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forum of diversity

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Photo courtesy of Gordon Neighbourhood House

Community-based education at Vancouver's neighbourhood houses teaches seniors valuable skills

by SANDRINE JACQUOT

Learning isn't just for kids or young adults. It's important for people of all ages – notably older adults – to continue learning, even if it isn't in school. Numerous studies emphasize the mental and physical health of lifelong learning and taking up new skills for older adults, which also improves their overall sense of security and well-being.

But living alone as an older individual in Metro Vancouver can sometimes be an isolating experience. There can be many

physical and financial barriers to accessing different types of education, whether it's language learning or technological literacy. However, neighbour-

“It connects neighbours. They're building relationships through coming to Gordon House.”

Jenn Mason, seniors program coordinator at Gordon Neighbourhood House

hood houses across Vancouver are breaking down these access barriers, offering a plethora of education programs tailored for seniors – often, if not always, at no cost.

“It connects neighbours,” says Jenn Mason, the seniors program coordinator at Gordon Neighbourhood House in Vancouver's West End. “They're

building relationships through coming to Gordon House.”

A place for connection across the city

Neighbourhood houses are chari-

table organizations that plan social gatherings, recreational events and educational programming for individuals in their local neighbourhood. It's a safe space

to meet fellow neighbours over a meal or take up a new hobby. They also offer dozens of programs for youth, newcomers and seniors.

“We have programs running five days a week,” says Mason.

“So often people come and attend these workshops, and then they might join our community lunch, and then they're meeting their neighbours.”

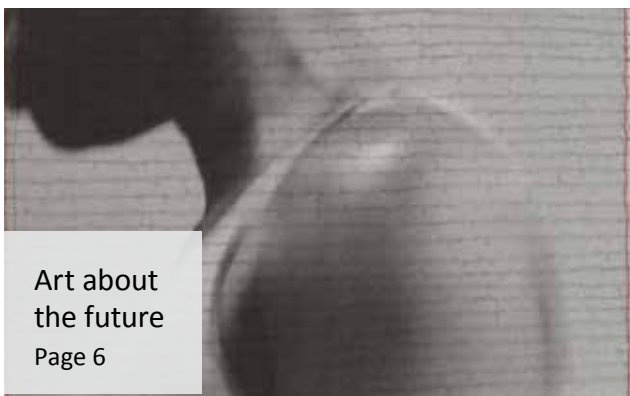
They also offer free clinics for seniors that might otherwise cost money, like tax clinics or hearing clinics. Most of these workshops or programs rely on volunteers. But many of the classes aren't just about picking up a new hobby but teach seniors valuable skills, like Gordon House's “Tech Tips n' Tricks.”

“We started doing one-on-one tech support with volunteers at least three years ago, sort of just

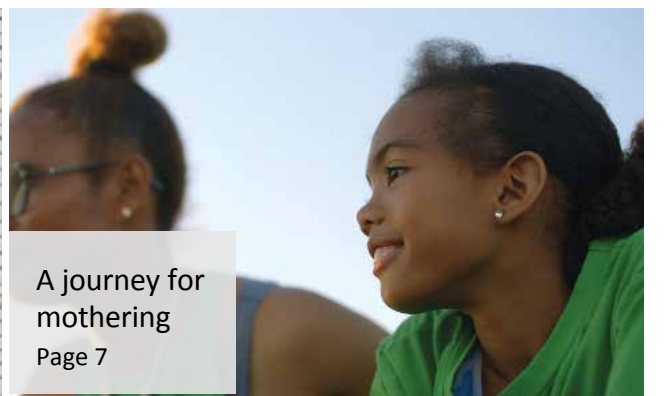
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Community Spotlight

Sharing the vibrance of Métis communities in British Columbia

by LUC MVONO

Millions across Canada and beyond will lace up this month to partake in the 44th annual run to commemorate Canadian legend Terry Fox. Yet, few are aware of Fox's Métis heritage, or the Fox family's embrace of their Métis identity in their advocacy for cancer research. According to Lorelei Lyons, founder of the organization 2 Metis Women, Terry Fox is one of many examples of the active, yet often unrecognized Indigenous presence in today's culture.

"We are not people of the past. We're here now – we have things to contribute to society, and we have things to teach people," says Lyons.

Over the past 15 years, Lyons' company, 2 Metis Women, has been doing just that by offering hands-on explorations into the vibrance and continued relevance of Métis peoples and culture today.

As she recalls, Lyons launched 2 Metis Women to fill a gap in Indigenous awareness education within the community.

"[For] 30 years, I worked as a youth engagement worker with the Brigham School District with the Indigenous Education Department," she explains. "Fifteen years ago, I started to get requests to do some cultural competency work in and around all Indigenous knowledge, but in particular the Métis culture."

To date, 2 Metis Women has reached tens of thousands of people across BC through more than 500 workshops.

The medicine wheel

2 Metis Women's workshops are built around the principles of balance, self-care, mindfulness and community building, drawn from the Indigenous medicine wheel. The medicine wheel is a symbol used across Indigenous nations whose circular shape reflects the cycle, evolution and interconnectedness of life – both in the natural world and in human contexts.

"I base my values and structures on the medicine wheel and its four quadrants representing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual [dimensions]," Lyons explains. "It's also a very good [basis] to build community, to bring people together and [promotes] connections to community and also environment, how to connect with Mother Earth and how that can help us become happier and healthier."

The medicine wheel not only underpins the organization's overall offerings but also orients many of 2 Metis Women's indi-



▲ Lorelei Lyons, co-founder of 2 Metis Women.

vidual coaching and group work. In both cases, the wheel is used to engage participants in an ancient yet often new framework in pursuit of balance and self-learning.

The Métis Sash

On September 11, 2 Metis Women will host a Métis Finger Weaving Workshop in partnership with Burnaby Library. The workshop will be an opportunity for people to connect to themselves and their values through Métis culture. The sash, Lyons explains, bears multiple uses within Métis

culture and can be both practical and sentimental.

"The sash, historically, was very useful as a way [to carry out] various tasks. Now, we use it as a way to show our pride. If you choose to wear it across your heart, you're to think that the Métis people are [with you] protecting your heart. If you choose to wear it around your waist, [it can symbolize] the Métis community is here hugging you."

Through the finger-weaving workshop, participants will create sash friendship bracelets and learn to use color to convey meaning in a way that honors the longstanding tradition.

"We'll teach them about the different colours of the sash and why specific colours are chosen," explains Lyons. "[Sometimes] people come up with their own ideas of what those colours represent. It's important to make sure that they understand that they do not just pick any [random] colours. It's about choosing colours that mean something and then being able to speak to [your choices]."

For more information about 2 Metis Women and the event, visit <https://bpl.bc.ca/events/m%C3%A9tis-finger-weaving-september-11>



▲ Sash weaving is one of a number of workshops that Lorelei Lyons runs celebrating Métis heritage.

Le plaisir of the words by Le Stylo à mots

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1												
2												
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11												
12												

Horizontally

1. behaviours
2. activates – early
3. masculine – white cotton garment – possibility
4. inquires – indian monkey
5. to come out – procedure
6. sleep – moral nature
7. comparison – before noon – male descendant – choice
8. Chinese nurse – together
9. disappointed – to be
10. lifted – sums paid at fixed intervals
11. old textile measure – bright star – to catch fishes
12. afternoon naps – use to smell

verticalement

- A) climats
- B) courroies – blémi
- C) bougeas – peut être sécuritaire
- D) plomb – premiers morceaux
- E) prénom – dominant
- F) près de – personnel – écrivain lyonnais
- G) plantes de sous-bois – contre
- H) identification sanguine – bravo
- I) existe – surprise
- J) disputes – direction
- K) pâtés de soja – maux d'oreille
- L) étain – mesure de bois – bénie

For answers, see page 7

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Nikkei Garden of Farmers Market

June to October

Nikkei national museum & cultural centre

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Education beyond intellectualism

by LILLIAN LIAO

“Open your mind, open your heart, and try to be engaged with whatever initiative is happening around you,” says Claudia Diaz-Diaz, assistant professor of leadership studies at the University of Victoria, of her approach to climate justice and anti-colonial education. For Diaz-Diaz, decolonizing classrooms involves more than intellectualism – it also requires learning about our own connection to places, histories, and people.

“If we aim to bring some decolonizing effort into the classroom, we need to understand we are more than our thinking and talking heads,” she says. “We are holistic human beings who have relationships with each other and with the places we have been.”

Classrooms reimaged

Originally from Chile, Diaz-Diaz completed her doctoral studies at the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) faculty of education. Inspired by Indigenous writers, activists, and educators, she started to reflect on how her relationship with Vancouver, and particularly, the UBC campus, is shaped by colonial history.

“I realized that this place has a history, has different meanings, [and] people’s identities

are attached to this place,” she says. “None of these things come up at first because we are immersed ...in a colonial project that really [gets] us to think

ties, including artistic activities and walking tours. She also leverages storytelling as a reflective tool, inviting students to reflect on how their gender, sex-

yourself reflecting on how your positionality...has put you in relationship to other people,” she says. “I’m really looking at the story they have to share

el, should include fundamental changes to how the success of students, faculty members, and other staff is measured. Without such change, she warns

“If we aim to bring some decolonizing effort into the classroom, we need to understand we are more than our thinking and talking heads.

Claudia Diaz-Diaz, assistant professor of leadership studies at the University of Victoria

about place as something that is at our service.”

To encourage a similar reflection in her classrooms, Diaz-Diaz uses different teaching modalities,

including artistic activities and walking tours. She also leverages storytelling as a reflective tool, inviting students to reflect on how their gender, sex-

uality, skin colour, abilities, and socioeconomic class shape their lived experience.

and how they reflect who they are in relation to other folks in the community.”

Diaz-Diaz adds that when assessing this assignment, she moves away from using traditional criteria – such as the academic essay structure. She advocates for a similar approach to early childhood education – one that focuses on helping children relate to places through their senses, encouraging them to build respectful relationships with the environment.

“There are so many expectations on young children on this project of mastering their education,” she adds. “The challenge that we have today is really slowing the world as it is and thinking [about] what we need to change.”

Challenges with tokenism

For Diaz-Diaz, decolonizing educational institutions, particularly at the post-secondary lev-

el, should include fundamental changes to how the success of students, faculty members, and other staff is measured. Without such change, she warns

that efforts of decolonization, such as hiring Indigenous consultants, can be tokenistic.

“There had been many folks writing about this and saying, ‘you want to decolonize institutions; but you don’t want to change anything about those institutions,’” she adds. She also highlights teachers feeling overwhelmed as another barrier to decolonizing education. In response, Diaz-Diaz offers a self-reflective tool called ‘pedagogical mappings:’ teachers can identify their response patterns to real-world classroom problems, and consider how their response prevents or translates into action.

She also encourages teachers to think of themselves as working in a supportive network of educators, counsellors, and other professionals.

“You are not a superhero, and nobody wants you to be one,” she adds. “Take care of yourself, [and] that is going to give you stamina for the long run.”

Diaz-Diaz’s work has also involved climate justice, centering on a women-led movement in Chile. She notes this bridge from thinking about decolonization to climate change felt natural, as both involve reflecting on relationships with place.

Rather than denying or turning away from a problem that seems hopeless, she invites people to mobilize and act.

“It doesn’t have to happen in a bad mood,” she adds. “It can also be done in joy.”

For more information, see www.uvic.ca/education/psychology/people/faculty/diaz-diaz-claudia.php



▲ Claudia Diaz-Diaz says decolonizing classrooms involves commitment to understanding one’s positionality.

Canada Energy Regulator Notice of public hearing GH-001-2024 Westcoast Energy Inc. Application for the Sunrise Expansion Program

The Canada Energy Regulator (CER) has received an application from Westcoast Energy Inc. (Westcoast) for approval to construct and operate the Sunrise Expansion Program (Project) pursuant to sections 182, 214, 97, and 226 of the *Canadian Energy Regulator Act* (CER Act). This Project involves building approximately 137 kilometres (km) of 42-inch diameter natural gas pipeline in 11 pipeline looping segments in British Columbia, extending southwest from Chetwynd to the Canada-United States border near Sumas. The Project also involves work at existing compressor stations and a meter station, as well as the construction of approximately 34 km of power lines.

Westcoast also seeks various exemptions under the CER Act and the *Canadian Energy Regulator Onshore Pipeline Regulations*, and further seeks an order affirming that the Project’s costs will be included in the T-South cost of service and tolled on a rolled-in basis. Westcoast intends to start construction as early as the second quarter of 2026, subject to receiving regulatory approval. Its target in-service date is 1 November 2028.

Hearing participation

The Commission of the CER is currently assessing whether Westcoast’s application is complete, having regard to comments received on this issue. It will hold a hearing for the Project if the application is found to be complete, such that it can proceed to assessment. Those participating in any hearing can do so in one of two ways:

- A **commenter** may share their views with the Commission in a letter of comment. They cannot be asked questions about their letter of comment, nor can they ask questions about Westcoast’s or intervenors’ written evidence or provide argument. Commenters are not eligible for participant funding.
- An **intervenor** may, among other things, file written evidence, ask questions about Westcoast’s and other intervenors’ evidence, and provide argument in accordance with a hearing timeline. An intervenor that files written evidence must answer any questions asked about their evidence. Intervenors may be eligible for participant funding (learn more at <http://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/pfp>).

Those wanting to be intervenors must register and be confirmed as intervenors by the Commission. Commenters may sign up to be notified by email when the commenting period opens. Registrations and sign ups must be done through the CER’s online Participation Portal found at <http://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/participate>.

Registration and sign-up opportunities will be available from **1 August 2024 until 29 August 2024**.

Need help?

<https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/applications-hearings/view-applications-projects/westcoast-energy-sunrise-expansion-program/index.html>

sunrise.help@cer-rec.gc.ca

1-800-899-1265

Canada Energy Regulator Régie de l’énergie du Canada



Map is for illustrative purposes only and not to scale. Project design is under development and configuration of pipeline loops, compressor units, additional compressor station modifications, and powerlines are subject to change.

For detailed Project mapping, please refer to: enbridge.com/sunrise

Errata

Vol. 25, No. 4
The passion of flamenco with a touch of Taiwan

The story mistakenly spells dancer and choreographer Hsueh Yu-Hsien’s name.

The story mistakenly used an assumed preferred name in attributing quotations, for both Lian Ho and Hsueh Yu-Hsien. All instances of their names beyond the first mention should have been attributed conventionally by their respective surnames, Ho and Hsueh.

We apologise for these mistakes.

Canada



The enduring legacy of the abacus

by KATRIANNA DESANTE

Math is one of those subjects that, no matter how much you practice, there is always more to learn. The Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre is home to preserving Japanese Canadians' history and heritage, which includes the abacus, a hand-operated calculating tool used to perform mathematical functions dating back to the 2nd century BC.

Since moving to Vancouver from Kesennuma, Japan in 2004, Norie Ikoma has led the museum's abacus workshop. She began learning how to use the abacus at the age of four because, at that time, the abacus was "an important part of Japanese culture."

"Now you don't need to learn it; there are calculators around the world," says Ikoma.

"But it's very simple, intuitive and logical."

Her workshop, Abacus Ikoma, provides lessons on using the abacus for up to 10 students of any age. For Ikoma's students, who range from three to 65 years old, the abacus can take anywhere from a couple of months to multiple years to master.

"We mix everyone in the same class," says Ikoma. "Everyone's starting spot is the same, but the process can look very different."

As Ikoma embarks on her 20th year teaching at the Nikkei Museum this fall, she recognizes the exceptional qualities the abacus offers her students, such as its ability to enhance mental math skills, foster concentration and provide a unique cultural connection. Despite mastering the abacus after their first year, most of Ikoma's students have continued attending the work-

shop to improve their skills, with some even coming to Ikoma for over a decade.

"Seeing that 'aha' moment, I like that," shares Ikoma. "That is why I keep teaching."

While teaching Canadians about the abacus, a unique piece of her culture, Ikoma has also opened her eyes to what it was like for Japanese Canadians who immigrated be-

she recalls. "I was like, 'how... how could this be?'"

But, like with many exhibits the museum offers, there is a real value to be found in learning more about the abacus.

“A student once told me that the abacus shows you the beauty of precision.

Norie Ikoma, teacher

She notes that students who are either neurodivergent or have a learning disability often tend to excel.

"They don't need to talk, so it's a good match for kids with dyslexia or autism," she explains. "The parents also sit in on the class so that they can work together."

fore her. The Nikkei Museum's multi-use space features ongoing exhibitions of Japanese-Canadian history, marked by discrimination, internment and the struggle for acceptance. This has given Ikoma a glimpse into the challenging past.

"We didn't learn anything in Japan, so this was all new to me,"

"A student once told me that the abacus shows you the beauty of precision," says Ikoma. "It does; it embodies the beauty of math." ✍

For more information about the workshop, visit <https://centre.nikkeiplace.org/programs/ikoma-abacus>

➤ "Gordon House" from page 1 at the tail end of the pandemic," says Mason.

With a new kind of isolation during COVID-19, many seniors weren't familiar with using communication technology, like Zoom. So, they could book one-on-one sessions once a week and be paired with a volunteer to help them through whatever they wanted to learn – whether that's working with Zoom, setting up a Facebook profile or using email for the first time.

"Simple things like that are easy for us who grew up with technology, but for seniors [are] completely foreign," she says.

Gordon House also received funding a few years ago for a tablet loaner program, and one-on-one volunteers also help the seniors familiarise themselves with the technology.

"We actually distributed 20 tablets out into the community

for low-income seniors," she says. "We continue to get some funding so that we can actually pay for the data for the tablets. So that gives them internet access at home where, again, they likely don't have a computer at home; and even if they do, they may not have internet."

Gordon House doesn't just offer how-tos. The organization



▲ Jenn Mason, community programmer at Gordon Neighbourhood House.

also ensures seniors know – through workshops which cover cyber fraud and how to spot online scams – how to use this new skill safely. Mason says these are crimes that seniors are particularly targeted for, especially as more and more join social media.

"There's still a huge need to educate seniors, so that program is not going anywhere," says Mason.

More than just a workshop

Gordon House is always open to new workshop ideas or classes to add to their current programming. The challenge, says Mason, is being able to fund these free activities or lessons.

"If anybody, any organization, reaches out in terms of wanting to come in and do presentations or educational workshops, we welcome it," she says. "Wherever we can, obviously we try and find funding for programs. But when there are hard costs

in terms of resources or supplies needed, that can sometimes be a barrier in terms of being able to present it."

Gordon House, like other neighbourhood houses, receives various government grants or funding from organizations like the United Way. Despite the funding constraints on possible new programming, Mason says the work is rewarding. She's always open to feedback or suggestions, and to help those wanting to run a particular workshop find a funding partner to make it happen.

"I live here in the West End, so these are my neighbours," she says. "I use my role to connect with the community, to see what the needs are, and just work with them."

On the front lines of these workshops or classes are the volunteers who run them and work directly with the seniors – which Mason says are hugely

impactful to not only the success of the programs, but to the community itself.

"I even said to our volunteer, 'You don't even realize how much you're changing lives.' By educating these seniors, [it] just gives them access to the world. So, I just said to him, 'Don't underestimate what you're doing here. This is huge,'" she says.

It's not just the access, but also the socialization that makes these programs all the more important she says, adding that it builds a stronger community.

"Places like the neighbourhood houses, I think, become a second home," says Mason.

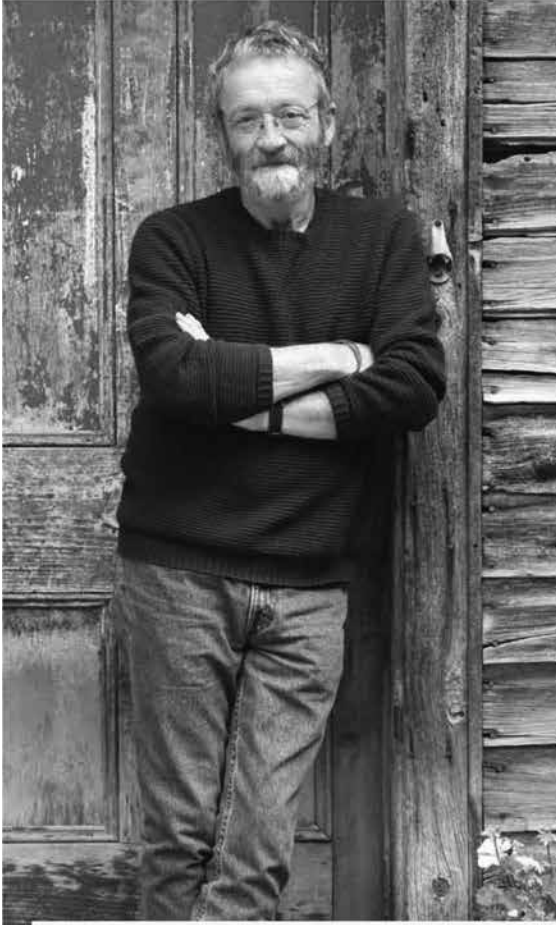
Gordon House is just one of eight neighbourhood houses under the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC (ANH-BC), where the association has a total of 50 sites and hosts over 300 programs across Metro Vancouver. ✍



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43 and me

Reflecting on loss, grief, family heritage and identity

by ALISON MACDONALD

"Migration, loss of home, not good enough, abandonment, survival – these are huge patterns within the women of my lineage," says Anastasia Koutalianos about 43 and me, which she'll be performing as part of the upcoming Fringe Festival.

"They weren't supported to be anything out of the home," she adds. "My maternal grandmother married and was widowed a decade later; she had to flee Izmir, survive war, leave home."

43 and me is a highly personal performance for Koutalianos. It was born out of the period leading up to her mother's sudden passing, the resulting grief and loss and her intent on honouring her mother's wish that she write about her ancestral heritage.

"The show is improvised, and so I don't know what the boundary is just yet, and how much to share," she admits. "There is a lot of stretching, vulnerability. And I don't have all the answers. In the end, it's a personal story.... This project has unearthed unresolved intergenerational trauma, especially around abandonment, loss of fathers, self-limiting beliefs."

She credits her diverse experiences with giving her skills that led her here. These experiences include being a food and cookbook writer, radio show founder and host, career mentor, board member, healer and energy work practitioner and communications and project management consultant.

With 43 and me, Koutalianos says she has the chance to reflect on this journey which has finally offered her a sense of clarity and direction.

"I have a changing mindset; I am 44 now and really stepping into my power," she says. "Some people have a very clear trajectory for their career and life; I feel like I was always on a meandering road."

Healing through silent solace, connection and creativity

In March of this year, Koutalianos successfully applied for a Canada Council for the Arts grant. With this funding, she plans a three-book memoir entitled *The Mirrors of Me*. The two works, 43 and me and *The Mirrors of Me* are related to her journey through her mother's passing and the story of their ancestral heritage and intergenerational trauma. 43 and me also serves as a fundraiser for her family memoir project.

"The Mirrors of Me project gave me a sense of purpose. I was busy researching, traveling, meeting people and through it, dealing with grief, which is good; it was all about my mom," she says.

The project is leading her across Canada, Greece and Turkey, to Australia and back to the United States where, ideally, she will take a boat to New York where her grandmother landed in 1947. Through it, she plans to continue connecting with relatives, travelling, researching in archives and libraries and reliving her ancestors' experiences and challenges. The process has been both cathartic and moving.



Photo by Dwan Ipomee

▲ 43 and me, Anastasia Koutalianos' earnest performance reflecting on the breadth of life's challenges and experiences, will debut at this year's Fringe Festival in September.

She can now add the title of "performer" to her accomplishments.

Whether writing, her healing work, project management or her volunteer and board work, the breadth of her experiences has built her skillset and led her to this place, each one building on the next.

"It was like one thing leading to another. Healing, with undoing in my life, by my mid-30s I had gone on my first meditation retreat, and I fell in love with silence," she says. "I think there was always a battle within me: the healing, imaginative, sensitive creative child, and the analytical 'do it, and do it well' project management side. We champion getting things done in this culture, but not always the intuitive, creative, soulful side."

And, like her family before her, she has experienced the feeling of losing home.

"I never felt at home within myself – that hyphenated identity as a Greek Canadian which leads to that. I am more Greek here, but not Greek enough in Greece," she says.

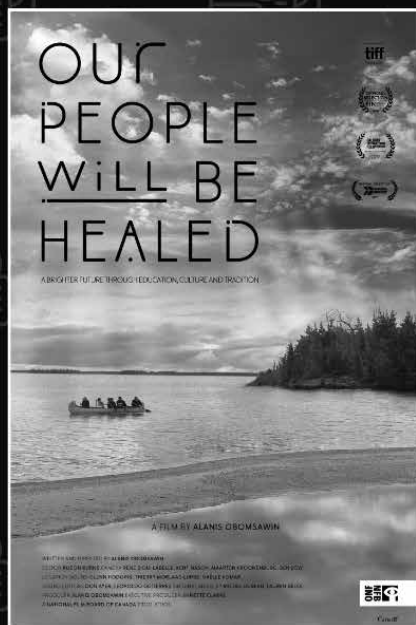
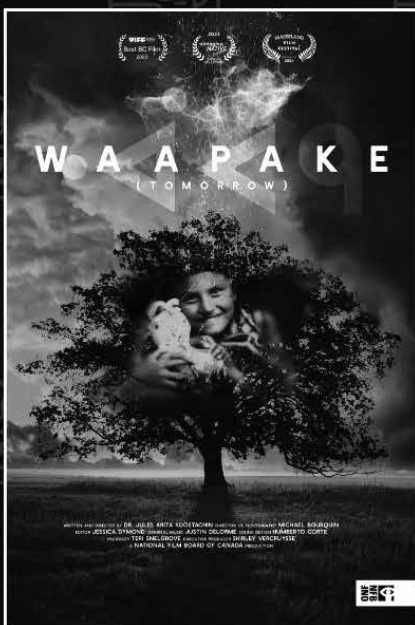
Overall, Koutalianos is both hopeful and realistic, hoping her works enable her to hold space for people and discover themselves, as challenging as that can often be.

43 and me will be performed on various dates between September 5 to 15 at the Waterfront Theatre as part of Fringe Festival.

For more information, please visit www.vancouverfringe.com/events/43-and-me

Truth and Reconciliation Day: NFB Film Screenings

Sept 30, 2024



10:30am

1:00pm



Art for the future

Future Worldlings unites voices on identity and sustainability

by VAISHNAVI DANDEKAR

The *Future Worldlings* exhibit at Griffin Art Projects brings together a diverse group of international artists to explore the intricate themes of identity, displacement and cultural belonging in an ever-evolving world. Among these artists are South African multidisciplinary artist Wezile Harmans and Canadian-based artist Sun Forest, whose works invite visitors to engage in a deep, reflective dialogue about the future.

For Wezile Harmans, participation in *Future of Worldlings* feels like the culmination of a long, thoughtful process.

“Through material and visual art practice, we can imagine better worlds for ourselves and for each other.

Sun Forest, artist

“We started during lockdown, talking online, and now it’s happening in reality,” he says.

The environment of our future

Known for his exploration of the relationships between humans and the spaces they inhabit, Harmans contributes pieces from his series – *Locating Spaces of Agency: Chapter One*, recently exhibited in Cape Town. These works involve cursive writing on rice paper with red acrylic overlays, inspired by conversations he had during the project.

“The cursive writing is taken from those conversations, but when you come closer, you cannot read it. There are things that are very personal, meant to be known only by specific people,” he explains, emphasizing the need to preserve personal and community narratives within his art.

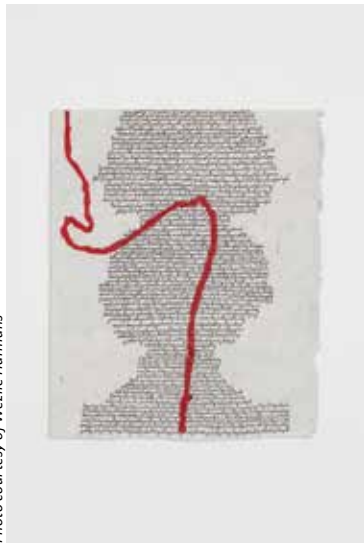


Photo courtesy of Wezile Harmans

▲ From Wezile Harmans’ *Locating Spaces of Agency Chapter One*.

Harmans also brings work from his *Do Not Trust the Borders* series, which maps unresolved political cases using coordinates and creates landscapes from coffee and tea. His art reflects a deep engagement with the dynamics of formal and informal spaces, particularly in how they affect marginalized communities.

“The TRC [The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission] often forced people to apologize in unfamiliar spaces, which didn’t always allow for true healing,” he adds, contrasting this with the more organic, informal settings where communities find comfort and healing.

On the other side of the exhibit, Sun Forest approaches the themes of *Future Worldlings* from a perspective that combines art with activism, particularly focusing on sustainability and the creation of protective spaces. Forest’s work is rooted in the development of “counter-surveillance cloaking devices tied to finding shelter, care, and rest for the wearer.”

These devices are crafted not only to reclaim agency from ‘hypervisibility,’ but also to provide a sense of physical and emotional recovery. Her installations, which utilize ‘biomaterials’ such as seaweed and milk protein, challenge the industrial processes often associated with sustainability.

“Biomaterials are essentially compostable materials that are fully able to reintegrate back into the earth without industrial intervention,” Forest says, stressing the importance of creating materials that artists can make in their kitchens and later compost.

Forest’s contribution to the exhibit extends beyond the materiality of her work to a broader commentary on how art can envision better futures, a sentiment which aligns with her focus on sustainability, a growing theme in her work over the past few years.

“Through material and visual art practice, we can imagine better worlds for ourselves and for each other,” she adds.

Both Harmans and Forest see *Future Worldlings* as an opportunity to engage in meaningful collaboration with other artists, despite the differences in their individual practices.

“Collaboration comes in different forms,” Harmans notes. “Even if our subjects aren’t the same, there’s a connection we share as artists.”

Forest echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the interconnectedness of their work within the exhibit.

“There are certainly lots of overlaps and interconnections that are happening between all of us, which is really exciting to be part of,” she says.

Future Worldlings runs from Sept. 28 to Dec. 15 at Griffin Art Projects. ✉

For more information about the exhibit, visit www.griffinartprojects.ca/exhibitions/future-worldlings

VIFF

43rd
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Vancouver International Film Festival

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#VIFF2024

A Mother Apart at Vancouver Queer Film Festival

Searching answers, finding healing

by CURTIS SEUFERT

Staceyann Chin was a ‘barrel child,’ one of the many Caribbean-born children who, in the 20th century, were left behind by parents who pursued opportunities abroad to better support their children. But these children were restricted from entering Canada alongside their parents due to baked-in immigration restrictions.

Laurie Townshend’s documentary film, *A Mother Apart*, to be screened at the Vancouver Queer Film Festival (VQFF), offers a poignant reflection on motherhood, separation and healing. It highlights the story of Chin, a Jamaica-born, New York-based LGBTQ+ activist – and now a mother herself – as she searches worldwide to reconnect with her mother.

While Townshend was originally looking to spotlight the lives of 4 different activist mothers for her latest film, her discussions with Chin revealed that a dedicated documentary to Chin’s story would be necessary to do it justice, as she began the search for her mother.

“The story was unfolding in real time,” says Townshend. “COVID hit and her mother went off the grid, and she didn’t know where she was. So, this sense of, once again, being in a stance of having to reach for her mother, this one-

sided attempt to narrow this distance, this has been the theme of her whole relationship with her mother since she was nine.”

A journey undertaken

Townshend has long felt a connection to the stories she’s sought to share in her film-making practise, and that personal connection to the storytelling extends as deep as ever with *A Mother Apart* for the Toronto-based director.

Not only is there that typically close connection between



▲ Laurie Townshend, director of *A Mother Apart* showing at this year’s Vancouver Queer Film Festival.

a documentary film subject and the director spotlighting their life and journey, but there is also a set of shared identities between the two who are both Black queer women with roots in Jamaica. Townshend says that prior to filming, conversations around motherhood also



▲ *A Mother Apart* tells the story of LGBTQ+ activist Staceyann Chin as she searches for her mother’s whereabouts around the world.

emerged, highlighting both the similarities and differences between her and Chin.

“I was also thinking about having a child, actively trying to have a child at the time and it wasn’t working... and I was really curious as to what kind of mother I would be,” says Townshend. “My mom didn’t abandon me, but there were certainly conversations Staceyann and I had about emotional abandonment and the effects of immigration on Jamaican or Caribbean parents.”

As pandemic-era travel restrictions eased, Townshend and Chin set off on a journey

spanning Montreal, New York, Zurich and Jamaica. In *A Mother Apart*, Chin searches for answers in pursuit of discovering the whereabouts of her mother while the film documents moments revealing the emotional and circumstantial challenges of searching for answers.

By the end, the director says that a healing journey has taken place, but perhaps without a “bow” to tie things up with. However, she says that that’s a big part of what audiences so resonated with most.

“Someone said to me, recently, that they ended up having more

questions than answers at the end of this film. And they were actually more than okay with that,” says Townshend. “Because it was refreshing in a way to understand, or to have a film reflect, how much of a cycle healing can be and how non-linear it is.”

Once a prospective mother herself, Townshend says she was deeply surprised with her own takeaway from the filming and storytelling experience. As she wrapped up filming, she emerged with a new, deeper understanding of what it means to love and to care.

“I learned, fairly close to the time we wrapped, that for me it was never about being a mother to somebody else,” she says. “I didn’t necessarily know the full extent of my heart’s desires, because I didn’t really know myself... I had heard and read Audre Lorde’s words that it’s possible for us to mother ourselves. But I don’t think I ever really knew what she meant until I went through the process of making this film.”

A Mother Apart will be screened at the VIFF Centre on Sept 19, along with an array of other films highlighting the diversity of queer life, love and experience. ✨

For more information about *A Mother Apart* and VQFF, visit <https://outonscreen.com/vqff-event/a-mother-apart>

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Answers:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. temperaments | 7. as – am – son – or | A) températures | G) asarets – vs |
| 2. enables – soon | 8. amah – unite | B) énarμες – pali | H) rh – hourra |
| 3. man – izar – if | 9. upset – are | C) manias – asile | I) es – étonnée |
| 4. pries – rhesus | 10. raised – rents | D) pb – entames | J) noises – nno |
| 5. emanate – test | 11. ell – nova – net | E) Elisa – matent | K) tofus – otitis |
| 6. rest – ethos | 12. siestas – nose | F) rez – te – Doa | L) sn – stère – ste |

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September 10–24, 2024

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

As the days grow shorter and the leaves begin to paint the city in shades of amber and gold, Vancouver welcomes the enchanting season of autumn with open arms which starts on Sept. 22 this year. The cool breeze brings with it a sense of renewal, as the city fills with the warmth of cultural events and gatherings that celebrate creativity and connection. From Indigenous festivals brimming with local crafts to music festivals that ignite the imagination, there's no shortage of ways to dive into the magic of fall.

Come From Away

Sept. 10–15
www.vancouver.broadway.com/shows/comefromaway

The New York Times Critics' Pick takes you into the heart of the remarkable true story of 7,000 stranded passengers and the small town in Newfoundland that welcomed them. Cultures clashed and nerves ran high, but uneasiness turned into trust, music soared into the night and gratitude grew into enduring friendships. Playing at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre from Sept. 10 to 15. For tickets and more information, check out the Broadway Across Canada website.

Vancouver International Flamenco Festival

Sept. 12–22
www.thedancecentre.ca/event/vancouver-international-flamenco-festival-2024

The Vancouver International Flamenco Festival's 34th edition will feature live performances, with both ticketed and free events, promising to deliver exceptional and dynamic programs and celebrating our local, national and international connections and performers from Spain, Taiwan, Cuba, Mexico, India and Canada. This year's highlights include the Canadian premiere presentation of Spain's COMPANÍA MARCO FLORES with Rayuela at the Vancouver Playhouse. The musicians from the company, Jose Tomás Jiménez (guitar) Jose Valencia (voice) will also give an exclusive music concert at St James Hall. Celebrate flamenco with accordion-robots (Ebe), a vibrant CD release (Lara Wong/ Melón Jiménez) and a moving personal journey (Flamencolía Dance Company).

Mid-Autumn Moon Celebration at the Space Centre

Sept. 13, 6–9:30 p.m.
www.eventbrite.ca/e/



▲ Middletown explores surreality and existential questions this month at the Pacific Theatre.

mid-autumn-moon-celebration-at-the-space-centre-tickets-1004797465267

Celebrate the full harvest moon at the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, in collaboration with the Chinese Canadian Museum and the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden! The Mid-Autumn Moon is celebrated at its brightest and fullest, symbolizing family reunion and completeness. The festival features family gatherings, mooncake sharing, lantern displays and cultural performances, highlighting themes of reunion, gratitude and the harvest moon's beauty. Check out the Eventbrite page for tickets and more information.

Siglo de Oro : Renaissance Reflections

Sept. 13, 7:30–9:20 p.m.
www.sjmusic.ca/events/siglo-de-oro/2024-09-13

London's celebrated vocal ensemble Siglo de Oro brings a programme of Renaissance and modern sacred music to St James Anglican Church for their Canadian debut in Vancouver as they commence their 2024 Canada and United States tour. The ensemble is best known for its work in early music, with a repertoire stretching from Hildegard of Bingen to Dieterich Buxtehude. Siglo de Oro is also dedicated to performing contemporary music, and their *Renaissance Reflections* programme offers selections both old and new. For tickets and more information, check out the website.

staiw pow wow

Sept. 13–15
www.stalewpowwow.ca

The staiw Arts and Cultural Society will be hosting their annual staiw pow-wow from Sept. 13–15 at the Langley Events Centre. The purpose of the pow-wow is to celebrate Indigenous culture, traditions, music, regalia and art. It is a time to celebrate and preserve the rich heritage and keep traditional Indigenous ways alive. They welcome you to share in the experience of learning the important role tradition plays and how these traditions define Indigenous culture. For more information, check out their website.

ᑲᓐᓄᓐ ᓂᓂᓐ ᓂᓂᓐ (Come Toward the Fire)

Sept. 14, 12 noon–7 p.m.
www.cometowardthefire.com

The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at the University of British Columbia and Musqueam announced today the full slate of programming for the third annual Indigenous festival, ᑲᓐᓄᓐ ᓂᓂᓐ ᓂᓂᓐ (Come Toward the Fire). The family-friendly festival is free with no tickets required. The festival will activate the Chan Centre

and its surrounding area, culminating in finale performances inside the venue at 5 p.m. From 11 a.m., parking at the nearby Rose Garden Parkade is free. Feel free to visit their website for more information.

Christopher Cheung: Under the White Gaze

Sept. 18, 7–8 p.m.
vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/66ad64722486bf251bbace7a

How is Canadian media failing to reflect Canada's multicultural society? Journalist Christopher Cheung's new book, *Under the White Gaze*, is a candid investigation into the state of race in Canadian media today and a call for newsrooms to think critically about representation in all areas of coverage. At this event being held at the VPL Central Library, Cheung explores why reporting on race is necessary, how the language for doing so is evolving and why intersectionality increasingly matters in stories about race. He also explains how some well-meaning reporting today

perpetuates the white gaze and weighs in on how Canada's white gaze operates differently than America's.

Middletown

Sept. 18–Oct. 6
www.pacifictheatre.org/show/middletown

Mary Swanson arrives in Middletown ready to start her family in a normal suburb. But her new neighbours see the surreal in the status quo and the outer bounds of the universe in their local garden patch. As Mary connects to her community via the magic and tragedy of ordinary experiences, *Middletown* dives into the big questions: what are beginnings? How should we end? And how are we supposed to deal with all the stuff in between? This two hour show will be performed at the Pacific Theatre; check out the theatre's website for tickets and more information.

Culture Days

Sept. 20–Oct. 13
www.culturedays.ca

Culture Days is a national celebration of arts and culture. At the end of each September, millions of people attend thousands of free participatory arts and culture events across the country both in-person and online. Culture Days programs invite the public to get hands-on and behind-the-scenes to highlight the importance of arts and culture in our communities. The next Culture Days celebration will take place Sept. 20 through Oct. 13 for three glorious weeks of colour, creativity and community.

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden Tea Festival: Tea For All

Sept. 21–22, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
www.eventbrite.ca/e/dr-sun-yat-sen-classical-chinese-garden-tea-festival-tea-for-all-tickets-982099484997

Experience the joy of tea at the Garden Tea Festival, hosted by the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden on Sept. 21 and 22! This engaging event invites everyone – tea lovers and curious visitors alike – to explore the rich traditions and flavors of tea. Set in a beautiful Chinese garden, the festival offers a range of fun activities, including hands-on workshops, interactive tea ceremonies and tastings. With the theme "Tea for All," there's something for everyone to enjoy, whether you're a tea enthusiast or new to the world of tea. Join us for a weekend of learning and celebration!



▲ ᑲᓐᓄᓐ ᓂᓂᓐ ᓂᓂᓐ (Come Toward the Fire) festival looks to showcase a breadth of Indigenous performance and talent at the Chan Centre this month.



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