plagued Māori and Pasifika communities. For example, 74 per cent of cases during Auckland's August 2020 outbreak occurred among the Pasifika population, which comprises only 16 per cent of the total population.

According to Birk, this imbalance can be explained by socioeco-

of British Columbia (UBC), advocates for storytelling as a tool to share experiences in an intimate way.

"Being an academic-activist is not a job, but rather who I am, so it informs me at Carleton University, but also when I am at the grocery store, in my home or navigating society day to day," says Birk.

Along with life experiences, Birk believes re-connecting to childhood values – including being kind, empathetic, and engaged, by sharing, helping others, and asking questions – are more relevant than ever.

"Now as a parent, I am reminded by how as adults we lose sight of these values," she says.

Some of her richest memories are of hearing her parents and grandparents recount their lives.

"This powerful telling helped me build a connection to the generations before me, and helped me connect to India," she says. "My experiences of feeling like an outsider when I was growing up inextricably connected me to this country I knew nothing about."

Early childhood experiences informed the scholar, activist, parent, and person that Birk is today. She grew up as a racialized person in a predominantly white community on the traditional and unceded territories of the WSÁNEĆ people on Vancouver Island.

"I could see injustice from a young age because I was experiencing it," she says. "As I grew older, I really began to understand how my experiences were part of a larger system of injustice. At the time, I didn't have the language to explain what it was that I was feeling, but from the fresh eyes of a young person I could see that something was wrong."

For Birk, academia and activism go hand in hand. She connects critical perspectives on critical race and social justice to actions, including supporting community organizations through workshops and educational initiatives, or writing public scholarship so information is accessible to more people.

"I am not interested in producing research that will just sit up on a shelf somewhere," asserts Birk. "My research always has direct and real action attached to it."

She also tries to interweave her scholar-activism philosophy into her teaching, from syllabus creation to lecture prep, assignment design, and grading.

"I take the principles of anti-racism and anti-oppression into the classroom and I try to make that clear with students," says Birk. "As a result, I hope students are able to learn by example and carry these ideas (or what they find useful from these ideas) into their lives as well."



▲ Manjeet Birk, brings scholar-activism philosophy to the classroom.

nomic factors, such as crowded homes and mandatory in-person employment. In fact, pre-existing health conditions and discrimination in health care make Pasifika and Māori communities twice as likely to die from COVID-19 than their Pa-keha- counterparts.

In response, New Zealand has established a four-stage vaccine rollout plan, but people who live in high-risk places must be invited by their doctor to make a vaccine appointment. Most marginalized people do not have the money needed to book a doctor's appointment, and so are not invited to get immunized.

## Spread storytelling, not social injustice

Birk, who earned her doctorate in philosophy at the University



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# Where an artist ought to be: a community festival for creative togetherness

by RAFAEL ZEN

**Each November, for the past 25 years the Eastside Arts Society has produced the Eastside Culture Crawl Festival where artists from different backgrounds and practices open their studios to public appreciation. The society, a registered charity, aims to inspire, educate, and engage Vancouver's community in contemporary visual arts.**

From Nov. 12–21 this year, artists will be opening their studios for two weekends, in-person and/or online, to offer workshops, demonstrations, exhibits, artist talks, 360 studio tours, live streaming, and live chats to the community.

"I felt I was a step away from society when I first immigrated to Canada," says painter Sung ah Cho, showcasing at this year's edition. "Through participating in the Eastside Culture Crawl, I was able to start a dialogue and receive so-

designer and freelance illustrator in Korea, starting to paint when she immigrated to Canada in 2007.

"Broadly speaking, my work's main theme is 'consolation', the comfort and courage, emptiness and unknown anxiety that derive from a repetitive life that borders alienation," she explains. "Through my practice, I ponder ways to communicate in a way that's not heavy but lighthearted, leaving a soft lingering impression."

To Cho, art ultimately invites the audience to discover the true meaning and depth of life. She describes herself as someone inspired to continue developing pieces that recognize the diverse cultural identity and social issues that immigrants encounter.

"By immersing myself further into the community," she says, "I'm hoping to bring this matter to the surface."

## Art suffuses everyday life

A deeper dialogue with her own community is also what artist



▲ To painter Sung ah Cho, the Eastside Culture Crawl connects art with individuals and communities, and supports dimensional communication.

Bourgh sought when showcasing her work at the Eastside Crawl. "I have been participating in the Culture Crawl since 2010 because it is an excellent way to sell artwork and have conversations around your process," she says. "I think it helps to educate the public on art appreciation."

To Bourgh, art exists everywhere in regular life, despite people being aware of it or not. It is something that holds the power to comfort and please - as well as challenge and influence. Thinking about her work, she thinks it mainly engages with both aesthetic value and provocation.

"My themes surround identity, especially based on being of an unidentified mixed background," she explains. "My current series is investigating intimacy. I often enjoy challenging the viewer - and the work that came from my master's degree was around how we use language to subjugate each other. I explored the hierarchy of language."

Visual artist and writer Kyla Bourgh, currently showing paintings and drawings at the festival, agrees that the Crawl builds community, making the art market more accessible to locals.

"Many people think that Art is either above them or don't know how to engage and prefer to buy wall art from furniture stores. The Crawl makes Art accessible, and allows our community to meet the artists, artisans and the makers who produce art here," she says.

## Belonging in a new land

Cho has a background in graphic design and worked as a product



Photo courtesy of Firehall Theatre

## Paddle song

# The story of indigenous existence and triumph

by ISHA OHRI

***Paddle Song*, a one-woman musical theatre production directed by Dinah Christie, follows Pauline Johnson, an iconic visionary Mohawk performer during the late 1700s. Co-written by Dinah Christie and Tom Hill and performed by Cheri Maracle, *Paddle Song* will be presented at the Firehall Theatre from Nov. 9–21.**

Johnson was the daughter of an English woman and a Six Nations Mohawk chief. Despite the negative connotations associated with her heritage at that time, she challenged them through her work and toured Canada for 30 years. This piece honors her influence on the Indigenous arts.

## The roots run deep

Maracle, who plays Johnson, acknowledges the empowerment she found through this role as she is also of Mohawk ancestry. She finds playing such a respected and fiery figure in the Indigenous community tricky but equally rewarding as the recognition and influence of Johnson is empowering to embody. As an actress, she also found it quite interesting how she related to Johnson at times due to the racial stereotypes as well as the gender norms that were benefit-

ting White men. She had to dig deeper and try to place herself in a time where minorities – especially young Indigenous women – were being targeted by the 'old White boys' Club arena.' Although this was a learning curve for Maracle as an actress, she says it made the work that much more interesting and invigorating.

## Iconic status

Johnson is known as a visionary and an icon who, during her time, pushed the boundaries of

work, studying her life and seeing that in the late 1800s it was doable, and to craft your style and go for it," she explains.

## The theatre experience

Maracle feels she has been able to represent many layers of Johnson, her legacy and the pain she endured.

She says the team at the Firehall Arts Centre were in awe of Johnson and the phrase 'the woman had giant ovaries' became the motto while rehearsing.

**“ She was a bit of a trickster in that she played with the stereotypes, showed them to you and then flipped them through her work.**

*Cheri Maracle, actress*

acceptance as a minority. She challenged the status quo by bashing the hierarchy and sharing opinions on her heritage and equality.

Maracle says Johnson stood up for herself and her peers with intelligence and brutal honesty, a quality that has been associated with all these years.

"She was a bit of a trickster in that she played with the stereotypes, showed them to you and then flipped them through her work," says Maracle. "[She] reeled you in and gave you something you didn't expect – the reality of the Indigenous existence."

Johnson, Maracle points out, has also influenced young writers.

"Pauline was gutsy, intelligent, and took risks that paid off. Her poetry was and is still now very political. I think young writers can get a sense of her limitless pushing of boundaries, from reading her

Maracle and the crew kept finding more complexity and truth in each layer of Johnson's character. The story shows the complexity and the many different facets of her life she had to balance.

During her time in Norway at the Riddu Riddu festival, Maracle recounts that the Sami people were an amazing audience as they are a people of poetry.

"Performing a show portraying a prolific writer such as Pauline was an honour, particularly for Indigenous people, as the writing resonates with acutely different vibrations. We feel it in our bones, as the fight is real, for justice... and is on-going," she says.

Maracle feels she embodies Johnson's personality when giving advice to young artists. She says they should follow their gut and their heart, and listen and pay attention when something doesn't resonate as authentic in their artist self. She believes the payoff is unimaginable if they play true to themselves.

"We are all unique, so honour your spirit. Learn to be gracious and kind to yourself and grateful for your gifts," says Maracle.



▲ Cheri Maracle as Pauline Johnson.

Photo courtesy of Firehall Theatre

For more information visit [www.firehallartscentre.ca](http://www.firehallartscentre.ca)

November 9–23, 2021

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Nov. 11 is Remembrance Day in the Commonwealth of Nations, of which Canada is a member. It was originally created to honour the veterans of the First World War, and was extended to honour veterans of all wars. On that day, wear a poppy and find or watch online a Remembrance Day ceremony near you. Have a great November everyone – the holiday season is just around the corner!

\* \* \*

**Fragments of Love**  
by Majie Lavergne  
Nov. 3–Dec. 17  
[www.lecentreculturel.com](http://www.lecentreculturel.com)

From Nov. 3 to Dec. 17, artist Majie Lavergne will present his exhibition "Fragments of Love" at Le Centre culturel. In each painting, he deconstructed the word L-O-V-E into lines and circles in various configurations. Yet, as the "E" of LOVE lands at the bottom right of each painting, with constancy and stability, it reminds us that just like the sun, sometimes hiding behind the clouds, love too, is always present. Stylistically, he looks for the play between geometrical and organic shapes and how this rich interface creates a dynamic visual dance. Finally, he fell in love with the new art medium; "alcohol ink." The amazing and magical colours and unpredictable unfolding of this medium fill him up with joy.

\* \* \*

**Sannidhanam – Sacred Spaces by Rama Vaidyanathan + Ensemble**  
Nov. 8–15  
[www.thedancecentre.ca](http://www.thedancecentre.ca)

Sannidhanam is a new work choreographed by the world-renowned Indian Bharatanatyam artist Rama Vaidyanathan. It is inspired by the significance of symbols in Indian philosophy, using the precise grammar and lines of Bharatanatyam to depict a sacred geometry. Performed by eight dancers including Vaidyanathan, this is an unmissable op-

portunity to experience the work of one of the most celebrated Bharatanatyam dancers of her generation. Check out the Dance Centre's website for more information.

\* \* \*

**Portraits From A Fire**  
Streaming Nov. 9  
[www.photonfilms.ca](http://www.photonfilms.ca)

Portraits From A Fire is a coming-of-age film that follows Tyler, an eccentric and lonely teenager who spends his days filmmaking, vlogging his Indigenous community, and hanging out with his grandparents. The film follows Tyler's journey to heal the wounds of the past by opening them once again. And by finding the courage to face the fear of the unknown, he weaves together the strong sacred bonds of family through both living and ancestral realms. The film will be available on VOD across Canada on all major platforms.

\* \* \*

**Ronak K. Kapadia:  
On the Skin: Drone  
Warfare, Collateral Damage,  
and the Human Terrain**  
Nov. 10, 4:30 p.m.  
[www.events.sfu.ca/event/25953-ronak-k-kapadia-on-the-skin-drone-warfare](http://www.events.sfu.ca/event/25953-ronak-k-kapadia-on-the-skin-drone-warfare)

This talk will explore University of Illinois associate professor Ronak Kapadia's research into the contemporary multimedia art works by Iraqi American artist Wafaa Bilal and American artist elin o'Hara slavick, as a meditation on how the violence of U.S. imperial and aerial warfare across the long twentieth century has devastated humans, animals and social ecologies in the Greater Middle East. Together, these artists powerfully attest to the violent expanse of postwar U.S. geopolitical power around the globe and make palpable the "sensorial life of empire." Check out SFU Event's website for the link to the webinar and more information.

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