

# The Source

forum of diversity

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## The story behind two local writers nominated for the first Carol Shields Prize for Fiction

by MARTINA PETKOV

**The Carol Shields Prize for Fiction is a major new English-language literary award to celebrate creativity and excellence in fiction by women and non-binary writers in Canada and the United States. The announced long-list sees five Canadian writers: Suzette Mayr, Chelene Knight, Tsering Yangzom Lama, Emma Hooper and Francine Cunningham join 10 American authors.**

### Francine Cunningham – *God Isn't Here Today*

Francine Cunningham is an award-winning Indigenous writer, artist and educator. *God Isn't Here Today* is her debut collection of short fiction.

From a very young age, she always knew her future would be a web of creativity.

"My mum made our spare room into my art studio," Cunningham recalls. "She said, 'Go in there, create, spend as much time as you can, and put all your focus into the things you are good at.'"

Poetry was the first outlet for Cunningham, as she journaled through her teenage years, putting pen to paper to make sense of all the existential angst, her poems were full of heart.

"For me, creativity is inevitable. I don't know how not to do it!" she says.

Cunningham still draws from a myriad of creativity in her life and even her writing varies in style and expression, from poetry, to fiction, to short stories, to script writing.

"It keeps the writing fun, exciting and challenging!" she explains.

At any given moment, Cunningham has five to six projects on the go, and each in a different genre of writing. Even in a day she will mix her creative outlets and move from writing, to bead work, to painting.

"It just lights up different parts of my brain," she says.

The different emotions also spark different genres of Cunningham's writing.

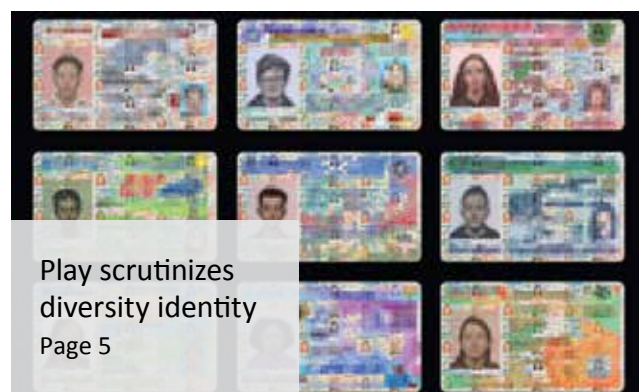
"I find poetry is always in my heart," she says. "Short fiction is where I get to explore my weird side and go into those strange 'what if places' like with the book *God Isn't Here Today*. Then my novel is for exploration of deeper themes, while the memoir is where I go to try and figure out why I do things."

With the short fiction in her debut collection, *God Isn't Here Today*, Cunningham takes readers on a dark but poignant journey.

See "Book Day" page 7 ➤



▲ Covers of *God Isn't Here Today* by Francine Cunningham and *We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies* by Tsering Yangzom Lama.



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Photo courtesy of the Senate of Canada



# Northern voices must shape Arctic shift to greener energy

**When it comes to infrastructure, Canada’s North is lagging behind the rest of the world.**

Focusing on energy infrastructure in comparable regions throughout the circumpolar Arctic, we see countries that have successfully harnessed alternatives, such as nuclear and geothermal energy, to power communities in northern and remote areas.

In stark contrast, all 25 of Nunavut’s communities remain almost entirely reliant on diesel. Since the Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources released its 2015 report, *Powering Canada’s Territories*, there have been many advances in renewable energy infrastructure. Wind turbines can now more reliably withstand Arctic weather conditions; batteries for solar power have advanced in design and accessibility; and small nuclear reactors (SMRs) are increasingly being recognized for their many advantages. The advantages of SMRs include the fact that they are relatively easy to construct; they are modular and can easily be ex-

ing for 9% of the total uranium produced globally. In Nunavut, the Kiggavik deposit in the central region of the territory – the Kivalliq – has the potential to be another Athabasca Basin. One only needs to look at how the primary, secondary and tertiary industries resulting from Cameco’s Cigar Lake and McArthur River mines to know

All of Nunavut’s communities are fly-in only and without connecting roads. Every Nunavut community is a coastal community. This means that construction materials must be shipped by sealift, which requires long lead times and lots of advance coordination. Despite this reality, funding agreements with

“ If we want to move forward with a truly “just transition,” then Canada needs to ensure that it is just for northern and remote communities...

the potential that rich resources and sustainable development can boost the local economy and shape an entire region. If we want to move forward with a truly “just transition,” then Canada needs to ensure that it is just for northern and remote communities who face multiple barriers to acquire, construct and maintain alternative energy sources. We are limited by geography, weather and capacity – both human and funding-wise.

The government must ensure that any “just transition” legislation includes significant resources and future budgets must include equitable funding, beyond the ad hoc or per capita funding announcements we get too often. Some funding areas related to “just transition” are obvious. For example, we need to ensure local community members are trained on how to operate and maintain energy equipment. We need to have more federal subsidies to build new energy infrastructure, since the relatively small populations of Arctic communities don’t normally allow our projects to fit into P3 arrangements – or into the Infrastructure Bank model, which doesn’t fund smaller projects with little to no return on investment.

However, some funding needs aren’t so obvious unless you’re a northerner, such as the need for paved airports or for flexible funding models that work with our short shipping season.

Canada often get announced at the start of the fiscal year, but don’t get disbursed until months later – usually past the time we can place sealift orders – and then expire a year later. We need more flexible funding agreements that enable us to work with the sealift schedule. Smaller cargo can also be flown in by jet. Each region of Nunavut has a central hub community: Cambridge Bay in the west, Rankin Inlet in the central region and Iqaluit in the east. Yet Cambridge Bay still only has a gravel runway and modern jets require a paved runway to land. Many of the older jets outfitted with gravel kits are being retired this year and Cambridge Bay has officially lost its jet service.

These are the type of logistics that we need to ensure are being recognized at the federal level. Too often, programs and policies are developed by someone in Ottawa with little to no knowledge of northern realities – and that has to change. Canada’s Arctic has the potential to be just as developed as its circumpolar neighbours, but in order to take advantage of the advances in technology that could make us less reliant on diesel, we need Ottawa to understand how best to help us make the transition. That requires listening to northern voices – and actually acting on our advice.

Senator DENNIS PATTERSON represents Nunavut in the Senate.



▲ Senator Dennis Patterson.

panded to fit the growing needs of communities; and they are extremely safe sources of energy. It is also significant that Canada is the world’s fourth-largest uranium producer, account-



# Fundraising for a Lifesaving Surgical C-Arm for Jamaica

Maryann Pyne of Surrey is walking 10km in this year’s Virtual Vancouver Sun Run to raise funds for a very special medical need. Volunteers with the Canadian Jamaican Medical Assistance Society (CJMAS) have launched a campaign to obtain and ship to Kingston Public Hospital, Jamaica a replacement for the now worn out surgical C-arm fluoroscope machine - a life-saving item donated through the charity more than a decade ago. CJMAS’s goal is to raise \$10,000 by the end of June to accomplish this.

“C-arm fluoroscopy is used in orthopedic procedures and is an important tool in modern orthopaedic surgery. It enhances the technical proficiency of the surgeon, as well as reducing the length of a patient’s hospital stay” said CJMAS President Cindy Hildebrandt. “It is used in many types of complicated surgeries, in pain management, emergency procedures, cardiac and therapeutic studies, and more.” The surgical C-arm sent to Jamaica over ten years ago has made a significant difference to the lives and health of thousands of patients and to their medical teams. Now, it is breaking down and wearing out.

CJMAS, an all-volunteer, registered Canadian charity, works to provide educational and health-related resources in Jamaica and to assist students – both in the early school years and those studying for health-related professions. These efforts are supported by volunteers of Jamaican background and by other Canadians “with a heart for Jamaica”. Donations over \$20.00 can receive a tax-deductible receipt.

Have you visited Jamaica? Do you enjoy the Island’s food and beverages? Their music? Are you concerned about improving community health? Then, for any - or all - of these reasons, please consider making a donation to CJMAS, marked “for SR 23”, to help get a new surgical C-Arm to Kingston. Your gift can be made by e-transfer to cjmasmail@cjmas.ca, online at www.cjmas.ca, or by cheque, payable to CJMAS, mailed to 151 – 10090 – 152 St. #271, Surrey, B.C., V3R 8X8. For more information about the work of CJMAS, check our website or contact Maryann Pyne at mpcpyne@yahoo.ca or 778-888-5705. Thank you for caring about so many in Jamaica whose health will be improved by your support.

“Together we can make a difference!”



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Page 6: Amy Ching-Yan Lam, *Time Capsule* (1994), 2023. Photo courtesy of the artist.

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# Storytelling and memory keeping as climate change activism

by LILLIAN LIAO

**Buy locally, use LEDs, compost organic waste, sort recyclables from the trash, invest in an electric vehicle, or better yet, take public transportation – these are all well-known everyday strategies for combating climate change. But what about storytelling and memory keeping as instruments from the same toolbox?**

This is a question Nina Hewitt, a UBC associate professor of teaching specializing in biogeography, seeks to address with the latest Green College Leading Scholars Series. Unstandardizing Standards: Baselines, Memories and Connections in the Human and Other Natural Sciences, organized by Hewitt and two of her colleagues, offers interdisciplinary talks that highlight the social and political power of remembering in the face of deteriorating environmental conditions.

“It is not just about the fact that we are losing biodiversity and systems overtime – it’s also about the collective memory of humans and observing these changes, but not seeing all of them,” says Hewitt. “We can lose

an awful lot of richness, but we don’t realize it because of the shifting baseline.”

To stop this personal and communal forgetfulness, a thorough examination of individual and shared baselines needs to occur.

### Normalization of climate change effects

The term “shifting baselines” refers to UBC Killam Professor Daniel Pauly’s research on how our understanding of what is normal in nature is shaped by a normalization of the present conditions, resulting in collective amnesia of nature’s past abundance and diversity. In other words, when one’s baseline – or understanding of the norm – shifts to accommodate contemporary scenarios, they may not realize they are seeing fewer ducklings hatching or fewer salmon spawning in the rivers.

Pauly’s Mar. 8 talk Rethinking Our Planetary Baselines Across Disciplines, which can still be viewed as a video lecture through the Green College website, sought to explore how baselines are defined. The problem then is not just one of what to do in the face of climate change, but how to document and recog-

nize these changes so people are compelled to act.

For Hewitt, the answers lie in the connections between storytelling, memory, and data collection.

### The importance of storytelling

As highlighted by the lecture series, storytelling is integral to both the data collection that occurs in research and the shared narrativizing of the past. The lecture series is also organized with the help of UBC assistant professors Anaïs Orsi, who specializes in researching the climate science of polar regions, and Meike Wernicke, a scholar of language education. Between the three – Hewitt, Orsi, and Meike – there is already a wide range of different disciplines.

For Hewitt, this is one of the keys to the series’ focus on storytelling: an intention to highlight the different methodologies used in various disciplines and the stories one can tell through these different approaches to research.

Outside of research, the human element of storytelling is also an attractive tool for science communication.



▲ Nina Hewitt.

“People relate really well to data and people relate really well to stories,” says Hewitt, highlighting how storytelling is an important mechanism for making scientific information accessible.

In the next talk, Wed, Apr. 19 from 5:00–6:30 p.m. at Green College, Belinda Daniels, as-

sistant professor at UVic and researcher of Indigenous languages and education will elaborate on these issues. Those attending in person are welcomed to join a reception after the talk for further discussions. A livestream will also be provided for those unable to attend in person.

According to Hewitt, attendees can expect a mix of scholarly insights with openness to discussion, leading to moments of deep reflection on their understanding of what is normal.

This challenging of human assumptions, as the lecture series suggests, is crucial for climate change activism. Through documenting nature and sharing memories of the past, one can recognize just how much has been lost, an important step towards taking action against harmful climate policies.

“We have to get engaged in a way with our communities and our governments – go out into nature,” says Hewitt.

It is in nature, after all, that baselines can be challenged and re-established. ✎

For more information please visit: [www.greencollege.ubc.ca](http://www.greencollege.ubc.ca)

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# Earth prefers to serve life in XXS and XXL sizes: UBC research

Life comes in all shapes and sizes, but some sizes are more popular than others, new research from the University of British Columbia has found.

In the first study of its kind published today in PLOS ONE, Dr. Eden Tekwa, who conducted the study as a postdoctoral fellow at UBC's department of zoology, surveyed the body sizes of all Earth's living organisms, and uncovered an unexpected pattern. Contrary to what current theories can explain, our planet's biomass – the material that makes up all living organisms – is concentrated in organisms at either end of the size spectrum.

"The smallest and largest organisms significantly outweigh all other organisms," said Dr. Tekwa, lead author of "The size of life," and now a research associate with McGill University's de-

would be spread evenly across all body sizes."

In addition to challenging our understanding of how life is distributed, these results have important implications for predicting the effects and impacts of climate change. "Body size governs a lot of global processes as well as local processes, including the rate at which carbon gets sequestered, and how the function and stability of ecosystems might be affected by the composition of living things," said Dr. Tekwa. "We need to think about how body size biomass distribution will change under environmental pressures."

"Life constantly amazes us, including the incredible range of sizes that it comes in," says senior author Dr. Malin Pinsky, associate professor in the department of ecology, evolution, and natural resources at Rutgers University. "If the tiniest microbe was the size of the period at the end of this sentence, the largest living organism, a sequoia tree, would be the size of the Panama Canal."

To obtain their results, Dr. Tekwa spent five years compiling



▲ The smallest and largest organisms significantly outweigh all other organisms, says Eden Tekwa, PhD.

and analyzing data about the size and biomass of every type of living organism on the planet – from tiny one-celled organisms like soil archaea and bacteria to large organisms like blue whales and sequoia trees. They found that the pattern favouring large and small organisms held across all types of species, and was more pronounced in land-based organisms than in marine environments. Interestingly, maximum body size seemed to reach the same upper limits across multiple species and environ-

"The largest body sizes appear across multiple species groups, and their maximum body sizes are all within a relatively narrow range," Dr. Tekwa noted. "Trees, grasses, underground fungi, mangroves, corals, fish and marine mammals all have similar maximum body sizes. This might suggest that there is a universal upper size limit due to ecological, evolutionary or biophysical limitations."

Dr. Tekwa was also able to uncover some intriguing details about the distribution of life in various ecosystems. "Even though corals occur in only a small fraction of the ocean, it turns out that they have about the same biomass as all the fish in the ocean," said Dr. Tekwa. "This illustrates how important the balance of biomass is in the oceans. Corals support a lot of fish diversity, so it's really interesting that those two organisms have almost the same biomass." As for humans, we already know we comprise a relatively small biomass, but our size among all living things reveals our place in the global biome.

"We belong to the size range that comprises the highest biomass, which is a relatively large body size," said Dr. Tekwa. Dr. Tekwa added that their findings will help inform future research into Earth's evolving environment.

"This enables us to move forward, because it establishes a baseline of the current state that already includes human-driven effects," they said. "For example, fish biomass is probably half of what it was before humans arrived, but it gets harder and harder to infer those patterns as we go farther back in geological time. These are really important empirical studies to conduct. There's a lot of relevance to humans and societies as we tackle sustainability challenges, and global ecological assessments should be an essential part of sustainability initiatives."

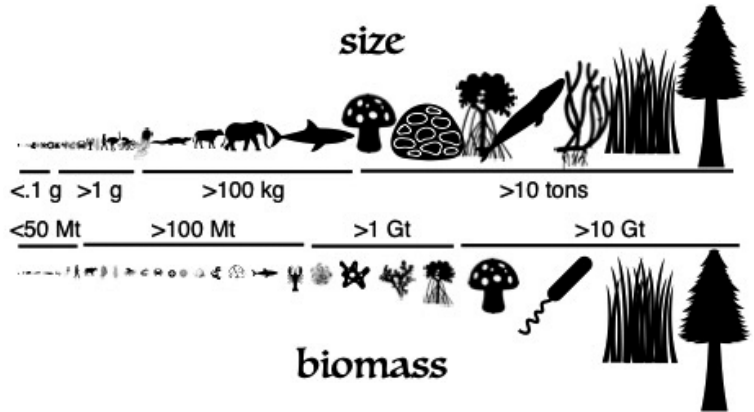
For more information visit: <https://news.ubc.ca/2023/03/29/earth-prefers-to-serve-life-in-xxs-and-xxl-sizes-ubc-research/>

Source: UBC



▲ Dr. Eden Tekwa.

partment of biology. "This seems like a new and emerging pattern that needs to be explained, and we don't have theories for how to explain it right now. Current theories predict that biomass



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# Last call to claim one's identity

by ELAHA AMANI

Director and playwright Valerie Methot expertly weaves together humour and the struggle of owning one's identity in a bold and original tale *The Identity Bureau*, presented by Some Assembly Theatre Company.

"*The Identity Bureau* promotes inclusion, equity, access, respect for oneself and others, kindness and support," Methot says. "Each person has the right to be who they truly are in an equitable society that allows everyone to reach their full potential."

In collaboration with Diverse Metro Vancouver Youth, *The Identity Bureau* will be performed Apr. 28 – May 2 at Roundhouse Performance Centre where audiences of all ages can witness the world premiere of this unapologetically bold existential work for no cost.

### Identity scrutinized

*The Identity Bureau* displays a world set in the future where identities and traits are assigned to all citizens, hence the title of the play, and the chaos that shortly ensues in this flawed system and society. It's the last day citizens can make identity updates and pay fines before the big system overhaul.

One defining aspect of this work is its diversity. In the process of script research, Methot queried students Grades 6–12

experienced that identity continues on at the core and that love is the key that connects all," she says.

### Still growing

As a director, creator, designer and the artistic director of Some Assembly Theatre Company, Methot's main objective is always to bring hope, positive social change and community connection. This company began as a project spurred by the death of her close friend during her time studying at UBC and has now blossomed into a well respected organization with national and international recognition.

To this day, Methot is still stunned to see that with every production and addition to her team, the company continues to grow alongside her. Methot is tremendously grateful towards all who have helped her build this company from the ground up, which took a lot of passion, perseverance, commitment and self-growth.

Some Assembly Theatre Company aims to build the public's appreciation of the arts, as well as a supportive community where diverse youth and professional artists are provided the opportunities to thrive, learn and grow. Youth audience members have been particularly touched by this company for representing and reflecting many of their own struggles, emotions and experiences.



▲ Diversity is at the core of *The Identity Bureau*.

about the importance of identity, which was then shared with a team of youth writers and theatre professionals. What is seen on stage is the accumulation of a wide range of perspectives and contributors of various identities. This is evident through the main cast, a diverse group who play characters of different upbringings, backgrounds, cultural heritage and so forth.

Additionally, *The Identity Bureau* will resonate within anyone who has been treated unfairly or disrespectfully because of their identity, as Some Assembly Theatre Company mirrors and validates these struggles perfectly.

While creating this play, Methot most struggled with capturing the fluidity and complexity of identity, of who one really is. She reflects upon how the loss of her mother and a youth participant affects her own identity and her very definition of the word.

"There is a lot of emotion attached to identity. I have deeply

The company is currently in its 23rd year of operation and is the recipient of the City of Vancouver Youth Award for outstanding contribution to the youth community and the Deryck Thomson Award for exceptional contribution to community building and well-being.

"I believe if we work together in a meaningful way, learn from each other and

use theatre to communicate the complexities of what it is to be human, then Some Assembly Theatre will continue to change my life and the lives of others," Methot says.

### Looking ahead

Despite the pandemic causing much vulnerability for the theatre arts industry, Methot is confident and optimistic in what the future holds. She has already begun writing grants for her upcoming project next year, to reach Some Assembly Theatre Company's 24th year and beyond. ✍

# Childhood dreams, Pekingese dogs, feng shui and property development

by STAFF WRITER

Guest curated by Su-Ying Lee, the exhibition, *A Small but Comfy House and Maybe a Dog*, is Amy Ching-Yan Lam’s first major solo show and features sculptures made in collaboration with HaeAhn Woo Kwon in addition to objects from the collections of the Gallery and the neighbouring Richmond Public Library.

“The title of this exhibition comes from an essay that Amy Ching-Yan Lam wrote to her future self at the age of 11, speculating that by the age of 25 she’d be married,

a new series of sculptures in which the pair remade toys and found objects to create a fantasy communal home. Analogous to both condo display models and Polly Pocket toys, the resulting artworks are small-scale living spaces fashioned inside of spaces like teapots and gourds.

### Pieces of Chinese past

The second major inspiration is the City of Richmond itself. Lam looked to the RAG and the Richmond Public Library as examples of institutional collections and how they are formed. The artist was particularly inspired by the Dr. Lee Collection at the Richmond Public Library.

“With humour and acuity, she examines the complicated relationships between institutional collections and power, property and theft, and history and family.

Su-Ying Lee, curator

have a career and ‘a small but comfy house and maybe a dog,’” says Lee. “Starting from these childhood fantasies of domestic love and financial stability, Lam presents artworks that explore how these dreams have been indirectly influenced by the wider trajectory of colonial history. With humour and acuity, she examines the complicated relationships between institutional collections and power, property and theft, and history and family.”

The exhibition, made possible by the Richmond Art Gallery (RAG), in partnership with the Richmond Public Library, runs from Apr. 22 to June 11, 2023.

### Of dogs and palaces

*A Small but Comfy House and Maybe a Dog* draws inspiration from two main sources: the first is the

Described as a ‘national treasure’ by antiquities experts, the Special Collection on Chinese Culture includes rare Chinese-language art books that have been gathered by Dr. Kwok-Chu Lee (Master Lam Chun) during his lifetime.

The RAG and Richmond Public Library, in conversation with Lam, curated a selection of items that will be on view in the exhibition. Among the pieces on display will be a series of ceramics depicting different animals from the Chinese zodiac, in relation to how similar animal depictions were featured in the Summer Palace. In turn, the RAG will have a temporary lending program of artworks from their Collection.

Lee was also passionate about feng shui. With regards to his dedication to the practice and in the context of the city’s numer-



▲ Amy Ching-Yan Lam, *Looty Goes to Heaven, 2022* (video still)



▲ Amy Ching-Yan Lam, *Looty Goes to Heaven, 2022* publication.

true story of Looty, a Pekingese dog taken from China’s Summer Palace by British troops at the end of the Second Opium War. Lam set off to fictionalize Looty’s life as a royal pet to the Queen in a book and animated video.

Drawing further on the theme of domestication, Lam, in collaboration with Kwon, created

ous new luxury condominiums currently being built across the street from the RAG, Lam invited renowned feng shui expert Sherman Tai to better improve the flow of the exhibition. Following Tai’s recommendation that a water feature was needed in the space, a new fountain sculpture was also created.

Now based in Toronto, Lam temporarily lived in Vancouver when she first immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong with her family in 1989. *A Small but Comfy House and Maybe a Dog* weaves together the ongoing histories of her past and present homes, highlighting at every step how the two are inextricable. ✍

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# “Like musical skydiving”: Jeremy Ledbetter Trio brings thrills to worldly jazz

by CURTIS SEUFERT

The Jeremy Ledbetter Trio takes audiences on a jazzy musical journey at Hermann’s Jazz Club in Victoria on Apr. 16. While the trio is named after its pianist and composer, Ledbetter says that the talent of drummer Larnell Lewis and bassist Rich Brown makes it possible to make thrilling music at a break-neck pace a reality.

“They’re basically superhuman. Composing a trio with a bass player and drummer like that. It’s limitless,” says Ledbetter. “Everything’s possible. It’s so liberating.”

### A deep rooted connection

Exploring the possibilities of contemporary jazz is the name of the game for the Ledbetter trio. Drawing on Ledbetter’s experience studying jazz-adjacent music throughout Central and South America, as well as Lewis and Brown’s extensive jazz backgrounds and Canadian-Central American heritage, Ledbetter says the trio is all about embracing the endless possibilities of the genre.

“There’s a lot of room for the music to go this way or that,” he says. “That was sort of the idea with the trio, just, ‘Anything’s possible, so let’s see where it leads.’”

It takes time to develop a musical relationship where a band can go in nearly any sort of direction and find success. So despite taking a hiatus during the pandemic, Ledbetter says the group benefits from a few years of experience working with one another. Since 2018, he says the trio has developed a connection with one another that allows for extensive, unspoken musical



▲ Anything is possible for the Jeremy Ledbetter Trio.

communication, crucial in a style of music that features heavy improvisation.

“The main way in which what we do has evolved is just the familiarity and communication, the connection between the three of us has become deeper and wider and more instantaneous,” he says. “It’s like at first we were on dial-up, but now we’re on WiFi.”

For Ledbetter, it’s that deep connection, being in tune with one another literally and metaphorically, that allows the band to take creative risks in the heat of the moment.

“We’re playing a song we’ve played a couple of dozen times,

and somebody has a brand new idea, and we all go ‘yeah, okay.’ It’s just like we turn on a dime together with no notice,” he says. “Sometimes I feel like I’m not even actually playing music. I’m just sort of going for a ride on a rollercoaster. Like musical skydiving.”

### Taking the listener on a journey

For the musician, the point of the trio’s approach is allowing the audience to watch a thrilling improvisational musical approach take place live. But, as is often the case with jazz, there’s a lot that goes into composing a song that can take wild turns and still

remain grounded. Keeping with the spirit of bringing audiences along a musical ride, Ledbetter says his compositions aim to create vivid visual images for listeners, carrying them through an evocative musical landscape.

“It’s important to me that the songs have a shape and that they take the listener on a journey,” he says. “Things are changing and moving. There’s a lot of dynamics and a lot of different moods and changes of vibe throughout.”

And what makes that musical journey so special, says Ledbetter, is that it can be different for everyone. While a whole audience might all be listening to the

same song, Ledbetter says that the trio’s music aims to stir up the imagination for everyone in a different way.

“The main thing is that there’s an atmosphere that’s created that [enables you to] close your eyes and let the music wash over you and take you somewhere,” says Ledbetter. “Sometimes I’m telling a specific story, but it’s not told in words. So everybody’s going to see something different in their minds.”

For more information about the event, visit: [www.caravanbc.com](http://www.caravanbc.com)

For more on the Jeremy Ledbetter Trio, visit: [www.jeremyledbetter.com](http://www.jeremyledbetter.com)

### ► “Book Day” from page 1

“I started writing those stories in grad school,” she says. “It took a long time to write them all. They started to come together, in this universe that I was trying to create. Finally bringing everything together to tell a story through micro fiction.”

Cunningham also has a passion for motivating young indigenous people to find their voice through creativity.

“It is incredibly important to me, to raise up indigenous voices, youth in particular,” she says. “Working with youth in the classroom is where I really feel I can make a difference.”

Cunningham believes each of us has a place in our communities to do what we do best.

“Follow what you are good at, and what brings you joy, and that is enough!” she concludes.

### Tsering Yangzom Lama – We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies

Born in Nepal, to exiled Tibetan parents, Tsering Yangzom Lama grew up in the vibrant and cosmopolitan capital, Kathmandu. It’s a really bustling city, she says, there is a real sense of openness and excitement.

When Lama was about seven or eight, she recalls writing a poem at school about impermanence which she shared with her father.

“My father was a real dreamer,” Lama remembers, and after seeing her poem he was determined that it would get published. “A few days later I saw it published in the newspaper! I didn’t even know that was a thing at the time.”

This was an important lesson for her, about what is possible if one is willing to take a leap.

That family support, especially from her father, would prove invaluable. Her dream of writing was resurrected during a creative writing elective course, which Lama took at UBC.

As a “90s kid” Lama enjoys the old school writing method of pen and paper. This is all part of the creative process for Lama. The messy notes on the page act as a great first draft, before it gets typed up and edited further.

Lama describes writing as a ‘compulsion’, like something she couldn’t not do.

“It [writing] helps me move through the world on a daily level,” says Lama.

When talking about her debut novel, *We Measure the Earth*

*With Our Bodies*, Lama reflects how she was driven to write about the refugee settlement in Nepal. Lama describes the camp as having a strong sense of community. The people are humble there, often stateless, and sometimes forgotten.



▲ Tsering Yangzom Lama depicts a refugee settlement in Nepal in her debut novel.



▲ Short fiction is where Francine Cunningham gets to explore her weird side.

“I knew I wanted to write about the camp and how the camp changed over time. From the beginning, right after the occupation and exile began, pretty much right up to the modern day. Looking at how time affects people and the way

in which displacement takes a family into all kinds of different directions,” she says.

Although the camp and its location is the site for a lot of the story, none of the characters in the book are real, and none of the things really happened. It’s entirely fictional, says Lama.

Through a lot of research, reading aid documents, visiting different places outlined in the novel, talking to people and listening to oral history, Lama has tried to animate a much larger story than her own personal experience.

When Lama is not immersed in the world of writing her day job takes her into a world of activism and advocacy with an environmental role at Greenpeace.

“I really like being in an advocacy space, because it’s creative in certain ways,” says Lama.

Both Cunningham and Lama have to wait until Apr. 6 to find out if they make it onto the short list before the winner is announced May 4.

For more information visit: [www.francinecunningham.ca](http://www.francinecunningham.ca)  
[www.tseringlama.com](http://www.tseringlama.com)  
[www.carolshieldsprizeforfiction.com](http://www.carolshieldsprizeforfiction.com)

April 4–25, 2023

# Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

April is an exciting time in Vancouver, with plenty of events and festivals taking place all around the city. With the Easter holiday just around the corner, there's even more reason to get out and explore. From family-friendly egg hunts to amazing music and cultural celebrations, there's something for everyone. With so many events and festivals happening in April, there's no shortage of things to do and see in Vancouver. So, put on your walking shoes, grab your camera, and get ready to explore all the sights, sounds and flavors that this amazing city has to offer!

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**Easter at the Cannery**  
April 7–9  
[www.gulfofgeorgiacannery.org](http://www.gulfofgeorgiacannery.org)

Bring the family down to Richmond for the Georgia Cannery's annual "Easter at the Cannery," a fun-filled family friendly weekend featuring crafts, story time, games and of course, the annual Easter Salmon Scavenger Hunt, all happening inside the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site. Throughout the day, they'll have activities suitable for kids ages 2 to 6 years old, including the Easter Salmon "Egg" hunt! Please visit the Georgia Cannery's website to RSVP and to learn more.

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**Turkish-Canadian Society Turkish Choir Ensemble Earthquake Relief Concert**  
April 8, 7 p.m.  
[www.eventbrite.ca/e/turkish-canadian-society-turkish-choir-ensemble-earthquake-relief-concert-tickets-570426630407](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/turkish-canadian-society-turkish-choir-ensemble-earthquake-relief-concert-tickets-570426630407)

The Turkish-Canadian Society (TCS) will present the annual concert of the Turkish Choir Ensemble Vancouver, celebrating 100 years of the Turkish Republic. The concert will consist of Turkish Folk Music and Turkish Classical Music. The society has revised the program after the massive earthquake in Türkiye and Syria on Feb. 6 and a portion of the proceeds from this concert will be used to support the Turkish students here in B.C., whose families were directly affected by the earthquake. For tickets and more information, check out their Eventbrite page.

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**Graveyards and Gardens**  
April 12–15  
[www.musiconmain.ca](http://www.musiconmain.ca)

Graveyards and Gardens is an unforgettable performance installation conceived, created and performed by composer Caroline Shaw and choreographer Vanessa Goodman. A stage is filled with lights and cables, plants and turntables. Things begin with an array of sounds – some come from tape decks, some from a record player, some from old Edison wax recordings. This auditory wash slowly diminishes until only one part is left; the energy then shifts, and dance mixes with music until they become one. Discover a live performance that is entrancing, enveloping and ultimately liberating. Check out Music on Main's website for more information.

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**Hillel Kogan: We Love Arabs**  
April 13–15, 8 p.m.  
[www.thedancecentre.ca](http://www.thedancecentre.ca)

*We Love Arabs* dives into the toughest of questions – how can we co-exist within conflict? Somewhere in Tel Aviv, a Jewish choreographer enlists an Arab dancer to help create a work that will carry a message of peace. But as the work progresses, power struggles ensue; bodies resist control. Skewering choreographic fads, unconscious bias and misplaced good intentions, the piece unfolds as a corrosively funny takedown of politics, ethnic stereotypes and contemporary dance itself. Hillel Kogan is one of Israel's most successful choreographers, blending biting political and social commentary with a highly physical movement language, and this award-winning work has been a hit on stages all over the world.

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**Tom Hsu – Isthmuses Exhibition**  
April 13–August 7  
[www.vancouverchinesegarden.com](http://www.vancouverchinesegarden.com)

The Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden will be hosting an opening on April 13 for photographer Tom Hsu's solo exhibition *Isthmuses* as it makes its debut at the Garden's Hall of One Hundred Rivers Exhibition Space. *Isthmuses* is part of the Capture Photo Festival and runs from April 1 to August 7. Hsu presents images made from visits to their homeland in Taiwan. Photography also acts as a type of isthmus weaving together events and memory, exploring geographical, ideological, sociological, political and philosophical spaces. Hsu visits Taiwan seeking the familiar and unfamiliar; what was once home becomes memories that reactivate in the body as time passes. For more information, and to RSVP for the opening, check out the garden's website.

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**Sakura Days Japan Fair**  
April 15–16  
[www.vcbf.ca/festival/sakura-days-japan-fair](http://www.vcbf.ca/festival/sakura-days-japan-fair)

The Sakura Days Japan Fair celebrates all things Japan, from Japanese food, performances, to arts and culture. Most activities will take place out of doors, with selected vendors, tea ceremony and experiences to take place indoors. Look forward to taiko drumming, theatre performances, woodworking demonstrations and a renewed Japanese Garden display, just to name a few! Immerse yourself in Japanese culture, food and art – participate in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, try some Japanese festival food, sample premium sake, learn new Japanese games and enjoy cultural performances. Discover a wide variety of vendors and exhibitors featuring local Japanese food, craft and businesses.

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**White Noise**  
April 15–May 7  
[www.firehallartscentre.ca](http://www.firehallartscentre.ca)

With over forty years' history of weaving diverse storytelling into the fabric of Greater Vancouver, Firehall Arts Centre is where stories come alive. Their last play, *Our Ghosts* by playwright Sally

Stubbs, amazingly dealt with personal responses to loss and tragedy following the disappearance of the playwright's own father. This upcoming play, *White Noise* by playwright Taran Kootenayoo, is a comedy about two families who have dinner together for the first time during Truth and Reconciliation week and explores what it means to live in Canada from two different paradigms and asks us to consider: How do we deal with internalized racism? Do we keep pushing it away and pretend to live safely in our day-to-day? For tickets and more information about the Firehall plays, please check out their website.

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**National Canadian Film Day**  
April 19  
[www.canfilmday.ca](http://www.canfilmday.ca)

Launched in 2014, CanFilmDay has brought together hundreds of thousands of Canadians, to celebrate our stories and the incredible achievements of our filmmakers. Whether you host a screening or attend one, watch from the comfort of your home or join the party on social media, CanFilmDay is your day to feel connected to our cultures and shared values. This year's programming spotlight will showcase one hundred titles: a broad and diverse cross-section of Canadian films, with ten enticing categories, each featuring ten delectable films. Hundreds of screening partners across the country will once again host free in-person events in communities

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**Verses Festival of Words**  
April 20–29  
[www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com](http://www.vancouverpoetryhouse.com)

Verses Festival of Words is at it again! The Vancouver Poetry House is bringing together a broad intersection of poetic artists, including spoken word and page poets, storytellers, singer-songwriters and improvisers, to celebrate the power of the spoken word. This year's festival will focus on nurturing as a medicine, celebrating the power of the spoken word with the 2023 theme, Gathering Found Family Back Around The Table. Spoken word and page poets, storytellers, singer-songwriters and improvisers will be at the festival, including: Sheri-D Wilson, Louise B. Halfe, Randell Adjei, Anto Chan and more. Poets from across the country come to compete in the Canadian Individual Poetry Slam and there will be three nights of poetry bouts to see who will be named the 2023 champion.

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**Surrey Khalsa Day Vaisakhi Parade**  
April 22, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.  
[www.surreyvaisakhiparade.com](http://www.surreyvaisakhiparade.com)

The Surrey Khalsa Day Vaisakhi Parade will return to the

streets of Surrey on Saturday, April 22 following three years of cancellations due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Every April, millions of Sikhs worldwide celebrate Vaisakhi Day, a day that marks the New Year. Considered one of the most important festivals in the Sikh calendar, parades celebrating the event are held in Sikh communities around the world. The largest Vaisakhi Parade in the world occurs in Surrey, where approximately 500,000 people attend the annual Surrey Khalsa Day Vaisakhi Parade. For event day information, check out the parade's website.

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**a small but comfy house and maybe a dog**  
April 22–June 11  
[www.richmondartgallery.org](http://www.richmondartgallery.org)

The Richmond Art Gallery will be presenting an exhibit by artist Amy Ching-Yan Lam until June 11. The title of this exhibition comes from a text, "Me in the Future," that Lam wrote at age 11 and put in a time capsule, speculating by the age of 25 she'd be married, have a career and "a small but comfy house and maybe a dog." Starting from these childhood fantasies of domestic love and financial stability, Lam presents artworks that explore how these dreams function within the wider context of colonial history. With humour and acuity, she examines the relationships between property, family, institutional power and collections and theft.

## Recruiting BIPOC youth (ages 15 to 19) in BC!

Attend events held specifically for youth of racialized backgrounds. Make new friends and connect virtually to explore the theme of:

**"IDENTITY & BELONGING IN MULTICULTURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA"**




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BC Black History Awareness Society  
OUR ROOTS RUN DEEP

MORRIS J. WOSK  
CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE