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forum of diversity

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Photo courtesy of LUSO Canadian Multicultural Festival

Finding Portuguese connections from Penticton to Vancouver and abroad

by LILLIAN LIAO

“The communities preserve traditions much better than the homelands,” says Terry Costa, one of the founders of Canada’s Portuguese Heritage Month. “As the countries, the ‘homelands’ move forward in society, the communities try to preserve the little they knew about it.”

In 2003, Costa and Manuel Azevedo, a lawyer and researcher, along with other members of the Portuguese Canadian diaspora first thought of designating June as a month for celebrat-

ing Portuguese culture. Their advocacy and community building efforts were recognized by BC’s Attorney General in 2004 with the first government-proclaimed, Portuguese Heritage Month, a festival of arts, culture, and community that has now grown into a nation-wide celebration.

Visions of past and future

“How many countries do you know that celebrate a poet on the national day,” asks Costa, noting that the annual Portugal Day on June 10 commemorates Luís de Camões, a renowned Portuguese poet.

A strong advocate for passing down cultural traditions through the arts, Costa and his team designed the celebrations to feature Portuguese books, films, music, food, and other art forms. Keeping inclusion in mind, these events were programmed in English with the hopes of engaging the children and grandchildren of Portuguese immigrants.

“Most people think *Fado*, the music, *Fátima*, the religion, and *Futebol*, soccer,” says Costa about Portugal’s cultural impressions. “I think arts. That’s why it made sense... to construct the Portuguese Heritage Month around it.”

Born in Oakville, Ontario, but raised in his parents’ homeland of Pico, Azores, Costa returned to Canada during his high school years. He then studied at Sheridan College and the University of Toronto before moving to Vancouver where he reconnected with his heritage. The years he spent programming Vancouver’s Portuguese events also led to partnerships with major art and culture organizations as well as Portuguese clubs, including the Portuguese Seniors Hall and the Portuguese Cultural Centre of Vancouver.

“During the 10 years I was in Vancouver, we kept seeing

organizations disappear,” he says. “Only the ones that had buildings and a major structure could survive the changes in society.”

Costa notes that the lack of people willing to sit on boards was another challenge. He also adds that the younger generations’ struggles with the language also contributes to further cultural loss, a challenge that Costa’s team tried to alleviate by offering Portuguese-language classes for adults which ended up primarily attracting people from other cultures.

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The reverberating effects of racism

110 years since the Komagata Maru incident

by STAFF WRITER

Systemic racism continues to affect Canadian society in many challenging ways, resulting in policies and outcomes which reaffirm social, economic, political and cultural inequality. So as Canadian people and institutions look to combat bigotry and encourage interconnectedness, decade-over-decade, it can be worth looking into and remembering the past in order to understand how Canada's political and governmental history can continue to reverberate into the present.

As such, it is worth reflecting on an event which took place just over 110 years ago this month, a manifestation of one of Canada's most distinctive, discriminatory policies against Asian immigrants: the forced return of the SS Komagata Maru after its arrival at Vancouver on May 23, 1914.

A history of anti-Asian immigrant policies

Prior to the departure of the Komagata Maru in 1914, Canada had been increasingly implementing and enforcing numerous anti-Asian immigration policies, in no small part due to intense lobbying by anti-Asian groups. Some of these policies, like the Chinese head tax, specifically carved out policies directed against certain groups. But other policies and laws limited South Asian arrivals by function and by design but without explicit mention of specific nationalities, making such laws harder to challenge.

One such policy that had limited immigration from India was the right of immigration officers to turn away any Asian arrivals with less than \$200. But the majority of the 376 passengers aboard the Komagata Maru – particularly among its 337 Sikh passengers – were relatively wealthy and land-owning men.

Instead, it was the enforcement of another rule that would serve as the justification for the eventual refusal of port for the ship: the continuous journey regulation. This policy allowed immigration officers to deny entry to anyone other than those arriving by a single, continuous journey from their native country, arbitrarily limiting travel from India, whose

voyages often required a stop to resupply along Asia's east coast.

That enforcement had even been overruled in a court case dealing with Sikh immigrants who arrived from Japan just a few months prior to the Komagata Maru's departure. But the Canadian government quickly re-wrote and re-implemented the legislation to abide by that court case's objections, shortly before that very ship – which would eventually stop over in Yokohama, Japan prior to its arrival in Vancouver – set sail.

May 23, 1914

Gurdit Singh Sirhali, the chief spokesperson for the passen-

izing incident, tensions broke loose when the ship eventually docked at the Indian port of Budge Budge near Kolkata in September of that year, and twenty passengers were killed in a dispute with British Indian police and troops who again had attempted to restrict their movement.

A challenged legacy

In part because of those restrictions, there were only around 6,800 South Asians counted in the Canadian census as late as 1961. As a result, it was only decades later, as the number of Punjabi and Sikh people began growing in Canada and British Columbia, that



▲ Sikhs on board the SS Komagata Maru, in English Bay, 1914.

gers who hired the Komagata Maru to set sail to begin with, expected pushback to some degree when the ship entered Vancouver's harbours. But he and other passengers were not prepared for the uncompromising measures that would be taken by the Canadian authorities.

Only 20 returning residents and a few particularly special case individuals were allowed ashore whatsoever. The remaining majority were not only denied entry, but also suffered through a lengthy battle with immigration authorities, including attempts to block any communications with the outside world, and a refusal to resupply the ship with food and water except in most desperate circumstances.

A subsequent legal battle proved fruitless, and without the resources to fight an appeal process, the Komagata Maru was forced to depart from Vancouver just two months later on July 23. After this radical-

this story became more widely known and discussed in this country.

In particular, as B.C. grew to become the largest diaspora home for Sikhs in the world, British Columbian Sikhs pushed for formal apologies from responsible levels of government for the event. They would eventually receive them from provincial, federal, and municipal levels of government, with the City of Vancouver naming May 23 a day of remembrance for the incident in 2021.

But the impacts of racism continue to be felt, and some remain concerned about whether Canada is doing enough to protect new South Asian immigrants from things like extortion, and to prevent South Asian racism in general. For now, it is worth understanding the history behind the ongoing problems that Canada, its organizations and its people aim to address. ✉

Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia

Le plaisir of the words by Le Stylo à mots

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Horizontally

- 1- crop and animal production's specialist
- 2- to bring together again – house employee
- 3- commander – heads of college – toilet
- 4- admired achievers – hopefully, not used for salary
- 5- artificial intelligence – feels sorrow for the lost of someone
- 6- plate brick fixer – road
- 7- surname of a brilliant inventor – moves carefully
- 8- highest ranking person – king – company
- 9- legal ownership of a land – Iran workers currency
- 10- liquid moving irregularly – very black
- 11- no name – use for a group – had meal
- 12- unacceptable in any working place!

verticalement

- A) concepteur de maison
- B) administrateur – lumière – en cet endroit
- C) cours d'eau à court d'eau – grognions
- D) fais des vagues – os du bras
- E) déments – bruits d'un chat content
- F) enleva – apparues
- G) guide d'apprentissage – marque de doute
- H) personne de liaison – personnel
- I) Sa Majesté – krypton – continent aux nombreux travailleurs
- J) nécessaires pour certains emplois – tue
- K) atomes chargés – tout nouveau
- L) chercheurs de premier emploi – égal – pif

For answers, see page 7

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Women of distinction: recognizing remarkable achievements

by ELAHA AMANI

Presented by Scotiabank, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) celebrates extraordinary women in Metro Vancouver with its 41st annual Women of Distinction Awards. This fundraising event honours women from diverse fields for their contributions to the community, recognizing their achievements and empowering their initiatives.

"The Women of Distinction Awards honour and celebrate the achievements of thousands of inspiring women and workplaces who are driving change in their communities," says Amy Juschka, YWCA's vice president of communications and advocacy.

Unifying communities

Each of the nominees is also eligible to win the Connecting the Community Award, wherein the recipient is given \$10,000 to donate to a YWCA program of her choosing. The programs support causes like ending gender-based violence, providing affordable housing and more. This year's winner, selected by public vote, is Raheil Moradi.

One of Moradi's most impactful initiatives has been founding Pay it Forward, a cause dedicated to alleviating prejudice against unhoused people. She and her volunteers reach out to unhoused individuals to share a meal, start conversation and



▲ The YWCA Women of Distinction 2024.

create a compassionate, caring environment. Moradi is deeply moved by the support this initiative has received, not only for breaking down barriers but for bringing diverse people together to share their stories and experiences.

"This experience has demonstrated the power of community. It's a reminder of the impact we can achieve when we come together with a shared purpose and a commitment to positive change," says Moradi.

Embracing reconciliation

This year's recipient of the Reconciliation in Action Award is Mary Gerges. She has been on her Reconciliation journey for over 15 years, acting as an advocate for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Her goal has been to contrib-

ute her skills to building relationships, creating space for mutual understanding and striving towards Reconciliation in tangible ways.

Gerges' recent initiative involved working with BC Housing. She aimed to find ways to restructure the request for proposal (RFP) processes to consider and promote Reconciliation, thereby eliminating barriers for Indigenous proponents.

"I do my work because I've witnessed the past and present impacts of colonialism. If this award gives me a greater platform to reach and mobilize folks to action, then I am grateful for it," Gerges says.

Nurturing health and environment

Melissa Lem is the winner of the Environmental Sus-

tainability Award. She is recognized for not only her presidency of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CARE), where she advocates for healthy policy choices, but also for her founding of PaRx, Canada's national nature prescription program. In just three years, all practicing doctors in Canada have registered under PaRx.

Lem hopes to create an international impact with PaRx, and especially wants to provide nature prescriptions to the people who truly need it. She aims to foster a healthy, environmentally-conscious future, and to continue to connect people to nature.

"I want to inspire people to protect and restore nature to improve health. My work is only threading the needle of environ-

mental sustainability issues that truly matter," Lem says.

Shining youth

YWCA is also passionate about spotlighting talented youth like Stephanie Quon, this year's Young Woman of Distinction. Over the past few years, Quon has worked on 87 accessibility projects, such as opening a sensory room at UBC, and has received over \$1.32M in funding.

Quon is also the founder of The Sprouts Initiative, which works on projects related to sustainability, accessibility and community. She hopes to join larger community-based projects in the future, and pursue her passion for sustainability and social change.

"This award is an incredible honour. It motivates me to continue working towards change in the community and inspires me to dream bigger," says Quon.

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Offspring of famous parents who follow them into music rarely escape comparisons with their lauded maters or paters. Teddy Thompson's solution to this conundrum has been to do something very different to his parents, folk legends Richard and Linda Thompson. Thus, while music is in his DNA, Thompson sings with his own voice, a powerfully understated, emotional, echoey croon. Never mind that surname: it's his music and personality that delights the packed-out crowd. — Dave Simpson, The Guardian.

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Reflecting on a legacy: Adrienne Clarkson

by STAFF WRITER

In the decades since she arrived in Canada in 1941 as a refugee from Japan-occupied Hong Kong, Adrienne Clarkson has led an extensively influential and important life. She is perhaps most known as a former Governor General of Canada, but within that role and outside of it, Clarkson has brought forth a number of influential initiatives promoting the values of education, freedom and equality.

Take Thirty & The fifth estate

After growing up in Ottawa, thriving in scholarly work, and achieving a Master's in English Literature, Clarkson first came into the public eye in 1965, taking up the hosting role of CBC's Take Thirty news program. At just 26 years of age, she became also the first person of a racialized minority group to headline a national programme for the CBC.

This career in journalism would continue beyond Take Thirty, however, and lead into her perhaps best-known journalistic career piece, as co-host of CBC's widely renowned investigative journalism program, *The fifth estate*. During her time



▲ Former Canadian Governor General Adrienne Clarkson.

with the program, she played a leading role in uncovering numerous objectionable political and economic practices in Canada. This included various investigations into the finances of the McCain family, owners of major Canadian food business McCain

Foods, as well as discovering corruption and financial scandals during the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.

In the early 1980's, Clarkson stepped back from television and was appointed to become the Lieutenant Governor of On-

tario, serving as a diplomatic figure for the Ontario government in France and encouraging trade and closer business relationships between the two governments.

Shortly after her tenure, Clarkson returned to the CBC, developing and producing *Adrienne Clarkson Presents*, an 11-year-long general entertainment program that shined a spotlight on various figures in Canadian arts, culture and comedy. She continued as a lead producer in the role, all the way up until her appointment to the role of Governor General in 1999.

Governor General & Legacy

Drawing on her experience in diplomatic and governmental affairs in Ontario, as well as her journalistic background, Clarkson was named the 26th Governor General of Canada under the Jean Chrétien government in 1999, serving in that position up until 2005.

She served as the first racialized minority and the first refugee to hold the position, and during her tenure promoted various aims and initiatives in Canada, including Canadian arts and culture, and promoting education and other aims in Northern Canada.

After leaving the position, she co-founded the Institute for Canadian Citizenship which aims to assist new arrivals in Canada to more easily access various aspects of Canadian culture and society, including its National Parks and museums, in addition to carrying out various other initiatives promoting inclusion within Canada.

Since her time as Governor General, she has also authored various widely read and acclaimed books. These include *Heart Matters*, an autobiographical memoir, *Norman Bethune*, a biography about the titular and influential Canadian surgeon, and two books focussed on highlighting the diversity of the Canadian immigrant experience and the need for acceptance, *Room for All of Us*, and *Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship*.

While there are many other roles and initiatives Clarkson has held and led throughout her career in politics, journalism and philanthropy, such a fact speaks only to the breadth of experience and commitment to Canada Clarkson has held throughout her career, and her life. ✍️

Source: The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson

► "Portuguese" from page 1

"When Elaine Ávila wrote the play *Fado, the Saddest Music in the World* and Firehall Arts Centre produced it, there was a surge of Portuguese pride in the city," says Costa, who recognized the change despite no longer residing in BC. "That just proves the importance of arts in the development and survival of people."

Aside from building Canada's Portuguese Heritage Month, Costa also served for eight years as a consultant for the Government of Portugal's Language, Education and Culture Commission, advocating for more arts and language programs as well as connections between Portugal and its diaspora. With Vera Bettencourt providing the final illustrations, Costa has also authored English-Portuguese picture books featuring the adventures of a young girl, Néveda, in the Azores and abroad.

"I come from a lineage of adventurous people, a small country that was not afraid to go to the sea," says Costa. "I am Cana-

dian and Portuguese no matter where I am."

For the love of sports, food, and community

Founded from a love of soccer in 1979 as the Portuguese Sporting Club of Penticton, the LUSO Canadian Multicultural Society (LUSO) is also looking forward to celebrating Dia De Portugal with a dinner and dance on June 8. LUSO's current president, Margarida Alves, notes the organization's

pivot role in fostering Penticton's Portuguese community through annual festivities as well as weekly group activities.

"[Food] plays a big role in bringing people together," says Alves. "Our Sunday dinners bring senior from our club a place to come and eat with others when they might be eating at home alone."

Alves notes that a local Portuguese market makes the necessary ingredients for popular dishes, such as those involving cod fish, easily accessible. One of these dishes is Pork Alentejana, which blends different seafood with cubed pork and potatoes. For Alves, whose father was involved in the Portuguese community in Oliver, BC, it was natural for her to support the passing down of Portuguese traditions.

"I would like to try and bring the younger generation back into our family values of spending quality time together," says Alves, noting her teenage memories of time spent with friends and family at the beach.



▲ LUSO president Margarida Alves at OneWorld Festival in Penticton.

According to Alves, LUSO has also been raising money to replace their old kitchen ovens and other appliances. With plans to offer free cooking classes specializing in traditional Portuguese cuisine, Alves notes that LUSO has recently purchased a hot water tank, dishwasher, espresso machine, and up-right freezer in addition to two new gas ovens. Alves' favourite memory so far is last year's Dia De Portugal celebrations, which was also her first year at LUSO during which she served as a di-

rector. The organization is well connected to the Portuguese community with members like Portugal's Curling Team player Irene Goodis and former long-time LUSO president Arthur Mateus.

"His favourite memory is a big function they put on years ago in the middle of the city where the club volunteers ran a beer garden, had 10-12 tables of food to sell for people to try our culture," says Alves, passing along Mateus' thoughts.

The Consulate General of Portugal and the Portuguese Cultural Center of BC will also host a joint celebration of Portugal Day/Dia de Portugal, featuring Portuguese musician Ratinho Nogueira and others, on June 8 and 9. ✍️

See www.mirateca.com/about/terrycosta/default.aspx

See www.facebook.com/LUSOPenticton

See www.pccbc.ca/events/dia-de-portugal-portugal-day-2



▲ Terry Costa, cofounder of Portuguese Heritage Month.

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Province addresses mounting hate crimes with education and assistance

by PRISCA TANG

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) and Statistics Canada co-developed a series of landmark workshops on hate to address hate crimes across the country, starting in British Columbia.

“In British Columbia alone, hate crime rose 62% from 2019 to 2022. Communities disproportionately impacted by hate have flagged rising rates as cause for serious concern,” the CRRF says in a statement regarding the workshops.

The organisation says the two-day Building Bridges workshops aim to educate communities on

hate incidents online and in real life.

The workshops come in the midst of other action being taken within the province addressing the rise of hate crimes happening in British Columbia.

In November of last year, Premier David Eby announced a new fund and a helpline for groups that have been targeted. These targeted incidents include an increased number of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, a spike in anti-Asian racism, and the mounting acts against the LGBTQ2S+ community in the province and throughout Canada.

The B.C. Prosecution Service has also recently updated its

“We believe that more emphasis and funding should be placed on efforts to continue building safer communities.

Ninu Kang, Executive Director of Ending Violence Association of BC

how hate is understood and addressed through the criminal justice system, provide support for victims through community support or going to the police, as well as increase awareness and education of hate crimes to police forces across Canada.

A representative from the CRRF says the workshops will be the first two events in a larger cross-Canada initiative, offering a total of 24 workshops across 12 cities in Canada.

The workshop also aims to provide a foundation for attendees on understanding the existing legal framework on hate crimes.

hate crime policy in February to include more prohibited acts, such as promoting genocide, public incitement of hatred, the promotion of conversion therapy, and wilful promotion of antisemitism, as hate crimes.

Commenting on the CRRF workshops series, Executive Director of Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) Ninu Kang said that the effort of programs like this can begin to create meaningful changes, particularly for those who have intersecting identities that are targeted.

“We commend the Canadian Race Relations Foundation for their work in building stronger

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▲ The CRRF and Statistics Canada have co-developed and are presenting workshops aimed to address hate both in B.C. and throughout Canada.

“The event is intended for community members and practitioners (e.g., mental health, settlement) who work with communities experiencing hate,” says the CRRF statement.

Meanwhile, Statistics Canada will be in charge of providing a technical briefing to community members and civil sector practitioners on hate crime data trends by pinpointing said data trends and identifying hate crime and non-criminal

bridges to support individuals and organizations and healing through education. We believe that more emphasis and funding should be placed on efforts to continue building safer communities,” says Kang. “We recognize that some systems have not been a safe space for many and the efforts of programming like the CRRF’s can begin to create changes in the way that individuals are supported and cared for.”

Champions of Change: The Broadbent Institute's 2024 Awards

Each year, in partnership with the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, and Mayor of Toronto Olivia Chow, the Broadbent Institute has the honour of awarding the Jack Layton Progress Prize and Charles Taylor Prize for Excellence in Policy Research at the annual Progress Summit.

This year's shortlist of Layton and Taylor Prize nominees represented an inspiring field of policy thinkers who have had a demonstrable impact on policy making, and activists who are organizing and achieving social change in Canada.

The Layton Prize is awarded annually to a Canadian individual or organization who has run a particularly noteworthy political or issue campaign, reflecting the ideals Jack Layton exemplified, including justice, sustainability and democracy.

The recipients of this year's Layton Prize are AccessBC co-founders Devon Black and Teale Phelps Bondaroff.

As far as grassroots advocacy campaigns go, few success stories have seen the level of accomplishment reached by AccessBC. Launched by Teale Phelps Bondaroff and Devon Black in 2017, AccessBC set out to achieve free prescription contraception in British Columbia, a mandate that was achieved in April 2023.

Researcher, community organizer, and municipal councillor Dr. Teale Phelps

As the campaign gained momentum, she also stepped into the role of National Liaison, where she helped support other nascent campaigns across the country.

The two campaigned tirelessly, enlisting the support of upwards of 80 volunteers over the years, until free prescription contraception was rolled out by the BC government in April 2023. In the first 7 months alone, nearly 200,000 BC residents were able to access prescription contraception, at no cost. Devon and Teale have also helped set up and support campaigns in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, and they are working to help set up campaigns in Alberta and Quebec.

The Charles Taylor Prize was also awarded at this year's Broadbent Institute Awards, with this year's recipient being Sheila Block, a longtime economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, where her work applied an intersectional approach to labour markets, public finance, and inequality.

The Broadbent Institute, founded in 2011, is Canada's leading progressive policy and training organization. With offices across the country, we champion change through excellent research and analysis, educating and supporting a new generation of leaders, and



▲ Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow presents AccessBC co-founders Devon Black and Teale Phelps Bondaroff with this year's Jack Layton Award at the 2024 Broadbent Institute Awards.

Bondaroff served as the Chair of AccessBC since its inception, a role which has included managing day-to-day communications and administration, training new volunteers and coordinating a growing team, speaking to the press, researching and writing briefing papers, organizing meetings with MLAs, fundraising, and more. Lawyer and community organizer Devon Black has given critical communications support, drafting press releases and managing press relations, authoring messaging guides and other training materials, and mentoring new team members.

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Source: The Broadbent Institute



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Photo by Andres Zapata photography

They, They, & It

Exploring the deep connection between Italian and transgender identity

by CURTIS SEUFERT

For Italian-Canadian and non-binary artist Shel Stefan, the connection between their cultural heritage and gender identity is more than surface level. In line with the Italian values of passion, emotion and pleasure, Stefan feels that putting forth a passionate affirmation of their right to love and live as they are, experiencing the world and being loved without stigma, is a firmly Italian thing for them to do.

That maxim will be explored in *They, They, & It*, an exhibit at the Italian Cultural Centre that runs until July 5. Stefan's work is featured alongside fellow non-binary Italian-Canadian artist Mickey Vesceira, and is curated by ICC director and curator Angela Clarke.

Embracing passion and identity

The collaboration between Stefan, Clarke and the centre comes after a previously successful and well-received exhibit highlighting queer identity and sexuality in 2016. For all parties, a revisiting of this theme, touching even more on the link between Italian and transgender identities, seemed only natural.

"It was so wonderful because there were so many Italian grandmothers that came in and said, 'Oh, my, my son or my grandson or my grandchild has come out as gay or trans, and I'm trying to understand it,'" says Clarke. "I thought, okay, let's explore all of these things, and let's say this is Italian identity now."

For Clarke, the link between Italian identity and gender diversity goes back at least as far as the Roman Empire. She cites a poem by ancient poet Catullus, which tells the story of a follower of a deity who changes gender in order to continue their worship. For Clarke, the poem represents just one piece in a long line of overlap between Italian identity and transgender identity, as it reflects the depths of following 'the call' to one's true identity and meaning.

For Stefan, that overlap of identities is deeply personal. They describe how Italian cul-

ture is deeply rooted in pleasure and passion, two traits which are often denied or discouraged among queer and gender-diverse people like Stefan.

"People's Italian culture is rooted in pleasure. Pleasure of color, the pleasure of eating, the pleasure of bodies. You go to Italy, you're on the streets... and people are arguing, people are making out, people are feeding

sexuality and gender, it actually feels very Italian."

Claiming the narrative in art

That identity overlap extends to the art itself in this exhibit. In their self-portraits, Stefan uses *chiaroscuro*, a painting technique popularly employed by Italian and Spanish Renaissance-era and Baroque-era artists which uses a distinctive con-

“ I want to love, even against all odds, and to be able to celebrate sexuality and gender, it actually feels very Italian.

Shel Stefan, Italian-Canadian artist

each other the most glorious things. It is a sensuous culture," says Stefan.

As such, they describe how affirming it is to be able to freely love who they love and be who they are, feeling that being able to embrace queerness is, in a very real way, a deeply Italian thing to do.

"This is how I want to have sex. This is how I want to feel in my body. This is how pleasure looks like this to me," says Stefan. "Being a person who has come back into my body in a way that feels healthier, who has had to create paths to be able to love who I want to love, even against all odds, and to be able to celebrate

trast between bright light and heavy, dark shadows.

In Stefan's work, the emergence into light looks to represent an emergence of identity, while the heavy shadowing represents the ongoing challenge of fully 'emerging' in the face of transphobia and bigotry.

"It's wanting so badly to just unfold... can I just stand here and come out of the light as I know myself to be?" they ask. "I'm 50, so I've had a long life of coming up against that, [developing] the responses to then strategize, [finding] a place or a space where there could be a moment to feel safe to unfold."

As such, they note that there's something of an 'edge' to their work, in the boldness of light and subject presentation. But Stefan notes a wrinkle in that edge, and the notion that their work borders on 'confrontational,' even for being so bold.

Rather, they hope their work can shine a light on the notion of 'confrontation,' and what that word means when transgender people have to push back against a society in order to proudly demand love and acceptance.

"That 'confrontation' is based on probably centuries – but also just in this particular life – the cumulative experience of feeling like you need to kind of fight for your right to breathe," says Stefan. ✎



Photo by Andres Zapata photography

▲ One of Shel Stefan's self-portraits at *They, They, & It*. Artist: Shel Stefan; Title: Artist with Axe (Detail); Year: 2024; Medium: Acrylic, Chalk and Latex on Pine Panel; Size: 28 x 60 in.

For more information on the exhibit, visit www.italianculturalcentre.ca/current-exhibition

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May 28–June 11, 2024

Cultural Calendar

Photo courtesy of West Vancouver Community Cultural Fest



▲ The West Vancouver Community Cultural Fest looks to invite anyone and everyone to celebrate music and food across a breadth of cultures.

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

It's finally June! The long sunny days are here with the sun setting past 9 p.m. all month, and the summer solstice right around the corner. Enjoy a plethora of outdoor events happening around the city, from film and food festivals to artistic and musical performances. Why not check out some of the events below happening around town?

* * *

Des Pardes: The Reach
Now until June 15
www.thereach.ca/exhibition/des-pardes

Des Pardes explores and celebrates the vibrant and diverse South Asian communities of the Fraser Valley. The phrase “des pardes” – which can translate to “home and abroad” or “Motherland/Other Land” – embodies the sense of longing for, and belonging to, an ancestral place that is experienced differently across generations. Personal accounts, archival documents, photographs, heirlooms and works of art contributed by members of local South Asian Canadian communities are organized around the themes of migration, faith, family, business and livelihoods, oppression and opposition and contemporary culture. The exhibit highlights the importance of tradition and multigenerational family bonds, the tenacity of individuals and communities in the face of adversity and discrimination, and the significant impact that these communities have had in shaping Abbotsford and the surrounding region.

* * *

rEvolver Festival
May 22–June 2
www.upintheairtheatre.com/revolver-festival

rEvolver brings audiences the full range of contemporary theatrical practice, from script-based theatre to devised and site-specific

works, staged readings of work-in-progress and in-depth discussions with artists. Presenting adventurous, high energy and sophisticated new work by emerging companies and artists, the festival is dedicated to offering professional presenting opportunities to emerging professional theatre artists and companies. For a complete list of shows and performances, please check out the Up In the Air Theatre website.

* * *

Vancouver International Children's Festival
May 27–June 2
www.childrensfestival.ca

Mark your calendar! The Vancouver International Children's Festival returns this spring for another year. The festival will feature dazzling performances from artists far and wide. From local treasures to rare and exotic finds, these captivating performers will put a smile on your child's face and hopefully even make you hoot with laughter. Please check out their website for a complete list of performers and activities.

* * *

2024 Polyphonic Multilingual Creation Residency
May 30, 7–9 p.m.
www.riceandbeanstheatre.com

The Rice & Beans Theatre is thrilled to be sharing two new works from their 2024 Polyphonic Multilingual Creation Residency artists: *Anne's Cradle* by Carolyn Nakagawa and *I, Frida* by Yulissa Campos. Following 10 days of workshoping and project development, Carolyn and Yulissa will share excerpts of their pieces on Thursday, May 30 at 7 p.m., followed by a discussion between the artists and the attendees.

* * *

Mirage: Disused Public Property in Taiwan
From May 30
www.museumofvancouver.ca

Mirage: Disused Public Property in Taiwan covers 10 years of artist Yao Jui-Chung's use of photography to expose Taiwan's “mosquito halls” and it opens at the Museum of Vancouver on May 30. Starting in the 1970s, Taiwan invested in convention centres, sports facilities, schools and other public structures, only to abandon them – leaving them to breed mosquitoes, waste money and add to urban decay. Yao Jui-Chung, Taiwan's leading contemporary artist and photographer and his team, the Lost Society Document (LSD), photographed and researched these haunting modern-day ruins, showing that photography is a form of social activism.

* * *

West Vancouver Community Cultural Fest
May 31–June 1
www.wvculturalfest.ca

The District of West Vancouver invites everyone to attend the West Vancouver Community Cultural Fest! This two-day festival brings people together through food, music and culture. Join them as they celebrate the multicultural diversity of West Vancouver! Check out the website for a schedule of events and more information.

* * *

Vancouver Short Film Festival
May 31–June 9
www.vdff.com

The Vancouver Short Film Festival returns for the 14th Edition from May 31 to June 9, 2024, showcasing the best short films from across Canada. Featuring 46 films, six programs, three days of filmmaker events both in-person & virtual screenings, mark your calendars now – you won't want to miss it! For more information, check out the festival's website.

* * *

Ki'mola
June 1, 7:30 p.m.
www.musicaintima.org/kimola

Ki'mola means ‘walking together’ in the Kwakwaka'wakw language. This concert is for audiences and musicians interested in engaging in what reconciliation can be through music and art and for those who are interested in listening and contemplating as their contribution to reconciliation. The entire event is curated and defined by Marion Newman, the exceptional mezzo-soprano of Kwagiulth and Stó:lō First Nations with English, Irish and Scottish heritage. Music will be drawn from Marion and musica intima's repertoire, creating a narrative to guide you through the evening. The program will be created through Marion and the ensemble's time together – expect the unexpected and a unique, liminal experience.



Photo courtesy of Musica Intima Vocal Ensemble

▲ Ki'mola: *Walking Together* highlights the wonder to be found in listening and sharing together.

* * *

Afro World Expo
June 1–2
www.afroworldexpo.ca

Western Canada's Biggest Expo of African & Caribbean Products and Culture is happening on June 1 and 2 at the Vancouver

Convention Centre. Check out the expo's website for more exhibit information, list of speakers and more information.

* * *

Italian Day on the Drive 2024
June 9, Noon–8 p.m.
www.italianday.ca

Mark your calendars and get ready to visit Commercial Drive on Sunday June 9 for Italian Day, celebrating Italian culture, heritage and community. A lively 14 block community embrace and festa, it has become Vancouver's largest and most anticipated cultural street festival, drawing hundreds of thousands of attendees of all ages and cultures. Fittingly, this reflection is what has inspired this year's 2024 theme – STORIA – meaning History or Story in Italian. The significance of this year's theme is that history creates memories, generating emotional connections with the ability to transcend generations via storytelling, keeping traditions and important values alive, while bridging the past with the present.

* * *

Basho
June 9, 1 p.m.
www.powellstreetfestival.com/2024-vancouver-basho-amateur-sumo-exhibition

On Sunday, June 9, there will be an amateur sumo tournament hosted by Sumo Sundays and the Powell Street Festival Society. This inaugural event takes place ahead of the annual tournament at Powell Street Festival, offering an afternoon of family-friendly sumo in the comforts of a seated venue. Spectators will have the opportunity to watch three brackets featuring competitors of all body sizes and experiences from Vancouver and Seattle in an open-gender format. Come witness the growing and vibrant sumo scene in the Pacific Northwest!



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