

# The Source

forum of diversity

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## Blue Monday, pandemic blues



by GEOFF RUSS

**Protocols in place to keep us healthy from COVID can be mentally damaging. And with Blue Monday – the third Monday in January considered the most depressing day of the entire year – approaching, it is an opportunity to revisit the concept of “Blue Monday” in regards to mental health and spread awareness of the issues surrounding it.**

“I believe there is a high possibility that people experience low energy and higher anxiety after Christmas and New Years,” says Gulnaz Anjum, PhD. “This

is more likely if people were surrounded by friends, family, or were on vacation, and now are back to school or work with more stress.”

Conceived in 2005, Blue Monday was a publicity spin for selling the holidays; and according to the Mental Health Foundation website, Blue Monday was “designed to promote things that are vaguely linked to improving our wellbeing.”

**Experts are skeptical: a product of geography**

Anjum is an associate professor of social psychology at Simon Fraser University. Her work regarding anxiety recognition, gender, and

psychology has been published in numerous academic publications.

“I have a hard time saying that there is one particular day that is more ‘Blue’ for the majority of

ing mental health support earlier in January and early September.”

She agrees there are numerous stresses and anxieties that occur after the holiday sea-

Anjum does not believe Blue Monday is a universal phenomenon either, and that any day can be difficult for those who struggle with stress and anxiety.

“ We actually see the increase in people accessing mental health support earlier in January and early September.

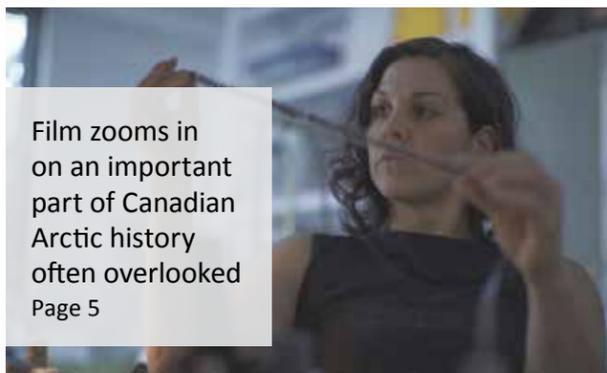
*Paula Allen, a researcher and senior vice-president of LifeWorks*

people,” says Paula Allen, a researcher and senior vice-president of LifeWorks, the human resources firm formerly known as Morneau Shepell. “We actually see the increase in people access-

son due to financial strain and adrenaline reductions. However, Allen says the diversity of people’s experiences make her skeptical that Blue Monday is a universal phenomenon.

She believes Blue Monday is a geographic and cultural phenomenon. She is familiar with Blue Monday from conversations with students and acquaintances from

See “Blue Monday” page 2 ➤



Film zooms in on an important part of Canadian Arctic history often overlooked  
Page 5



Vox.Infold: vocal ensemble uses traditional and emergent sound practices  
Page 6



Play offers a prayer to Black victims  
Page 7



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► “Blue Monday” from page 1

the Global North – that is people from North America and Europe.

“If we shift Christmas to summers, as in Australia, or say we are in a country that does not celebrate Christmas, would we still push for a day such as Blue Monday?” asks Anjum. “Of course not.”

Anjum says half the world, especially in the Global South in places like the Indian subcontinent and Africa, finds December and January to be a pleasant and anticipated time without a recognizable “blue” day. She points out that doesn’t mean similar anxieties don’t exist in those places either.

“Among the general population around the globe, roughly one third of us experience

health issues much more than physical health issues,” says Allen. “So there is much more to be done.”

Allen says it is somewhat true that greater stigma exists regarding mental health among older people. However, she also notes that personal standards set in the workplace create a larger stigma among younger workers towards mental health. Allen’s work at LifeWorks has shown that younger people’s mental well-being is more compromised than that of older people.

“Many mental health conditions first emerge in late teens and young adulthood,” says Allen. “The life changes during this period are stressful and

many other institutions,” says Anjum. “I have personally seen that there are sophisticated mental health support and accessibility centers, in-person counseling, and online support mechanisms.”

Allen also says universities are better equipped to offer mental health support than public schools, but the pandemic has prompted some public schools to increase their budgets for support.

“The need has increased since the start of the pandemic,” says Allen. “Everyone knows that more is needed, and it is good to see action in this respect.”

For more about LifeWorks, visit <https://lifeworks.com>

For more about Dr. Anjum, visit <https://sfu.academia.edu/GulnazAnjum>

For public mental health resources, visit [www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services.html)



▲ Gulnaz Anjum does not believe Blue Monday is a universal phenomenon.

anxiety related issues at least at some point in our lifetime,” says Anjum.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of depression, also known as seasonal depression, says Paula Allen, which fluctuates depending on the daily intake of sunlight and other factors. She says even summer and winter comes with its own set of stresses and people without SAD can feel them. Lifestyle adjustments like getting exploration and social contact are effective counters to that for most people, but professional treatment is needed for those with SAD.

“Most people think of SAD as a winter condition,” says Allen. “There is however a Summer SAD, where the hot long days of summer trigger restless agitation, anxiety and even anger issues.”

Real depression lasts more than a day. And as the Mental Health Foundation website mentions it is “pointless” trying to identify the most depressing day of the year because “it would be different for each one of us.” There have been no “actual scientific studies,” but Allen sees Blue Monday, the idea, as an opportunity.

“My thought is that anything that gets us talking about mental health respectfully is better than keeping silent,” she says.

#### Opening up about mental health

“Great progress has been made, but we still stigmatize mental

most typically do not have the cushions of financial security, role identity and accomplishments at work which can help.”

Anjum points out mental health issues exist across the age spectrum, but the stressors are different for each group. She says difficulties with attention, learning, substance use, anxiety disorders, and bullying are especially acute in Canada among youth who have been more open about the issue.

“Generation Z has been more vocal about mental health,” says Anjum. “Zoomers are followed by Millennials in being more expressive about their experience with stress and anxiety.”

Allen says increased discussions about mental health have happened simply because there is more data available.

“Lack of knowledge breeds fear and suppression,” says Allen. “With more information we have less fear, and understand the importance of broader awareness.”

Anjum notes that academic institutions and national campaigns have expanded mental health awareness across the world. Anjum and Allen also credit high-profile individuals and celebrities for openly speaking about mental health, which has reduced the stigma surrounding it, but believe there is more work to do.

Anjum points out that many challenges relating to youth mental health still exist in public schools because of insufficient funding and resources, but the situation is better in universities.

“Universities are doing a better job at this compared to



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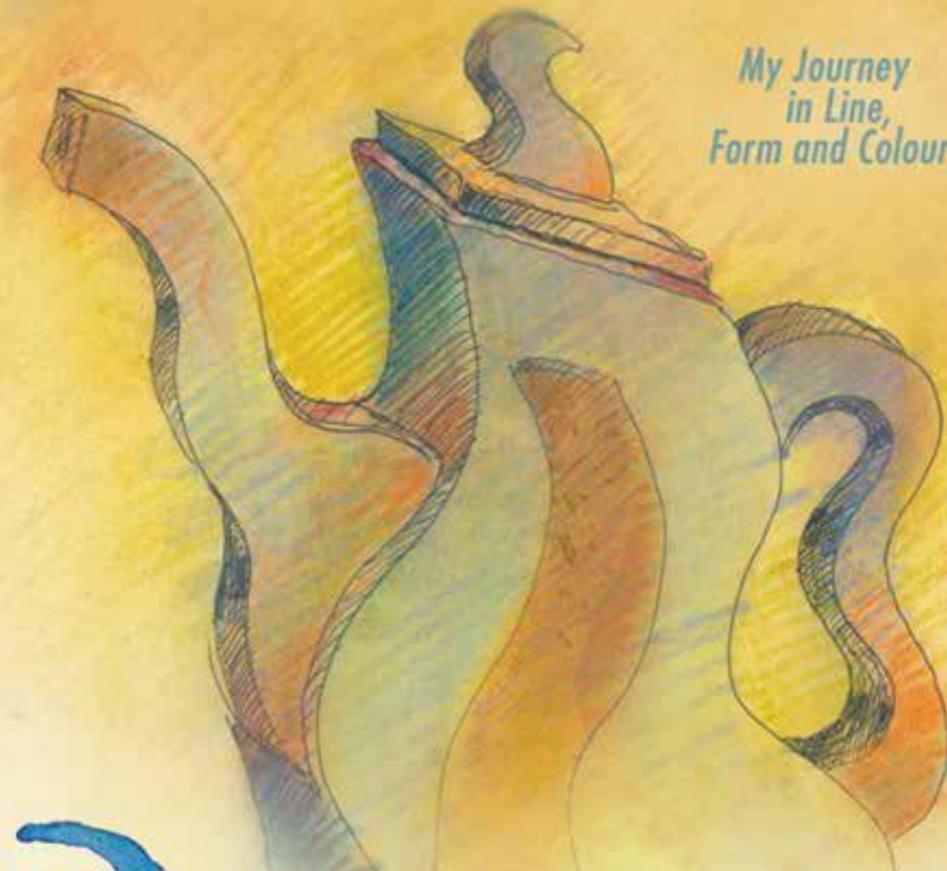
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## The Buddhist New Year

## A time of peace and reflection

by GEORGE SUN

**“The Buddhist New Year is a day to remind people about gratitude and appreciation,” says Reverend Aoki, minister for the Vancouver Buddhist Temple. This year, Jan 18 marks the Buddhist New Year – Buddhists around the world come together to pray.**

Reverend Tatsuya Aoki emphasizes the importance and sentimental value of the Buddhist New Year and the longstanding history of the Jodo Shinshu Tradition.

Originated by Shinran Shonin (1173–1262), the Jodo Shinshu Tradition is a teaching where the goal of Enlightenment is symbolized as the Pure Land. According to Rev. Aoki, Shinran says the most important aspect is how we cope with material desires and the way we live each day.

**Moving countries, finding inspiration**

Reverend Aoki has been living in Canada for 19 years, spreading the religion of Buddhism among hundreds of people across the Lower Mainland.

Growing up in Hokkaido, Japan, religion was ubiquitous. His father, a high school teacher, was born into a temple family; as a result, Reverend Aoki’s oldest uncle took over the family temple. This enabled him to visit and help out: it was here when he became inspired by the Buddhist religion.

“I took ESL classes,” he says, “so I could better understand the lectures from the professor teaching religion, who I found really intriguing.”

Once Reverend Aoki’s education in Edmonton had elapsed, he returned to Kyoto, Japan, where he studied Buddhism and trained to become a minister. Since being assigned to Vancouver following his training, Reverend Aoki has been involved with the Buddhist community. As minister, he has provided Japanese Buddhist services for weddings, funerals, and more, from Surrey and Langley all the way to Hope and Chilliwack.

**Buddhism in Vancouver**

The annual New Year’s and New Year’s Eve celebrations at the University of British Columbia has allowed him to become acquainted with the city’s Japanese Buddhists.

“Prior to COVID, I would partake in the bell-ringing services at UBC with over 200 Japanese Buddhists” he says. “I’ve also been able to give talks about treasuring the present—a strong theme in the Buddhist New Year—to those that come to the temple.”

Ever since being assigned in July 2003, Reverend Aoki has settled in the Vancouver area where he is now a minister at the Vancouver Buddhist Temple.

The Vancouver Buddhist Temple has a complicated history of its own. According to their website, in 1904, fourteen Buddhist



▲ Reverend Tatsuya Aoki says that Buddhism is a very universal way of thinking because it embodies self-cultivation.

“People who came were very peaceful, not for any selfish reason,” he says.

From this, Rev. Aoki grew eager to learn about the religion himself, wondering why people came to the temples in the first place.

As a teenager, he attended Mission High School in Hokkaido, where, through weekly bible studies and daily prayer sessions, he learned about Christianity and its monotheistic relationship with God. This inspired Reverend Aoki to make comparisons with Buddhism, pondering on what Buddhists may think of something. His conclusion was that Buddhism is a very universal way of thinking because it embodies self-cultivation, and people can change their future.

After high school, Rev. Aoki travelled to Edmonton where he spent two years at the University of Lethbridge studying both English and religion.

followers gathered to discuss the construction of a new temple in Vancouver. On October 12, 1905, a minister from Kyoto, Reverend Senju Sasaki, was sent to Canada. A year later, property was purchased at 32 Alexander St. which later became the center of activity for Jodo Shinshu followers.

But the Buddhist temple was closed, as a result of the Second World War, but was reorganized in 1951 once Canadians of Japanese descent were permitted to return to the country. Three years later, the Methodist Church building at 220 Jackson Ave. was purchased and renovated. However, between 1978 and 1979, a new temple was completed following the decision that a fresh building on the site should be built. To date, this is the location of the Vancouver Buddhist Temple. ☞

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



Photo courtesy of UBC

## TikTok and public health

by JUSTIN LEE

**TikTok is a rapidly growing short video-sharing social media platform that has gathered over 1 billion global users, but little is known about the potential health-related impacts on its users.**

According to Skye Barbic, an assistant professor in the University of British Columbia’s Department of Occupational Health and Occupational Therapy, “There are several potential issues of TikTok on global health, but really, the overarching issue is that we don’t know about the impact that it has on citizens of all kinds.”

In a paper released in November 2021, Barbic, along with research associate Marco Zenone and postdoctoral fellow Nikki Ow, called for public health researchers to examine the issue more closely.

**Challenges ahead**

However, according to Barbic, TikTok’s growing usage can make it a challenge to study rigorously.

“The biggest challenge is working with social media companies at large and how to keep up with the pace. Our research is renowned for being methodologically rigorous and has a very good process, but it takes some time,” she says.

“TikTok is just exceptionally rapid in its use and the extent it is being used, so we researchers have to adapt and make sure we are mobile and provide the information that public health needs.”

Barbic indicates that more needs to be understood about how the information that is shared on TikTok is being received by its end users, most of whom are young people.

“About 80 per cent of TikTok users are under the age of 30, so we have a lot more to learn in that space,” she explains. “How do we know the information that is shared on TikTok is evidence based, validated,

and presented in a way so that the end user, in this case young people, can really understand it safely and be able to use the information in a way that’s meaningful to them?”

Additionally, Barbic says that there are several research priorities that public health researchers should consider when it comes to the platform.

information that is similar to other social media platforms.”

**More research needed**

Despite the limited research available on TikTok, Barbic and her team have noticed that the situation is starting to change since their call for action.

“There has been very little work done to study TikTok, but every

“ There are several potential issues of TikTok on global health, but really, the overarching issue is that we don’t know about the impact that it has on citizens of all kinds.

*Skye Barbic, assistant professor, Department of Occupational Health and Occupational Therapy, UBC*

“There are concerns that we highlight in commentary, such as the product promotion of health-harming products and substance use like vaping, and what are the impacts of that,” she points out. “There’s also, especially with COVID-19, a lot of medical advice that we need to understand more, and the misinformation and disinform-

day we are seeing more that is coming out,” she says. “Since we published our paper in November, there have been a couple new studies on alcohol use and vaping products on TikTok, some other research in areas with videos promoting diabetes and other physical conditions and more information coming out on how and by whom TikTok is used.”

Barbic is optimistic that her team’s commentary has influenced other researchers to study TikTok and to share information on the topic.

“I think hopefully our paper has sparked a lot of interest in this topic, and I am quite thrilled to see how many have picked it up and the far reach of it,” she says. “This kind of research involves being active in synthesizing the current events coming out, and really mapping it out systematically so that we are not doing research in our own silos and building on each other’s work.” ☞

To read the full commentary and the proposed research agenda, visit here: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/11/e007648.full>



Photo courtesy of Skye Barbic

▲ For Skye Barbic, there are several potential issues of TikTok on global health.



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## Issues and Ideas



## Time for Canada to step up in the fight against forced labour

The pandemic has turned our lives upside down. It has taken away our loved ones. It has changed our habits and opened our eyes to certain realities. One of those realities is a global scourge on humanity: forced labour and child labour, which supply a slew of cheap products to consumers in wealthy countries like ours.

These appalling human rights violations are nothing new – at least 90 million children and adults around the world are affected. But the sudden focus on supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic has thrust these violations back into the spotlight.

The rush to buy protective equipment left the world's most vulnerable people at increased risk of exploitation. In October, the United States seized an incoming shipment of medical gloves from a Malaysian company facing allegations of forced labour – the fourth Malaysian company to be sanctioned in 15 months. Canada has bought and used millions of gloves from two of these embattled suppliers, Top Glove and Supermax, despite having had a law in place at the border for over a year prohibiting such shipments from entering the country.



▲ Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne.

There is nothing unusual about this. Forced labour and child labour (sometimes referred to as modern slavery) have been creeping into our everyday consumption for some time now. A CBC investigation recently revealed the origins of Del Monte, Nestlé, Unilever and La Doria tomato products found on the shelves in our supermarkets, including Loblaw's and Walmart. The tomatoes were processed by intermedi-

aries but they came from the Xinjiang region of China and may have been produced by members of the Uyghur minority forced to work in fields and factories. It's impossible to tell from the label.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. World Vision estimates that 10% of Canadian food imports may be linked to child labour, particularly in Mexico.

The highest-risk products include coffee, cocoa, seafood, palm oil and sugarcane.

Sadly, Canada has chosen to watch from the sidelines while other countries – including the United Kingdom, France and Germany – have passed legislation requiring their companies to investigate and report on the risk of forced labour in their supply chains.

Since 2018, member of Parliament John McKay and I have tried three times to pass a bill outlawing modern slavery. An improved version of this bill will be introduced when the Senate resumes sitting. It would require companies to be transparent about their efforts to address the risk of forced labour and child labour in their supply chains.

For the first time, both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party pledged to combat forced labour in their most recent election platforms. The pressure is building – and so much the better.

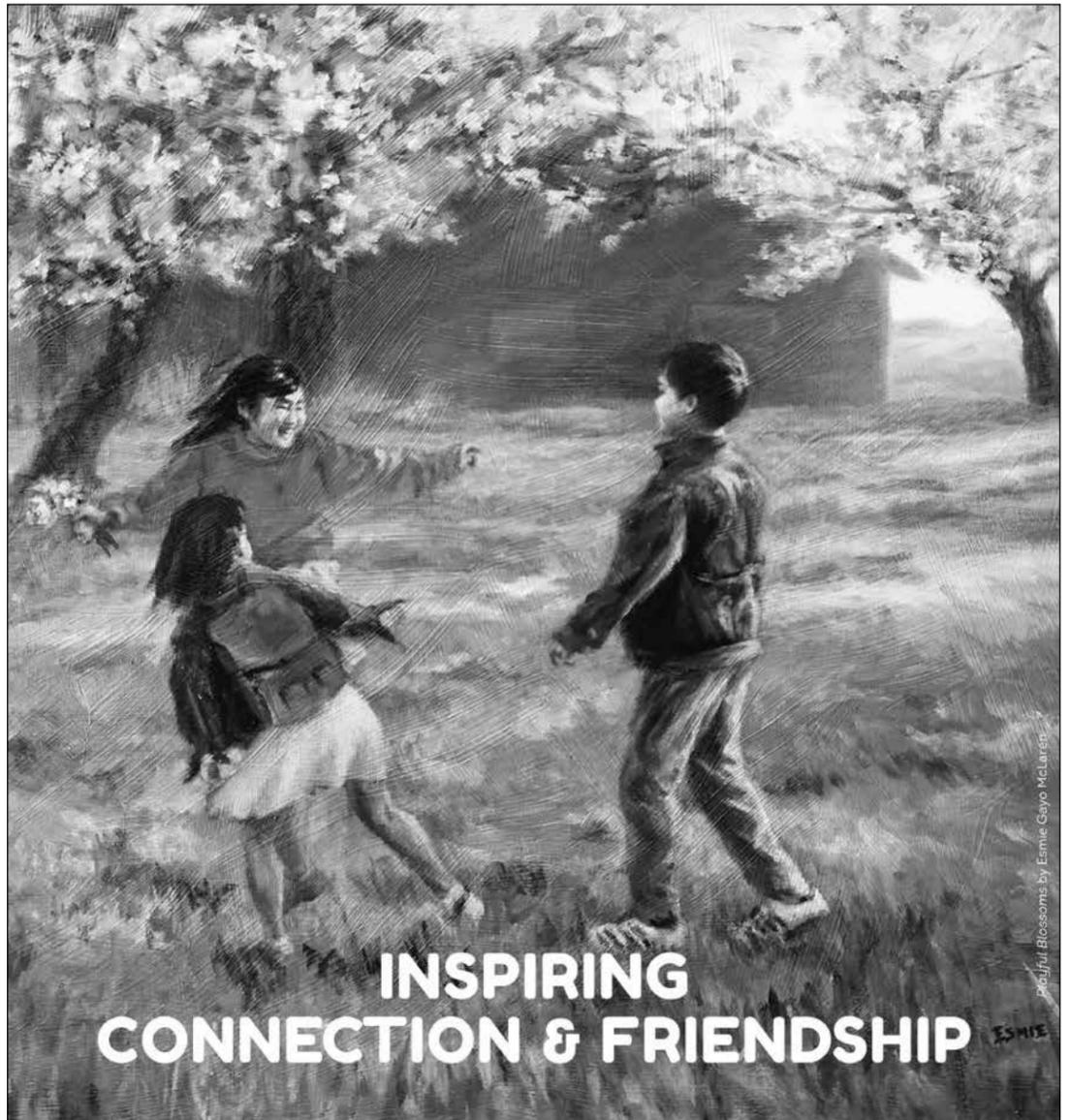
It gives us hope that our fourth attempt to pass this legislation will succeed.

This bill will not eliminate forced labour or child labour, which are complex problems tied to poverty, insecurity and gender inequality. But it's a vital first step in requiring major corporations to take responsibility. Some have already stepped up, but others are dragging their feet, even though this is what consumers want.

We also need to show consistency; our public policy should live up to the speeches and statements we make on the international stage. ✉

Senator JULIE MIVILLE-DECHÊNE represents the Inkerman division of Quebec.

This article appeared in the November 11, 2021 edition of *La Presse* (in French only).



"Inspired by sakura blooms and shrieks of spontaneous play, *Playful Blossoms* pays homage to children's ability to easily accept others and forge friendships. Perhaps unencumbered by discrimination and fears, they readily initiate play with newcomers. With energetic brushstrokes and soft Spring colours, I aspire to encourage connection with others and inspire new friendships."

Esmie Gayo McLaren

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## RACISM AND HATE HURT US ALL

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# An untold Inuk story in the making

by DAPHNÉ DOSSIOS

Last December, Lindsay McIntyre, a filmmaker of Inuk and Scottish descent won the Women In the Director's Chair's (WIDC) Feature Film Award. Estimated at \$250,000 in services and rentals, the prize will support the making of her first feature film *The Words We Can't Speak*, expected for 2024.

"It's a story about identity and belonging, about feeling like an outsider in certain places. I think it will resonate with all kinds of people that have been displaced from somewhere, or who experienced a clash of cultures," says McIntyre.

This period piece, set in the 1930s, follows an Inuk translator named Kumaa'naaq in her dangerous 1800-mile trip from the Arctic to the Prairies, forced to leave her community after a terrible accident.

"It is the resilience and the strength of Kumaa'naaq, despite all the hardships she encounters through her journey, that inspired me," explains McIntyre who will draw on the real-life events experienced by her Inuk great grandmother, Kumaa'naaq.

As the voice of her community while translating for the RCMP, Kumaa'naaq is caught between the Inuk and Qallunaat worlds ('non-inuit' in Inuktitut).

"[She will have to] choose whether to speak or not to speak, whether to follow her



▲ Lindsay McIntyre is a filmmaker of Inuk and Scottish descent.

Inuk ways or to lean more heavily on the Qallunaat's ways," adds the director.

## Re-privileging Inuit voices

McIntyre says her films always come from a personal place as she only feels comfortable telling stories that are hers.

"I make films to process things that I'm dealing with. Maybe it's my own personal therapy," she shares. "This story has been very important to me for a long time."

But the movie will go beyond herself and her ancestry, as she points out that the story tells "a really important part of Canadian history that is often overlooked."

"I want people to have a different and better understand-

ing of that timeframe in the Arctic, which comes from Inuit perspective, instead of coming from the explorers that we traditionally hear. It's about re-privileging [Inuit] voices," McIntyre stresses.

As she considers that her great grandmother's story also belongs to Inuit, she plans on extensive consultation and collaboration with community members in Nunavut before shooting the movie.

"It's really important to me that the film serves the purpose of the community, not just mine," she says.

McIntyre states that one third of the movie will be shot in Inuit Nunangat, hopefully in the com-

munity where the original story occurred. In this spirit of participation and collaboration with Inuit communities, the director also hopes to involve Inuit in the filmmaking process as part of an extensive mentorship program.

"I really like to help people gain skills and empower them to tell their own stories. It's my job to hold open the door for others as I walk through it," she comments.

## Opening the door to Indigenous women directors

Coming from an experimental short film background, McIntyre is switching things up with *The Words We Can't Speak*, which will be her first narrative feature film. She admits it won't be an easy task.

"Making a feature film is very expensive and challenging. It takes a lot of gumption to think you can entertain people for hours and to believe that your story is important enough to call for all these resources and energy," she shares. "That's why the support coming from the WIDC Feature Film Award means the world to me. It's a huge vote of confidence in me and in the story."

Granted once a year by the Creative Women Workshops Association, the national WIDC Feature Film Award aims to "develop, support, and advance the voices, talents, and screen fiction projects of Canadian women directors" as described by Carol Whiteman, producer and co-creator of the WIDC program.

Whiteman explains that women filmmakers are deeply underrepresented in Canada and around the world. This is even more true for those coming from racialized communities, including Indigenous directors.

"Indigenous women face added barriers – racism, missing and murdered Indigenous women – just to feel safe and to be able to tell one's story, to find the path to resources and to support a career in this very elite industry," she points out.

For Whiteman, recognizing these additional obstacles for racialized women filmmakers also calls for the association to take actions internally, such as holding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) workshops led by Indigenous and Black women at the beginning of each program.

Having a plurality of voices is crucial and McIntyre winning the WIDC Feature Film Award goes in that direction, Whiteman declares.

"Lindsay is an artistic voice of our time that we need to support and hear from. She sees the world in a particular way, and we will all benefit to see more of what she sees," she concludes.

For more information on the film *The Words We Can't Speak* and the WIDC feature film award visit: [www.widc.ca](http://www.widc.ca).

To learn more about Lindsay McIntyre's artistic works: <http://tinymovingpictures.com>

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Photo courtesy of puSh Festival

Ruby Singh

# A sound innovator on Turtle Island

by ISHA OHRI

**Ruby Singh expresses himself through music, visual art and poetry, while also advocating for social justice issues using his artistic endeavors as the medium. His upcoming show, Vox.Infold, put on by the PuSh Festival, will be performed at the Lobe Studio from Jan. 20–30.**

Singh has presented his work across Turtle Island and around the world, in India, Germany and the U.K. In Vox.Infold, he will be showcasing new technology, such as 4DSOUND technology and vibroacoustic floor panels, to launch the audience into another dimension.

## Cultural beginnings

The year of his birth, Singh's family took a monumental step: they immigrated to Turtle Island. Singh was immersed in his rich Punjabi and Sikhi culture throughout his upbringing, which significantly influenced his attraction to the arts.

"[My] migrant family had large influences on my art – from music, dance and poetry to identity and politics," he says.

Although Singh grew up being exposed to both his roots and Canadian culture, he says he is not seeking balance, but rather authentic expression.

"I think the idea of chopping strict lines between musical influences isn't something I do and the diversity that comes through from 'Indian

laboration. I often see music as the emotional language and undercurrent of film to be given the opportunity and faith to work with a director's vision and collaborate in film is truly one of my favorite things," he says.

Singh says his advice to his younger self would be to learn

about or want to see change and start creating," he says.

## Social justice and advocacy

As a young artist, Singh aligned with artists who were supporting their communities by running workshops. As he matured, Singh quickly understood the inequities that society faces, and

"Creativity allows us to examine these topics from multiple perspectives and gives the ability for us to deeply reflect our own understandings," he adds.

## The pandemic

Singh says the COVID-19 pandemic is not the only crisis we are currently facing.

“ [My] migrant family had large influences on my art – from music, dance and poetry to identity and politics.

*Ruby Singh, artist*

culture' and 'Western culture' are so vast that it's hard for me to pick apart which parts are influencing what," he says.

## Growth and recognition

As a result of Singh's dedication and execution, he has been able to work with organizations such as the National Film Board (NFB) to collaborate and showcase his music in multiple films.

"I'm deeply honoured to be trusted with this kind of col-

laboration. I often see music as the emotional language and undercurrent of film to be given the opportunity and faith to work with a director's vision and collaborate in film is truly one of my favorite things," he says.

To younger artists, he offers a few words of advice.

"Art is something humans have used for expression for time out of mind. We all have a birthright to it. It is only recently in human history that we've divided the role of artist as a 'career' to fit within the capitalist paradigm. Art is for everyone to explore and create. Find the things in your world that you are passionate

to be more vulnerable, because it's where growth and truly great work stems from.

he wanted to help expose these issues through art. "I have had incredible mentors and colleagues come into my life to nurture my vision for this work. For me as someone from a Sikhi family, it is impossible not to work towards justice for all; it is steeped into the fabric of our beings," he says.

Singh emphasizes critical thinking, creativity and compassion in his workshops. By doing so, he feels people can connect with each other more easily and be more expressive.

"We are going through multiple pandemics at the same time," he points out, "The climate catastrophe, opioid crisis and COVID-19 have impacted my work immensely. I've had numerous tours canceled, my income has dramatically dropped and I miss so many people. When stripped of so much of what I used to experience in the world, I'm holding on to what centers me and gives me purpose: creative and liberatory work." ✍

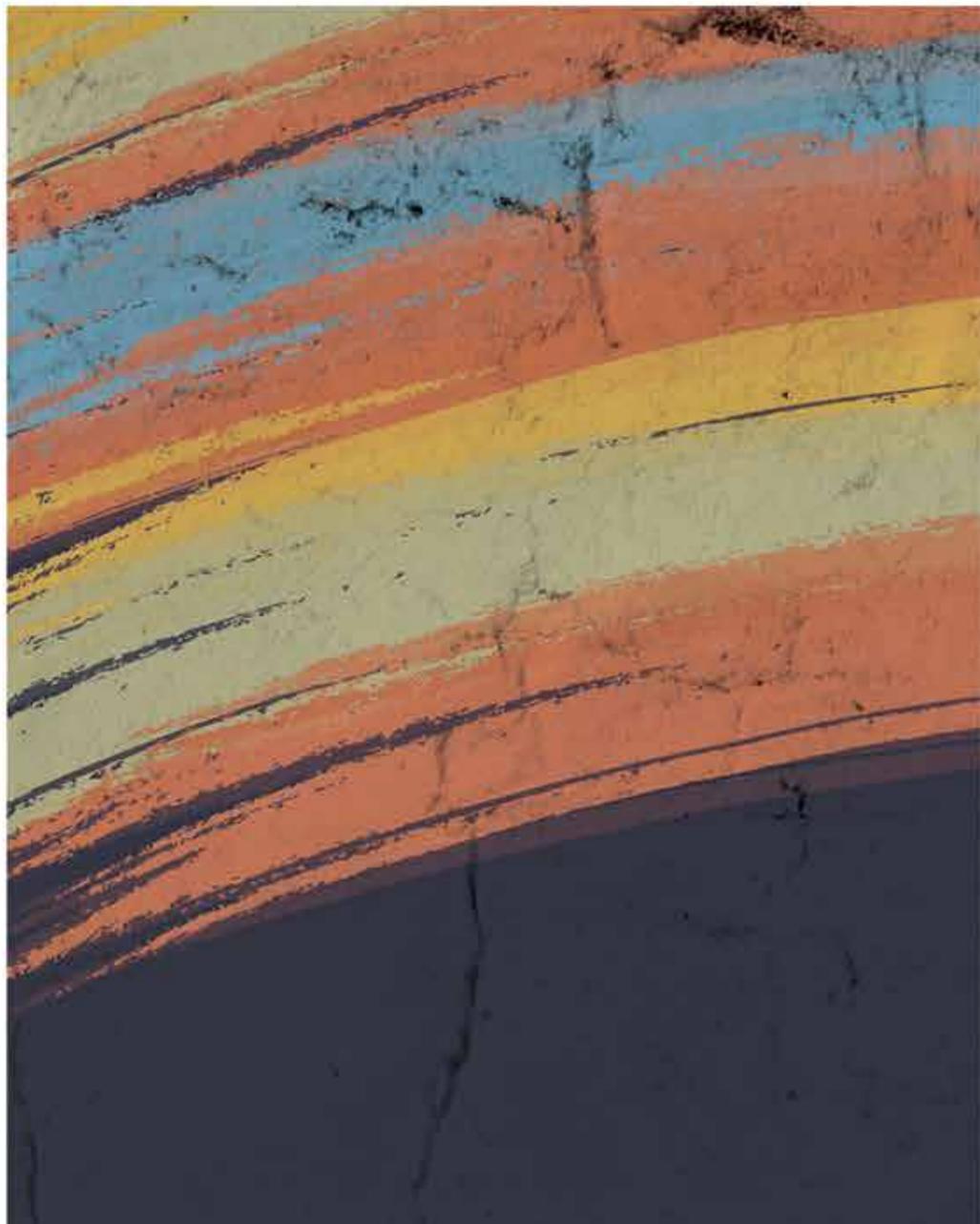
For more information visit [www.pushfestival.ca](http://www.pushfestival.ca)



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## Black Lives Matter on stage – a tribute and a prayer

by XI CHEN

**Based on the real-life murder of Trayvon Martin that launched the Black Lives Matter movement, *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers* is an exciting and emotional theatre show that tells the story of a black teenager and his experience in the afterlife.**

Written and performed by Makambe K Simamba, the play will premiere in Vancouver from Jan. 20–22 at the Firehall Arts Centre as part of the 2022 PuSh International Performing Arts Festival.

### The boy who launched the movement

Trayvon Martin was followed and fatally shot by a neighbourhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman in 2012. Zimmerman was later acquitted of the charges against him and this event marked the start of the Black Lives Matter movement.

“I have been thinking about this play for a very long time. It sat in my body ever since 2012. I was still processing events so I didn’t know how to tell the story I wanted to tell,” says Simamba. “I was really inspired by my love for my little brother and what so many black families go through, losing someone to racialized violence. I literally felt like that could be my brother.”

Simamba started working on the piece in 2016, and it took her a few years to expand it into a full play. She says she got really curious about death after losing a cousin and was thinking a lot about what happens to people’s spirits when they move on. She was also contemplating the reality of black life and black death in the American context.

Simamba also incorporates humour into the play that draws quite a few laughs.

“Humour is the thing that gives us the room to experience the sad thing. Nothing exists without its opposites. Sometimes we need that laugh. I also think that when I think of black American culture, standup comedy of a certain brand is really central,” she says.

### Making room for the next generation

Born in Zambia and raised in the Caribbeans, Simamba has already experienced a few different cultures before she and her family settled in Canada.

“With moving around, I understand how different people’s languages, values and beliefs might be. That sort of childhood analysis of culture, behaviours and values ended up manifesting in my storytelling practice,” she says.

Being one of the very few black theatre students when she was in Calgary, she feels the theatre is always in need of people of colour to tell more diverse and authentic stories.

“I would like that to change in our lifetime. We need to tell the story of our own communities. There is always a need and hunger. It is so important and exciting to tackle that, so the stages can look like our neighbourhoods, our friends and our families,” she adds.

With this play, Simamba says she hopes to not only share the story of Trayvon Martin so that young black people are seen but also to create a space for the community to feel safe.

She adds that the current generation of theatre is still at a place where it is so rare for a particular culture to be on stage



▲ Makambe K Simamba performs in *Our Fathers, Sons, Lovers and Little Brothers*.

“The boy who launched the movement, what a weight that would be to put on a teenager who didn’t choose to be part of that movement. I did a 10-minute solo piece exploring the afterlife that would have elements of Trayvon Martin, from that, the play was born,” she says.

Body movement is an integral part of the play according to Simamba who also performs in the play.

“I wanted to explore American black male physicality of teenage boys around 2012 time. Which music was really popular? How do those bodies move? I wanted to see how to incorporate them into my piece,” she explains.

but if there are several black plays all the time, then the stories can dig in more into nuances and complications rather than just fighting for a place to exist.

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful for a 16-year-old black person to see this as their first play? I mean, Shakespeare is amazing, but he wasn’t writing for me,” she says. “My point is that I am excited to be part of the generation to continue to build on what my predecessors have made space for. Success to me means using the work to push and push until I feel like we exist.”

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

January 11–25, 2022

## Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Goodbye 2021, and hello 2022! I hope everyone enjoyed their holiday season, despite the presence of the omicron variant. While I have recommended a few events below, please remember to stay safe and follow provincial health orders and venue guidelines when going to in-person events. Have a great January everyone!

\* \* \*

**Lights at Lafarge**  
Until Jan. 31  
[www.coquitlam.ca/784/Lights-at-Lafarge](http://www.coquitlam.ca/784/Lights-at-Lafarge)

If you didn't have a chance to visit Christmas lights last month, try to catch the Lights at Lafarge in Coquitlam, running until Jan. 31. Modified in consideration of current provincial health orders and public safety, this season's winter lights display is dispersed to provide two walking loops within Town Centre Park.

\* \* \*

**Connie Sabo: information + impression**  
Jan. 4–Feb. 4  
[www.pendulumgallery.bc.ca](http://www.pendulumgallery.bc.ca)

Connie Sabo is a Vancouver based artist with a studio practice in mixed media, sculpture and installation. Her work examines life cycles and sustainability, combining these concepts with identity and personal narratives. The interconnectedness of the past, present and future is a theme throughout her work, even as she challenges the physicality, cultural history and traditions associated with her chosen materials and techniques. Sabo weaves hand twisted newspaper into net-like constructions that hang and drape throughout the gallery space. Her latest exhibit, information + impression, examines the dichotomy of how information can enlighten us as well as contain and control us. Impressions formed by the information we receive become the basis of our beliefs and actions, defining who we are as individuals and as a society.

\* \* \*

**Cracks in the Rearview Mirror: The Cinema of Lynne Ramsay**  
Jan. 6–Feb. 4  
[www.thecinematheque.ca](http://www.thecinematheque.ca)

A poet of wounded people and the traumas they carry, Scottish auteur Lynne Ramsay has, with only four features to her name, become one of British cinema's most revered contemporary directors. Her bold, intimate, aesthetically immersive films have won festival laurels, international awards and the attention of A-list actors, eager to inhabit the anguished souls at the centre of her fractured character portraits. Slim but superlative – and distinctly, definitely her own – Ramsay's oeuvre is showcased in The Cinematheque's mid-career retrospective. The series collects her four extraordinary feature-length films to date, as well as a number of essential award-winning Ramsay shorts. Check out the theatre's website for more information.

\* \* \*

**Laiwan: Traces, Erasures, Resists**  
Jan. 7–April 10  
[www.belkin.ubc.ca](http://www.belkin.ubc.ca)

Since the early 1980s, Laiwan has made a meaningful contribution to Vancouver's cultural ecology through her engagement with artist-run centres – including as founder of the Or Gallery in 1983 – and her participation with numerous queer, feminist, multicultural and visual art print publications. The Belkin's exhibit *Laiwan: Traces, Erasures, Resists* highlights the artist's attention to the material and symbolic vocabularies of print and lens-based media between 1980 and 2000, and features her early interventions into the logic of the book form and the ideology of historical and encyclopedic genres. The exhibition title references processes related to printmaking, while at the same time speaking to the absent narratives, redacted perspectives and critical refusals that are latent in official publications.

\* \* \*

**John**  
Jan. 12–15  
[www.firehallartscentre.ca](http://www.firehallartscentre.ca)

The Firehall Arts Centre will open their 2022 year with dance artist Helen Walkley's powerful dance theatre piece, John, taking place from Jan. 12 to 15. John is a memoir of Walkley's oldest brother who disappeared from Vancouver in May of 1969, never to be heard from again. She sourced from an archive of family letters dating from 1959–2010, which document the years leading up to his disappearance, his medical history and the subsequent tracking her parents did of his disappearance. For more information on this dance theatre showing, please check out the Firehall Arts Centre website.

\* \* \*

**Ed Yong: The Future of Media**  
Jan. 20, 6–7:30 p.m.  
<https://sppga.ubc.ca/events/event/the-phil-lind-initiative-presents-ed-yong>

Pulitzer Prize-winning science staff writer for The Atlantic Ed Yong will be speaking on "The Art of Science Journalism." Speaking from his experience writing before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, Yong explores the core of what it means to be a science journalist, how inseparable science is from the rest of society and how it is shaped by our culture, our social norms and our collective decisions. Check out the UBC School of Public Policy and Global Affairs website to RSVP for the live broadcast.

\* \* \*

**PuSh Festival**  
Jan. 20–Feb. 6  
[www.pushfestival.ca](http://www.pushfestival.ca)

The PuSh Festival returns to Vancouver in 2022 to showcase innovative and transformative art. The 2022 program hopes to facilitate an emergence from our social hibernation with works that incept, evoke, activate and confront. In a time when people are all making sense of where we are after what has come to pass, this year's Festival line-up helps us situate ourselves in the complexity of the human experience. For a complete list of current shows and event details, please visit the festival's website.

\* \* \*

**Haven**  
Jan. 21–Feb. 13  
[www.jerichoartscentre.com](http://www.jerichoartscentre.com)

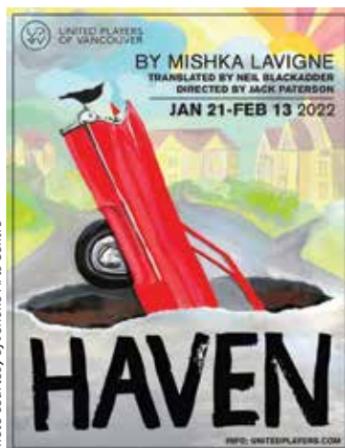


Photo courtesy of Jericho Arts Centre

The Jericho Arts Centre will be putting on the United Players of Vancouver's adaptation of Haven by Canadian playwright Mishka Lavigne, from Jan. 21 to Feb. 13. Haven won the 2019 Governor-General's award for French-language drama, and is here produced for the first time in English. Elise and Matt meet when a hole opens up in Elise's road. She's just lost her mother; he is tracing his ancestry in Sarajevo. Both are adults feeling voids concerning their parents, and they find what they need in their memories and each other. Check out the Jericho Arts Centre for more information.

\* \* \*

**The Medium is the Medium is the Medium**  
Jan. 22–March 20  
[www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/surrey-art-gallery](http://www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/surrey-art-gallery)

For the late Indo-Canadian artist P. Mansaram, repetition was art practice, repetition was meditation, repetition was spirituality, repetition was falling in love, and as he said, repetition was a way to find god. Yet, for all this interest in repetition, Mansaram's work is never repetitive. Figures and symbols appear and reappear in different spaces and configurations. Text and image play off each other. The Surrey Art Gallery exhibit of Mansaram's work shows how the artist used recurrence and reproduction through a variety of mediums. Visitors will see drawings, paintings, collage, texts, sculptures, xerox, silk-screen prints and films spanning more than five decades of the artist's prolific career. The selection of works in this exhibit highlights both material and spiritual elements from his surroundings. Characters, symbols and spaces convey the artist's meditative and transcendent processes in form and content. In this regard, the ways in which Mansaram assembled different media and

created a sense of place give a nuanced narrative of the diasporic experience.

\* \* \*

**Nourish**  
Jan. 22–April 3  
[www.richmondartgallery.org](http://www.richmondartgallery.org)

Nourishment – its scope and significance – lies at the heart of the works of artist duo, Mizzonk (Wan-Yi Lin and Roger Chen), and Jane Wong. How we are nourished, often characterized in terms of deprivation or abundance, can rouse memories of deep emotional intensity. Wong, a Seattle-based poet and artist, draws upon her experience of growing up in a Chinese American restaurant in New Jersey, and her family's history of hunger and poverty in China. Taiwanese born artists, Lin and Chen, live and work on six secluded acres in Greater Vancouver, a practice in living that has provided sustenance and inspiration for the past twenty years. Wong and Mizzonk will present two installations respectively at the Richmond Art Gallery: After Preparing the Altar, The Ghosts Feast Feverishly and Six Acres. Check out the art gallery's website for more information on these installations.

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