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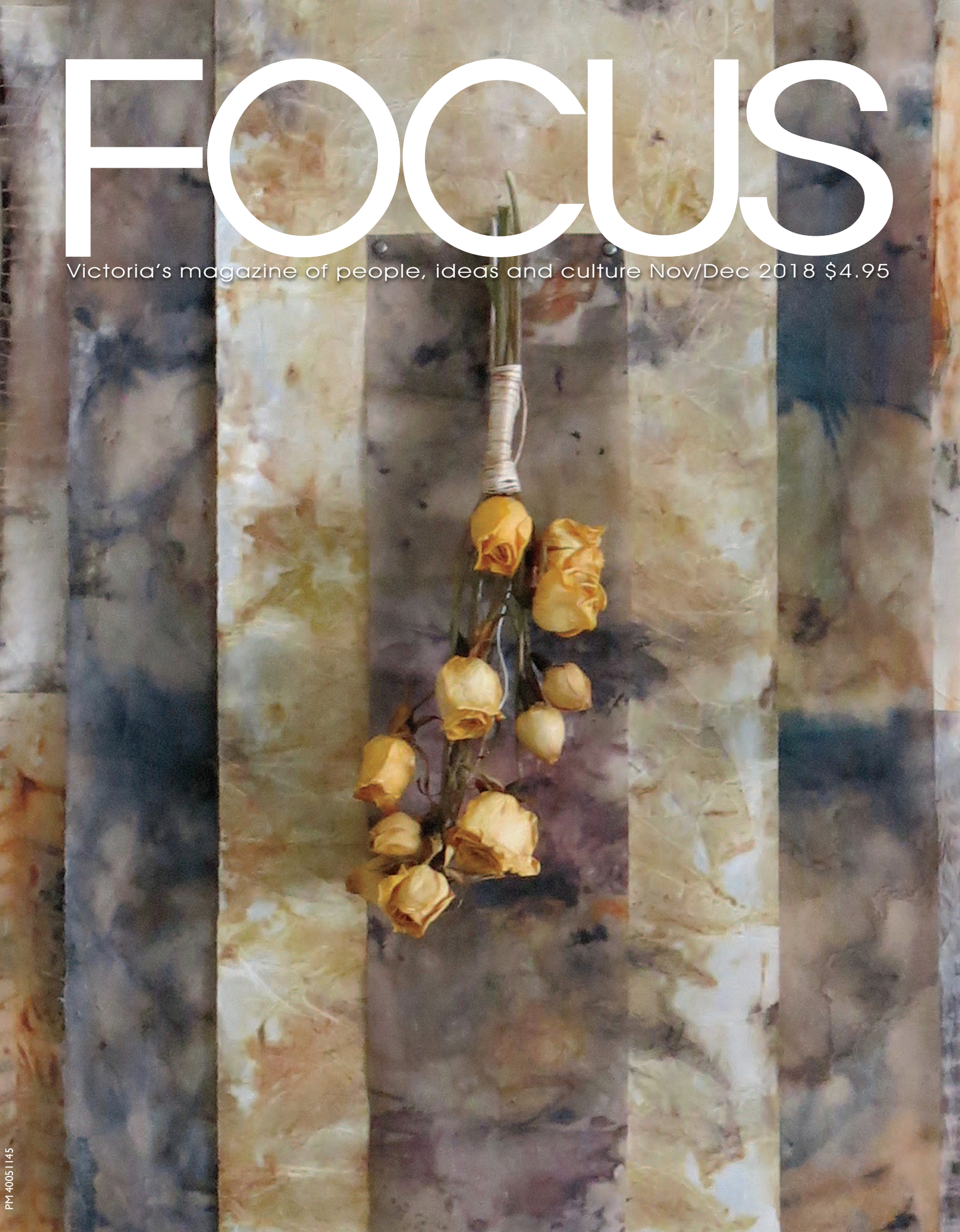

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"The Present" by Martina Edmondson, 32 by 13 inches, eco prints on oriental papers. See story on page 34.

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The heart and soul of *Focus*

LESLIE CAMPBELL

It's an understatement to say that a lot has changed in *Focus'* 30 years, but there's been at least one consistent thread.

While October brought lots of changes to this region's council tables, it also brought changes to *Focus*. For starters: we turned 30! Do you remember we (those of us of a certain age) used to say: "You can't trust anyone over 30?"

Well as it turns out, you can. And even the fellow who coined the phrase back in the mid '60s knows it. Jack Weinberg, who was active in the Free Speech Movement at Berkley in the '60s, explained in 2000: "I was being interviewed by a newspaper reporter and he kept asking me who was 'really' behind the actions of students, implying that we were being directed behind the scenes by the Communists or some other sinister group." Of course the media—and other members of the counter culture—loved it because "it shook up the older generation," and it spread like wildfire.

Jack went on to work for Greenpeace, the Environmental Health Fund, and against nuclear power. He seems like a trustworthy guy, even post 30.

Focus certainly intends to continue to earn readers' trust now that were over 30. If I've learned anything from 30 years with *Focus*, it's that trust is, without doubt, our most valuable asset.

How that trust is gained is pretty simple—it comes from our editorial content being non-commercial, well-researched, fact-based, and fair-minded even when pointed. It respects our readers' intelligence. It accepts our responsibility to communicate clearly and accurately—and to never dumb things down. It ensures we contribute to the community conversation in a meaningful, helpful way.

All this means *Focus* writers are absolutely key to our success.

Over our 30 years, so many things have changed, led largely by technology and its profound reshaping of the publishing industry. But throughout the decades, *Focus* has been blessed with wonderful long-term writers. A magazine's editorial content is its heart and soul; its writers create its personality, its integrity and trustworthiness. Besides their literary talent, *Focus* writers care deeply about their subjects, their "beats," whether in the arts or on hot social and political issues. Despite modest financial compensation, they take pains to get their facts straight and to craft them into stories that are a pleasure to read.

Lately, the *Focus* writers' table has seen some changes.

Aaren Madden has written for *Focus* for 15 years. She covered community "players" initially, then moved into arts coverage. With a growing family and near full-time job at the library, something had to give. Fortunately, Kate Cino, who has been immersed in the arts in this community for decades, started to fill Aaren's shoes a few editions ago. And Aaren has graciously agreed to return for the odd assignment. Watch for her in the next edition.

Alan Cassels, who provided 6 years of critical reporting on BC health policy in these pages, has taken a new job as communications director at the UBC Therapeutics Initiative. This will limit his work for us, but he will occasionally pop up in these pages.

This edition features Amy Reiswig's final interview with a local book author—after a nine-year run. Amy works in the Victoria Legislature for *Hansard*. She recently moved to Mayne Island and with the commute, plus a yearning to indulge in some other creative projects, not to mention have some evenings with her husband, she needed to reclaim the time that *Focus* occupied. Read Mollie Kaye's interview with Amy in this edition to learn about one of her other creative endeavours: Banquo Folk Ensemble.

We haven't determined who will fill Amy's pages yet. Fortunately, Victoria is blessed with talented writers who will love the job of interviewing fellow writers, just as Amy did.

Some other changes are strictly positive. Russ Francis joined us as of the last edition to focus mostly on provincial politics. Some of you may recall his investigative reporting back in *Monday Magazine*'s heyday. He worked there from 1994-2007. In his last column there he reminded readers that the job of reporters was "to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted." He went back to school after leaving *Monday*, then worked in policy development with the provincial government. Now "retired," we're thrilled he's willing to apply his intellect and time to holding government accountable through *Focus*.

This edition—and hopefully beyond—we have Stephen Hume aboard. Stephen has accomplishments and awards too many to list, but you likely read him in the *Vancouver Sun* where he worked for 27 years. He's also the author of nine books, both poetry and non-fiction. Amy profiled him in 2011 regarding his book *A Walk with the Rainy Sisters: In Praise of British Columbia's Places*, which was shortlisted for the Butler Prizes that year. In the interview, he told her that good journalism, while certainly being about the facts, goes beyond them: "If you can touch [readers'] spirits, you can better transfer the information." His piece on orcas in this edition offers a fine illustration of his skills in this regard.

To be a good editor, I've long realized, one just needs great writers. That includes, by the way, all those who contribute impressive letters-to-the editor: thank you, dear readers!

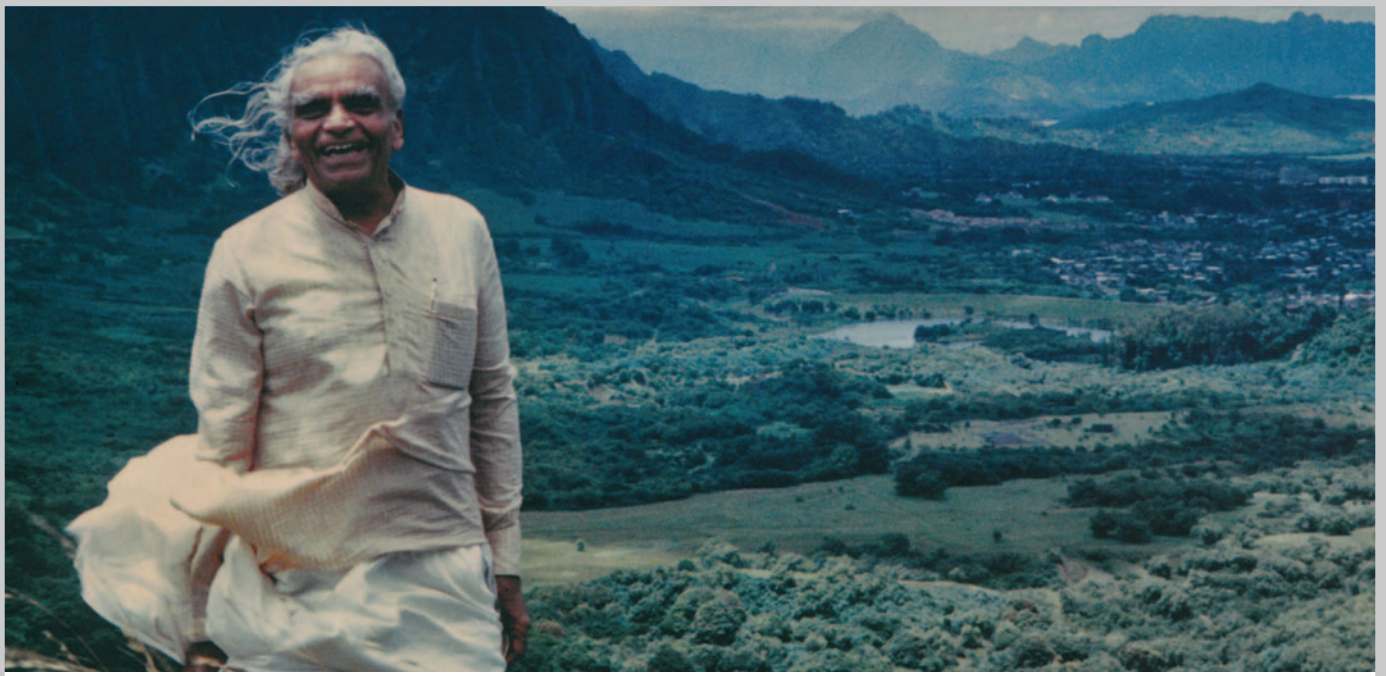
The past decade has been hard on publishers and their writers, particularly at the local level. Print media have been massively disrupted by the growth of the internet, with roller-coaster-type plunges in advertising revenue. Being small and simply structured has allowed *Focus* to adapt as necessary, while always prioritizing fact- and place-based journalism.

Yet the reality—that no successful model has evolved for paying for journalism in the new digital sphere—should worry us all. The world needs good, truth-seeking journalism at all levels. And that is not likely to happen when corporate profits or share prices are the priority.

Craigslist billionaire Craig Newmark, who donated $50 million to media in the past year, makes a noteworthy observation about his investment: "A trustworthy press is the immune system of democracy."

Our fair city deserves a healthy immune system in the form of local media that digs for the truth, without fear or favour. In an era when journalists in less democratic places get murdered for telling the truth, it's the least we can do.

On behalf of *Focus*, Leslie Campbell thanks the community for its generous support over 30 fascinating years. Please keep reading, sending us your letters, buying ad space and subscriptions.



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Will Victoria's Old Town become a facade?

Leslie Campbell's article on Victoria's Old Town is excellent! It addresses all the key issues. It should be required reading for anybody interested in Old Town. I write as a member of the Heritage Advisory Panel, and as a relatively new Victorian, a transplant from Vancouver. The Heritage Advisory Panel has been holding special meetings to discuss how we may encourage the City to pay proper attention to Old Town and respect the many regulations and guidelines that are already in place.

Hal Kalman

On reading Leslie Campbell's lament over the "hollowing out" of Victoria's historical architecture, mostly in favour of what amounts to Joni Mitchell's "little boxes made of ticky-tacky," I could not help but be reminded of China's so-called Ghost Cities, where no apparent reason (at least from a western perspective) can be conjured up for their existence. All it will take here in Victoria, is that the appeal for these modern edifices becomes focused elsewhere (whereupon the developers will disappear like swamp gas) and voilà… we will have what amounts to the makings of our very own "ghost city," with no apparent reason for its existence.

Richard Weatherill

Thank you for your well-written and most fair review of this matter.

I can assure you there are few, if any, heritage buildings about to fall over or are in particularly poor shape. They can virtually all be redeemed to their earlier glory, and because an individual paid too much for a property does not entitle a new owner to simply up the density and change the overall character of the neighbourhood and city.

Chris Le Fevre

Heartfelt thanks for your extensive and conscientious review of the complex issues in play for the future of an historic precinct. "Will Victoria's Old Town Become a Facade?" is indeed a very worthy topic as our community moves to a new City council.

Also a salute to Stuart Stark and Pamela Madoff for continuing to uphold their important ideals and objectives for maintaining this unique and invaluable urban area.

It is indeed a daunting challenge for these times in downtown Victoria, to come to grips with an array of evolving and interdependent issues: shifting retail, employment, and housing needs; escalating real estate pressures; seismic precautions; long-term strategies for tourism; refurbishment of historic buildings; and care for that ephemeral component of the soul of a city—community memory.

In 1971, as a Victoria High School student, I first became involved in the early campaign to recognize, protect, and reuse the historic architectural buildings of downtown Victoria—collectively, the rare asset of an intact, contiguous 19th-century commercial city centre.

Through my subsequent career as a Victoria architect and urban designer, the maintenance of Victoria's Old Town remains a central concern. As a city planner, I worked centrally on the preparation of the Downtown Core Area Plan—and know fully that one of its primary intentions was to retain the physical character and the authenticity of Downtown's vintage districts.

A set of strategies were instituted, to encourage development to expand Victoria's downtown east of Douglas Street—with greater allowances for building height and density in these areas, while tightly constraining increases in height and allowable density west of Douglas Street.

Analysis demonstrated that growth of over 10,000 new residents and considerable office and commercial expansion (over a million square meters of new building floor area outside of the historic commercial district) was achievable, without compromise to the retention of older districts.

Adaptation and renewal of our ever-struggling, but august Downtown is not a simple exercise: some innovations and compromises will be inevitable, but to what degree, and with what safeguards? At what point of change or redevelopment does an historic urban area begin to loose its essential integrity? What precautions are needed so that land speculators and developers do not begin to undermine or demolish delicate older buildings, in expectation of easy up-zonings, and for the convenience of parking lots (as have consumed so many older North American downtowns)?

Use of a Bonus Density Transfer System is often applied by cities to help conserve historic areas and to pay for rehabilitation, while at the same time using transferred densities to help support desirable new development in under-utilized areas—such as Victoria's North Douglas/Blanshard Corridor.

Worthy places such as Quebec City, Old Montreal, and a multitude of historic European cities, hold to strict and intricate constraints to protect their antique centres—areas integral both to their tourist economies, and to their cultural identity.

Without similar disciplined self-defense, in a time of hungry real estate appetite, Victoria runs risks of broiling its own Golden Goose.

Chris Gower

Landslide Lisa's record as mayor

Your article on Lisa Helps' first term is difficult to see as anything other than a hatchet job. That's because you selected three "moments" as defining her term and find that in all she lied, evaded her responsibilities, or did a bad job. Almost as a grudging afterthought, in two paragraphs within a 6-page article you write that it's a tough, contentious and complex job, and she's done good and bad things for the City. It's a hatchet job because all of the "moments" concern relatively ephemeral matters which will be relegated to footnotes in a few years, if remembered at all. What's glaringly missing are the things that she's done that will last. They generally aren't "moments." They are the things that really matter, changing and affecting the lives of citizens and the health and liveability of Victoria. They are many and impressive. They aren't acknowledged at all, let alone discussed…

Each of the three episodes that you examined are interesting and, knowing your careful analytical skills, I accept that they are probably very accurately described. But will any of the three matters have a long-lasting impact on the City? Is your portrayal of character complete and rounded? And really, are they the best way to understand and evaluate the

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Mayor's record prior to an election? In your opinion, is there really almost nothing that she's done that's positive? Because that's the general message you conveyed. Surely that's not credible.

You know what change there's been during Helps' term. It's been huge. She's not responsible "personally" for all that, most particularly the economic boom, no mayor could be, because City governance is a group exercise with a lot which is out of the control of any municipality. But leadership is critical. She has led and not held back, and must be given credit or blame (depending on your views) for what Council has done overall.

What do you think of the changes in the economic health of the City over that time, or the cycling network, or work on affordable housing, or on finally getting the sewage system in place, or the densification and influx of new residents and enterprises into the City, or the quality of public services, or the culture at City Hall with respect to the public, or collaboration with other municipalities or levels of government, or fiscal responsibility, or whether the council is forward-looking, or the nature and quality of development—always the biggest thing that any municipality has control over? And a whole lot more, obviously. Those are the things that have a lasting impact, some more than others. What do you think of her performance as the face and voice of the City?

As you say, she has a tough and complex job and one which is inevitably contentious. I'm not a fan of everything she's done. She's done some things, like the statue removal, as a personal project and very flat-footedly. But on balance her motives have been sound. She's been an intelligent, forward-looking, inclusive, open, gutsy and strong leader in a time of great change as this city matures. The city is better for it.

Rob Garrard

David Broadland replies:

At the time we published the story, Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe had not released his final report, which appeared on September 26. Lowe was very specific about what Mayors Helps and Desjardins did to cover up former VicPD Chief Frank Elsner's misconduct. The mayors lied to journalists and they tried to hide allegations of sexual harrassment against Elsner from Lowe's office. They were also provided with evidence about Elsner's own attempt to cover up his misconduct. This latter conduct was judged to be the most serious of Elsner's misconduct and warranted, in retired Judge Baird Ellan's opinion, "dismissal from policing." Yet Helps and Desjardins ignored this evidence. The mayors could have fired Elsner for cause. Instead, Mayor Helps, in spite of knowing the details of Elsner's misconduct and hiding them from Lowe, told journalists that Elsner was the "best thing that's happened to this town and Esquimalt in a long time." The legal process that followed cost Victoria taxpayers close to $1 million. It's true that Mayor Helps' conduct was just a series of "moments." But detailing such moments of serious political misjudgment and holding Helps accountable for those lapses are far more necessary to the long-term health of our municipal democracy than acknowledging Helps' support of urban densification or protected bicycle lanes. See page 14 of this edition for a full account of Lowe's final report.

David Broadland

Mayor Barb Desjardins told Black Press, "As two female mayors, I can tell you that I would not have allowed that not to be investigated." She was referring to the sexual harassment claim against then Police Chief Frank Elsner that she and Mayor Helps investigated.

Persecuting consenting personal behaviour, while masquerading as morality, to politically manipulate the public is a fascist tactic.

The Me Too movement is critical for womens' justice. But this one doesn't clearly fit the mold. The Office of the Police Complaints Commission (OPCC) effectively saying to "trust us" is condescending and arrogant. We're not hearing that a subordinate's dignity or physical security was threatened, or their employment jeopardized.

We deserve evidence that Chief Elsner's tweets undermined public or personal security. That doesn't require releasing potentially embarrassing material.

I met Chief Elsner a few months into his new position. He was the first police chief to visit Our Place. He was invited by the Victoria Committee to End Homelessness (VCEH).

Chief Elsner compassionately and humanely listened for two hours to the homeless, the poor, and their allies giving their experiences. He took to heart VCEH's call to end "policing poverty": end poor profiling, possession seizure, indiscriminate ticket issuance, "loitering" harassment and systematically arresting street substance users.

Chief Elsner pledged to change policy. It was clearly starting to happen.

A restorative justice approach is sufficient discipline—taking responsibility for immature social media and making amends, yes. Dictatorial guard changing, no. Mayors Helps and Desjardins were using this approach and it was working. They should have remained the ultimate arbiters, being democratically elected officials, presiding over their police departments.

Maybe input from the Victoria Committee to End Homelessness, Together Against Poverty Society, Society of Living Illicit Drug Users and the Alliance Against Displacement should also have been included.

Until actual personal or public harm is revealed, the effective outcome of the OPCC's (sham?) "investigation" is the apparent coerced loss of a public official whose community benefit vastly outweighed his acknowledged indiscretion.

Herding dispossessed people like cattle away from the civilized citizens' glitzy new downtown—whether it's Camp Namegans' residents or just Victoria's daily sufferers without privilege shuffling through our streets—is fascist. Some people of influence may not have liked Chief Elsner's challenge to this Old Guard approach. That seems to be the real cover-up.

Larry Wartels

I wanted to share with you the response from Councillor Alto on September 18 to a query about why minutes were not taken of the City Family meetings. Mayor Lisa Helps was originally contacted but deferred to Councillor Alto, who answered:

"When council approved the Witness Reconciliation Program in June 2017, it endorsed a program of work that was unlike anything the city had attempted before. In particular, the program acts in respect of the traditions shared with us by our nearest Indigenous neighbours, the Songhees and Esquimalt. Those Nations, like many of their neighbours, hold primarily to oral history and communication, using story telling as the primary means to share information, exchange ideas, and make important decisions.

"Council acknowledged that this new way of working would be challenging for us, as we would need to put aside our dependence on the written word, and open our minds to different values and ways of working together. We would need to learn to trust an entirely different process.

"In that spirit, there are no 'Minutes' in the conventional sense of our Western

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processes. We are present in the moment of gathering, and bear witness to the sharing conversation, understanding that one of our tasks is to act as a bridge, or translator, between the two conventions."

I think it's important for Victorians to understand how Mayor Helps' approach to governance is fluid and autocratic. She appears to have no issue with dismantling certain foundations of transparent governance. Particularly for work in which certain citizens were paid an honorarium for their contributions.

I fail to see how minutes can be construed as an element of colonization, which is how Mayor Helps categorized the act of minute-taking in her request to contact Councillor Alto for comment.

Anthony Danda

Here is a response I got from one member of the City Family as to why minutes were not available for the public to read. It happened only after I accused them of secrecy. Charlayne Thornton-Joe wrote:

"The City Family did not have minutes mostly because we were respecting the First Nation's Tradition of oral history. Which means we talked, we continued to talk, we went to the Songhees First Nation Chief and Council and spoke, then to Esquimalt Nations Chief and Council and spoke. Our conversations were witnessed by those in attendance which we then shared with Council in a report."

I find this response unsatisfactory, to put it mildly.

The monies came out of the public purse, to which we all contribute.

Reconciliation is of supreme importance to all of us. City Family must be accountable to all of us, not only to one group, otherwise reconciliation can be turned into a double-edged sword.

Anna Cal

Fresh out of Domani

In *Focus*' last edition, Gene Miller suggested that there is an accelerating drama playing out in the communities of Greater Victoria, as he puts it, a "cultural battle about how to live with strong implications for land use." My regular dog walks around north Gonzales in Victoria and over into Oak Bay seem to confirm this, judging by the lawns and utility poles festooned with signs exhorting passersby to "Stop Over Development by Oak Bay United Church—Respect our Neighbourhoods" and "Say No to Large Urban Village." Clearly these proposals are seen by many residents as threats to their sense of home and community and "the social connections and relationships these places foster." Why can't we, as Gene once asked me in the checkout line at Capital Iron, just let people living in Fairfield and other established neighbourhoods put in secondary suites and the occasional garden cottage, rather than have to accommodate townhouses, and apartment buildings too?

As he notes further in his column, story comes first, policy follows, as we try to make the story come true. As the "technocrat" who led the planning team at the City of Victoria which developed the Official Community Plan in 2012, rather than trying to foist some mechanistic abstraction on Victoria, we were trying to put into bylaw language the story about Victoria's future that emerged through a year-long consultation with more than 6,000 city residents. The story was about the value Victorians put on the quality of this place, and how it could grow and change over time in a manner that respected its essential character, becoming even more a city with a lively, walkable downtown surrounded by humane neighbourhoods, each with a village centre that put a nugget of urbanity and a focus for community life within walking distance of everyone. Turning any vision—whether of a city's future or, as I have been involved in for the past two years, a house—into reality requires shifting narrative gears to something more like a script, with inevitable and essential quantities and metrics. In other words a strategy.

The strategy proposed in Victoria's OCP calls for accommodating half of the forecast growth for the next 25 to 30 years, about 10,000 people, in the downtown core area; another 8,000 in 12 urban villages (all focused on existing places); with the remaining 2,000 people scattered throughout the remainder of the city's neighbourhoods. It's always possible that more people could choose to move to Victoria, but these estimates are consistent with what we have experienced over the past 25 years.

Contrary to what Gene Miller asserts in his column, a close reading of the OCP reveals a more nuanced understanding of community than simply as a collective market for local retail. Anyone who wants to know what a Large Urban Village (LUV) looks like just has to stand in front of the Beagle Pub on Cook Street and look around—Cook Street Village, and the surrounding residential area within a 10-minute walk composed of single detached houses, duplexes, four-plexes, townhouses, and apartments is the model. Victorians said unequivocally back in 2010-2012 that they wanted more of this—the sense of community, the local identity, the opportunity for face-to-face transactions with neighbours and friends—throughout the city. Also, they wanted to be able to reach shopping and community services on foot, which means that if you want a grocery store similar to the Thrifty Foods at Ross Bay, you need a local market area in the order of 15,000 people. Roughly what you find in James Bay.

What strikes me in all these numbers, particularly with respect to the urban villages and neighbourhoods, is just how modest they are outside of Downtown: about 80 people per year spread across Victoria's neighbourhoods; 320 across 12 urban villages. If we want to keep shopping, schools and community services viable in some of Victoria's neighbourhoods, in particular places like my neighbourhood Gonzales, where population has been flat or declining for years, these numbers are not likely enough. Victoria may have to try, as Gene Miller once advocated back in his Urban Development Institute days, to grab a bigger share of regional growth than forecast.

In my view, this distribution of new growth is too canted towards the Downtown and urban villages, where the predominant house form in the future will be apartments, whether rental or ownership. That works well for seniors and young singles, but less well for families with children. While some families are choosing to live in apartments, the majority would prefer a home with a yard of some kind, a challenge to provide in Victoria's high-cost housing market, where a 5,000-square-foot lot with a modest house can cost upwards of $700,000 to $1 million depending on the neighbourhood. If we want to provide more opportunities for families to live in Victoria, we need to find room for more affordable ground-oriented housing—secondary suites, garden cottages, duplexes, four and six plexes, townhouses and freehold rowhouses—what current housing jargon calls "missing middle housing" in Victoria's neighbourhoods, and not just in Burnside, Hillside-Quadra, Oaklands and Jubilee; in Fairfield, Rockland, and Gonzales too.

I don't know if the obvious intimations of societal collapse surveyed so well in Miller's column are behind the land-use conflict in

The empirical science and wisdom of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Japanese Style Acupuncture

From detailed abdominal palpation and diagnosis to moxibustion, ion pumping cords, magnets, microneedles and other tools, Japanese Style Acupuncture provides a gentle and effective way of dealing with many health conditions.

Dr. Katrine Hegillman has been in practice for 19 years, obtaining her diploma in Traditional Chinese Medicine in 1999 at ICTCM in Vancouver. Since she was introduced to the practice of Japanese Style Acupuncture in 2005, she has fully immersed herself in its continuing study and practice, particularly with Ikeda Masakazu Sensei and Kiiko Matsumoto Sensei Style of Acupuncture. Dr. Hegillman uses both Chinese and Japanese traditions to help her patients heal from a wide variety of conditions and to maintain optimal health.

In traditional Japanese Acupuncture, abdominal (hara) palpitation is central, though Dr. Hegillman also relies on pulse and tongue for diagnosis. Using hara, Dr. Hegillman can discover long-standing stagnations from physical and emotional trauma, immune and digestive issues, gynecological issues, adrenal weaknesses, and chronic pain and stress.

Such palpation also allows her to monitor the treatment as she goes along, telling her immediately if the needle placement is working as desired. The patient can witness the shift themselves as well and witness their body change. The needles are thinner in diameter than those used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and inserted more shallowly, because, says Dr. Hegillman, the electro-magnetic charge that is responsible for the energy flow of the body is quite superficial.

Dr. Hegillman's teacher also introduced his followers to a type of acupuncture with no needle insertion which is designed especially for children. Paediatric acupuncture is recommended for developmental issues, digestive issues, allergies, nervousness, sleep issues and immune weakness.

At the other end of the aging spectrum, Dr. Hegillman helps older folks with effective anti-aging regimes, including facial acupuncture. Recently, while doing a presentation in a retirement home, she was delighted when a beautiful, well-spoken woman looking to be about 60 years old, confessed she was 93 and credited weekly acupuncture treatments.

"Dr. Katrine Hegillman is a most gifted healer and absolutely excellent practitioner of both Chinese and Japanese medicine. She has a wealth of knowledge and with keen intuition diagnoses health problems and body issues quickly and accurately. Her technique of setting needles is fantastic and painless. Her guidance with nutrition and herbal remedies is spot on."

—Christine K.

"I appreciate her consultative approach. She answers all my questions allowing me to understand my system better; I feel part of the process." *—Gale P.*

Dr. Katrine Hegillman with patient

One of the more miraculous tools in the Japanese Style of Acupuncture was invented by Dr. Yoshio Manaka, MD: "Ion pumping cords." They work well for those with acute or long-term issues from concussions, chronic pain, or burns. This technique was discovered by Dr. Manaka shortly after the horrific bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. With patients suffering intense pain from radiation burns, he figured out how to use a radio diode to pull ions out of patients' damaged skin to release the pain (a burn involves positive ions irritating the nerve endings). Since Dr. Manaka was also fully trained as an acupuncturist, he used his discovery in burns and ion theory, and integrated it into Acupuncture Meridian Theory, creating comprehensive sets of treatments that involve attaching positive and negative ends of the diode to an acupuncture point to obtain a therapeutic effect.

These oriental medicine approaches are very practical, says Dr. Hegillman: "We look for which organ is constitutionally weak or traumatized, blocked or diseased. We treat, and then learn through our palpatory technique if we have released the problem. Once energy and blood circulate smoothly, the body can begin to heal itself. We as practitioners facilitate exactly that."

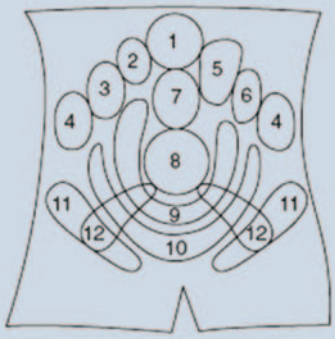
Another illustration of efficacy can be found in Chinese herbal medicine (CHM), a key component of TCM, in use for thousands of years and in which Dr. Hegillman is fully trained. Specific formulas have now been scientifically proven to help, for instance, patients undergoing chemotherapy. "Platelets can plummet with such treatment," notes Dr. Hegillman, but classic Chinese herbs have been scientifically investigated by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (a division of the US National Institute of Health) and shown to help keep platelet levels high enough for the treatment to be tolerated. Nausea and vomiting are also reduced.

Dr. Hegillman has produced Oriri's own line of organic herbal products. Her "Oriri Brain Rain" is especially good for those looking for mental alertness without the caffeine. An old European remedy from her early days in Poland inspired her to produce an amber-based tincture which was used for centuries in Europe and aids respiratory conditions including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia; it has been shown in scientific study to fight antibiotic-resistant gram-positive bacteria.

Dr. Hegillman is working with the Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine of BC towards integration of TCM into mainstream medical services, allowing more patients to get access and insurance coverage so they can benefit from this ancient practice in the modern world.

Key to the Hara Zones

1	Heart
2	Gall bladder
3	Liver
4	Lung
5	Stomach
6	Triple heater
7	Heart protector
8	Spleen
9	Kidney
10	Bladder
11	Large intestine
12	Small intestine



Katrine B. Hegillman BSc Dr TCM
Oriri Acupuncture
& Herbal Medicine Centre
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Victoria's waterfront communities. Similar dramas have played out repeatedly over the 20-plus years I have lived and worked here. There is constant tension between the desire of residents for community stability and control, and broader civic and regional challenges related to growth management, equity and social inclusivity. All of these dimensions need to be taken into account as we work our way through neighbourhood change and try to ensure that we maintain and enhance the qualities of community and place we love.

Saying "Stop" and "No" are not in the long run effective or fair strategies to ensure we get the communities we want. My worry, as I look around the room at community meetings on the Gonzales Neighbourhood Plan, and see a lot of people of my vintage expressing genuine hostility to the possibility of accepting even a few of these housing forms in the neighbourhood, is that what purports to be a concern for community character and respect for neighbourhoods is just plain old entitled exclusion. As Pat Carney once wrote about the Gulf Islands, the galvanizing ethos all too often seems to be: "I'm all right Jack, now pull up the ladder."

Victoria's waterfront neighbourhoods have some of the highest quality of life in the region, with access to the finest parks and views, along with easy access to transit, community amenities such as schools and, yes, shopping, on foot and by cycle. Their populations have been flat for years, and other neighbourhoods have taken on the lion's share of the civic work of accommodating rental and social housing. Those of us who live in them, many old guys like Gene and I, who had the great good fortune to buy in 20 or 30 years ago when prices were still relatively affordable, shouldn't squat on these neighbourhoods like dragons on a hoard of gold. Young people express a lot more acceptance of different housing forms in these communities, seeing in them the only conceivable way that they could ever possibly afford to live here. For the sake of healthy community life now, and future vibrancy, we need to welcome more people into our neighbourhoods, and let them evolve into richer, more complex places.

Mark Hornell

Public land and Northern Junk proposal

With regards to Ken Johnson's letter "Public lands being sold to Northern Junk developer," it seems to me that the real controversy over the Northern Junk property begins with the decision to preserve two abandoned buildings that are certainly old but that hardly seem to have any real heritage value. I am trying to imagine Victorians from the 1860s, or the 1910s, or the 1950s, or even the 1980s understanding why Victorians in 2018 would go out of their way to keep these two Northern Junk buildings standing. They were tiny little warehouses and, let's face it, they aren't that pretty and represent a bit of an eyesore at the "Gateway to Victoria."

It seems to me that a lot of people in this region would be quite content to see the Northern Junk building knocked down and have that entire property turned into a green space that would also open up the view of the harbour instead of the proposed multistorey structure that does the exact opposite.

When council finally gets around to having a referendum on the borrowing of money that might be required for the new Crystal Pool, they might want to consider killing two birds with one stone and ask Victorians what their preference is for the fate of the Northern Junk property.

Trevor Amon

Will Premier Horgan protect our water?

"All you need is two eyes to see it's a bad idea to put toxic soils in a watershed looking down on the drinking water for 12,000 people." This was John Horgan speaking to the Save Shawnigan Water rally at the BC legislature in 2015.

A huge pile of 100,000 tonnes of contaminated soil sits in a quarry a few kilometres above Shawnigan Lake, awaiting a government decision. The soil contains hydrocarbons, sulphur, arsenic, chromium, lead and other heavy metals, all known to be dangerous to human health. About 12,000 people rely on the Shawnigan Lake watershed for their drinking water.

In January 2017, Justice Robert Sewell of the BC Supreme Court found so many deficiencies with the Shawnigan site's permitting process that he ordered the permit to be sent back to the Environmental Appeal Board. The government cancelled the permit soon after Sewell's decision, but it put off the decision on whether to remove the mountain of contaminated soil at the site.

Over 18 months later, as the approaching rainy season brings increased risk of leaching, government inaction is making the Shawnigan community increasingly anxious.

Sewell found that the conduct of quarry owner Cobble Hill Holdings (CHH) and its silent partner Active Earth Engineering "compromised the integrity of the approval process." He also found that CHH co-owner Martin Block "was not being truthful in the evidence he gave with respect to the nature of the relationship between Active Earth and CHH." "It is quite clear that the information provided to the [Environmental Appeal] Board by Mr Block was false." Justice Sewell's findings confirmed a secret 50/50 partnership between the company and the engineers.

The Shawnigan community is united in wanting the soil removed, and the long delay has many residents worried. "The contaminated soil should never have come here in the first place," said Sierra Acton, Shawnigan area director at the Cowichan Valley Regional District. "It was completely opposed by the community even before the misleading evidence found by Justice Sewell. If the soil is not removed, it isn't a question of if poisons will leach into the Shawnigan community drinking water, it's a question of when. The community will not stand for it."

Where does the NDP government stand on this? Premier Horgan is on record against the contaminated site at Shawnigan numerous times. The big question now is will Premier Horgan be as good as his word? Will he order the removal of the contaminated soil to safeguard drinking water, as his government should? Or will he do nothing, and leave the soil where it sits, setting the stage for much more expensive remedial action down the road.

This much is clear: the government may have changed, but it is "business as usual" at the Ministry of Environment. Despite the obvious conflict of interest, the Ministry still does not require that engineers be independent from the projects they are monitoring for the government.

The site monitoring reports posted on the Ministry of Environment website are stamped by an engineer who was a partner at Active Earth Engineering at the time of the secret agreement denounced by Justice Sewell. The Ministry still appears to see no potential conflict of interest with this monitoring arrangement.

Will Premier Horgan walk his talk and order the soil removal himself? Clearly, the fate of Shawnigan drinking water is in his hands.

Blaise Salmon,
Shawnigan Research Group

LETTERS
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Charitable Giving: It's part of the picture for investors

Investment Advisors Neil Chappell and Graham Isenegger have always made it a priority to listen to their clients' wealth needs and goals. Years ago, they took this commitment further, recognizing that clients wanted their investments to align with their values. They established the Blue Heron Advisory Group at CIBC Wood Gundy, providing clients with customized solutions. "Our clients want to grow and preserve their wealth in a way that respects environmental, social and governance factors," says Graham.

Graham and Neil developed a wealth of knowledge around sustainable investing and now offer four discretionary portfolios, all based on high-quality third-party research. Their research enables them to screen for strong companies in terms of governance, the environment and social considerations. "What we found is that corporations that have high ethical standards, and work hard to be sustainable, usually perform better financially as well," says Graham.

Some clients are surprised to learn that the Blue Heron Advisory Group can also help with their charitable giving efforts, including supporting local causes.

"Many clients quietly go about doing good. They put a lot of thought into what their money can do now and when they pass on," notes Neil. "We help our clients support local charities by creating a tailored legacy plan that addresses their wishes and the organization's needs." For instance, a charity may not be best served by a large lump sum; it may be better to have an annual endowment, perhaps in support of a special project.

The Blue Heron Advisory Group has also invested their own money and time into local charities. They sponsor plays at the Belfry Theatre, and Paddle for Health, which is dedicated to enhancing the lives of cancer patients and their families. The Blue Heron Advisory Group boosts local businesses by sponsoring Victoria community micro-lending initiatives.

A few years ago, Jessica Duncan, a Blue Heron client, was raising funds to sponsor breakfasts for school children. "There are just too many kids going to school hungry," says Jessica. "Most breakfast programs are run by the parent advisory councils (PACs) and are often strapped for cash, as are the school districts." She asked Neil and Graham if they'd like to pitch in $40 to pay for 100 servings of organic cinnamon and raisin porridge she had developed through her company. Neil and Graham loved the idea. Today, 15-20 schools participate with up to 2,000 healthy breakfasts served monthly, all paid for by the Blue Heron Advisory Group.

"We help our clients support local charities by creating a tailored legacy plan that addresses their wishes and the organization's needs."
—Neil Chappell

"Our clients want to grow and preserve their wealth in a way that respects environmental, social and governance factors."
—Graham Isenegger

"We look for the same qualities in our community that we look for in an investment—smart, sustainable, well-run organizations that make a positive impact," says Neil. He is also active in CIBC's Victoria Branch Miracle Day, which in 2017 raised over $308K in trading commissions which were donated to children's charities in the Victoria community.

Of course, Graham and Neil are also keen to show clients how they can help their wealth grow by investing in the sustainable, best-practice companies that make up the funds in Blue Heron's family of discretionary portfolios.

Clients Gavin and Jessica Duncan said, "Graham and Neil have created a portfolio that has shown steady growth while giving us the peace of mind that our dollars are not funding unsavoury practices. Graham and Neil are there every step of the way, always willing to take time to explain how our investments are doing, and provide the best options to meet our personal needs."

Most importantly, the Blue Heron Advisory Group works with clients to develop a plan that meets their financial needs and goals; these plans are regularly reviewed with clients and updated as needed. "What's important to clients is at the centre of what we do," says Neil. Taking a patient, long-term approach to managing wealth means the Blue Heron Advisory Group builds long-term, trusted relationships while providing tailored investment solutions.

Contact the Blue Heron Advisory Group at 250-361-2284, email blueheronadvisorygroup@cibc.ca, or visit www.blueherongroup.ca for more information.

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Ross Crockford 18 Judith Lavoie 20 Russ Francis 22 Briony Penn 24 Russ Francis 26

The mayors' million-dollar cover-up

DAVID BROADLAND

Did Stan Lowe defame Mayor Helps and Mayor Desjardins? Or did the Police Complaint Commissioner pull his punches?

Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe's recent report on the 2015 investigation of Victoria Police Chief Frank Elsner made several damning assertions about the conduct of Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps and Esquimalt Mayor Barb Desjardins. The mayors conducted an internal investigation under their authority as Co-chairs of the Victoria Police Board. Lowe issued his report less than a month before the October 20 civic elections in which both mayors were seeking to keep their jobs. Helps told a *Times Colonist* reporter that Lowe's report "feels like character assassination." "I'm going to have someone look at the report carefully and see if it's defamatory. It feels defamatory," she complained to the *TC's* Louise Dickson.

Stan Lowe

The *Times Colonist's* coverage of Lowe's report, in the weeks before the election, did not include any of the details of Lowe's allegations against the mayors, but instead focussed on his general recommendation that BC's *Police Act* should be amended to remove mayors as the designated disciplinary authority in cases where allegations are made against a police chief or a deputy police chief. Both Helps and Desjardins made a big show of their agreement with that one aspect of Lowe's report, and that was well-covered by the *Times Colonist*. But the paper's focus on the mayors' "agreement" with Lowe's report had the effect of obscuring the stinging rebuke Lowe levelled at the mayors for several actions they took, or failed to take, during the 2015 investigation. The *TC* did include a short editorial before the election that noted the mayors had lied to journalists about whether Elsner had even been under investigation. But that was it. So in the absence of any responsible coverage coming from the *Times Colonist*, *Focus* will pursue this story over the coming months, starting with providing readers with the details in Lowe's report that demand further explanation—especially from Helps and Desjardins.

Below, I will outline several assertions about the mayors' handling of the internal investigation that Lowe included. Together, they constitute what Lowe called a "strong arguable case" that the mayors "had predetermined the outcome of the internal discipline process from the outset, and set about navigating a course to allow the former chief to remain in his post." I will also draw the reader's attention to an event that occurred during the investigation—a potentially criminal obstruction of justice committed by Elsner. Lowe's report provided little insight into whether the mayors may have abetted that obstruction. So let's start at the beginning.

In late August 2015, Helps and Desjardins were informed that Twitter messages between Victoria Police Chief Frank Elsner and the wife of a subordinate VicPD officer had been found. (Court documents show that the messages have been characterized as being "sexually charged.") The mayors informed the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner. The OPCC agreed to allow an internal investigation of the matter subject to certain preconditions under which the mayors committed to conduct their investigation. Taking the route of an internal investigation meant the mayors would have the authority to decide what disciplinary action, if any, would be taken following an investigation that was conducted by private lawyer Patricia Gallivan. The alternative to that course of action would have been a public trust investigation set up and monitored by OPCC. Under that arrangement the mayors would have had no control of the outcome.

The mayors' internal investigation seemed to go off the tracks at the first curve, in early September, 2015. One of Lowe's preconditions for allowing the mayors to act as the disciplinary authority was that they would personally ensure that the affected VicPD officer (aka "the husband") knew what had occurred between his wife and Elsner, and that once the officer had been fully informed, he would be asked whether he would prefer an internal or external investigation.

But Lowe's report notes: "In my review of the internal investigation it was evident to the mayors that the affected spouse, the husband, had been materially misinformed by [Elsner] regarding the matter, and they chose not to correct his misapprehension of the circumstance. They then confirmed [to OPCC] the husband's decision to proceed with an internal process, without disclosing that the husband had been misinformed by [Elsner]. Furthermore, the mayors did not expand the investigation to include this apparent misconduct, nor report it to our office as required. This conduct by [Elsner] falls in the most serious range of misconduct and has resulted in his dismissal from policing by Retired Judge Baird Ellan."

Here we need to digress briefly from the timeline to draw your attention to an error made by Lowe in that paragraph. Lowe's report notes elsewhere that Judge Carol Baird Ellan actually imposed "30 days' suspension, demotion to the rank of constable and training on ethical standards," on Elsner for misleading the husband, not "dismissal from policing." Baird Ellan's two verdicts of "dismissal from policing" came as a result of two other cases of misconduct by Elsner, both of which took place during Gallivan's internal investigation. Lowe is oddly silent on these more serious cases of misconduct. Did Helps and Desjardins sweep that misconduct under the rug, too? We'll come back to this question later. (In response to questions posed by *Focus*, OPCC quickly acknowledged the above error.)

So let's go back to the timeline. We'll include comments the mayors have made as we go along. Mayor Helps has previously provided *Focus* with her perspective on Lowe's allegation about the mayors' conduct as it related to Elsner's misleading of the husband. She stated that the "false information" provided by Elsner was "completely beyond our control" and that the mayors had been given no mandate by OPCC to investigate this additional misconduct. We might ask ourselves, though, if the mayors were aware that Elsner had lied to his subordinate officer about his relationship with the officer's wife, why wouldn't the mayors have taken that information to Lowe's office? Lowe has been adamant that his office instructed the mayors to bring such developments to his attention. Moreover, Lowe highlighted in his report an example that demonstrated "the mayors were aware

DURING THE CIVIC ELECTION, supporters of Helps and Desjardins characterized Lowe's report as being everything from a fascistic attack against community-based policing to the patriarchy attempting to put strong female leaders in their place. But it appears, based on the evidence available so far, that the mayors simply engaged in an expensive cover-up.

of their discretion to expand the scope of the investigation." Desjardins had asked Gallivan to investigate whether Elsner had retaliated against any other VicPD employee, which was an expansion of the investigation. So Helps' excuse of "no mandate" seems doubly implausible.

How, exactly, did Elsner mislead his subordinate officer? Court records show that Elsner told the officer on September 8, 2015 that "no inappropriate communication or contact of any sort" had taken place between Elsner and the officer's wife. The private conversation between Elsner and the officer took place in an unidentified Victoria park, according to court records.

As Gallivan's internal investigation proceeded through that September and October, she became aware of additional allegations against Elsner: bullying, and harassment of female VicPD employees. In agreeing to allow the mayors to conduct an investigation into Elsner's illicit Twitter communications, Lowe says "there was a clear understanding among all concerned that if, during the course of the investigation, any information came to light about conduct by any police officer that may constitute misconduct, our office was to be informed so that I could determine whether the conduct should be addressed as a public trust matter."

The record shows, however, that the mayors withheld from Lowe any hint about the bullying and harassment allegations until well after they had made their decision about how Elsner should be disciplined—a letter of reprimand on his file. Moreover, the mayors apparently tried to hide these allegations from Lowe *even after* he had asked for all their records. Let me take you through the details of that.

In his report, Lowe recalls, "Based on my review of internal communications, notes and evidence summaries, it is apparent that by October 20, 2015, the internal investigator [Gallivan] had reported to the mayors that numerous witnesses had made allegations of bullying and harassment against the former chief. These witnesses included members and civilian staff; the nature of the harassment was characterized as 'inappropriate comments and behaviour towards women,' which included inappropriate physical contact. Despite receiving this information, the mayors chose not to expand the investigator's mandate to include these allegations. On the contrary, the correspondence indicates that they instructed the investigator not to pursue those allegations or consider them in any respect in drafting the investigation report because they were 'outside the scope of the investigator's mandate.'"

Focus recently asked Mayor Helps' for comment on a summary of Lowe's numerous allegations about the mayors' handling of the investigation. Helps wrote: "…there's much I'd like to dispute and explain. I'm balancing my desire to fight back with the need for us to move on as a community." Helps addressed only one of Lowe's allegations, that the mayors instructed Gallivan not to investigate the allegations of Elsner's bullying and harassment of women. This allegation is one of the most challenging and potentially damaging to the mayors' political reputations. Helps told *Focus* she and Desjardins asked Gallivan "to document the allegations of bullying and harassment in a cover letter accompanying her final investigation report. This is what we did, with the intention that the cover letter and the final report would be handed to the OPCC for his consideration of the new allegations." But Gallivan's cover letter somehow went missing from the material sent to Lowe.

Lowe's report notes: "The first time my office learned of any allegations of bullying and workplace harassment was through the Victoria City Police Union, which provided information and materials to my office after the [December 3, 2015] disciplinary decision made by the mayors."

The implication here is that the mayors tried to hide the harassment and bullying allegations from Lowe's office by not providing him with the only document that showed such allegations had been made—Gallivan's cover letter. In her written response to our questions, Helps blamed a mistake made by an executive assistant for the circumstances that led to Gallivan's letter not being included in the information the mayors provided to Lowe at his request.

But, again, Helps' explanation seems implausible, perhaps evasive. According to Lowe, Gallivan had reported these allegations to the mayors by October 20, 2015. Gallivan's subsequent written report is dated November 16. The mayors wrote their discipline decision on December 3. So there was a 45-day period—between first being informed of these allegations and making their discipline decision—during which Helps and Desjardins knew about the allegations but did not notify Lowe's office, as they had been directed to do if additional allegations arose.

What had Gallivan reported to the mayors? The cover letter for her investigation report included "allegations" of "Yelling at senior colleagues and being insulting and demeaning," and "Inappropriate comments and behaviour towards women including coming up behind a female colleague who was standing at a desk and with his body pinning her to the desk." It seems clear enough that some action by the mayors would have been warranted.

Gallivan's cover letter went on to note, "I understand that you are now considering how to address those allegations." She also offered her company's services to investigate the allegations further. But, inexplicably, the mayors appear to have done nothing. What were they considering? Do they have written proof that they were considering anything other than sweeping the allegations under the rug? If they do, why haven't the mayors provided that proof?

By the way, the allegations against Elsner of bullying and harassment were eventually confirmed by an external investigation and warranted a finding of "Discreditable Conduct" by Judge (retired) Ian Pitfield.

Most of Lowe's allegations about the mayors' conduct centre on events that occurred just before and just after Helps and Desjardins made their decision on December 3, 2015 on how Elsner would be disciplined.

For example, Lowe alleges the mayors rushed to make a decision on December 3 once they were told by their own legal counsel, Marcia McNeil, that rumours about an investigation of Elsner were circulating and that reporters would soon be asking questions. It appears the mayors wanted to be able to deny that an investigation was underway—by concluding it that very same day. Indeed, each of them made statements to reporters within days that first denied an investigation had taken place, and then—when they were forced to acknowledge the investigation—mischaracterized it.

On December 4, 2015, Mayor Helps was asked by a Global TV journalist whether Elsner was being investigated. Helps responded: "No. The [Police] Board has full confidence in our chief. He's the best thing that's happened to this town and Esquimalt in a long time." Desjardins made a similarly misleading statement to *Vancouver Sun* reporter Rob Shaw and, a few days later, while acknowledging that

an investigation had taken place, she mischaracterized the investigation to a CFAX reporter by claiming the investigation had found "there was no relationship" between Elsner and the wife of his subordinate officer. The investigation was instead, Desjardins said, about "an inappropriate use of social media."

In fact, the mayors' investigator, Gallivan, had previously provided the mayors with a written report that (according to court records) concluded that Elsner "did not have a sexual relationship…but did exchange 'tweets' with her that were sexually charged and that the exchange constituted an inappropriate relationship."

Mayor Helps' December 4, 2015 statement to the Global TV journalist is particularly worthy of attention considering what we now know she knew when she made that statement. Besides the fact that she lied to the journalist about the existence of an investigation, she added, without any prompting, "He's the best thing that's happened to this town and Esquimalt in a long time."

Think about that. Helps made this statement with the full knowledge that Elsner had lied to his subordinate officer about his involvement with the officer's wife and had also been accused of multiple cases of bullying and harassment of female VicPD employees.

When she made that statement, 45 days had passed during which she could have investigated—but didn't—VicPD female employees' claims of what some would consider to be sexual assault by Elsner. Gallavin had offered her company's services to that end, but the mayors had declined. Helps also had 45 days during which she could have informed Lowe's office and sought his advice, but didn't. She'd had 45 days in which to think about whether to support the women who made the allegations. In the end, she sided with a powerful, deceitful man accused of physical and sexual harassment and characterized him as "the best thing that's happened…in a long time."

Mayor Helps could now easily clear up any impression that she has acted improperly by providing written records showing, for example, that she and Desjardins were planning on doing something about those allegations besides sitting on them. Those records, if they exist, could be submitted to a public inquiry.

Mayor Helps' and Mayor Desjardins' separate claims to media on December 4, 2015 of "no investigation" make it evident they were trying to protect Elsner and were willing to deceive the public to accomplish that. Lowe's account of all the things the two mayors did to cover up Elsner's misconduct needs to be considered in the light of that public deception. Rather than libelling the mayors, as Helps has claimed, Lowe appears to have been overly polite in describing their multi-layered cover-up as "navigating a course to allow the former chief to remain in his post." The mayors appear to have attempted to deceive Lowe in several ways. All of these apparent deceptions amount to a perception of an obstruction of justice—not necessarily according to the Canadian Criminal Code definition of "obstruction of justice," but certainly in the plain meaning of the words.

Both Helps and Desjardins have complained about Lowe's report, but neither has provided any evidence to counter Lowe's very specific claims. Deputy Police Complaint Commissioner Rollie Woods has encouraged Helps and Desjardins to request a public inquiry. "If they think they've been hard done by in any way in this report, we have a considerable body of evidence we would be willing to provide at any public inquiry so the truth would certainly come out," Woods told The Canadian Press. So far, neither mayor has requested a public inquiry.

Considering what was revealed in Lowe's report, it's unlikely that either mayor would want, or support, a public inquiry. But one aspect of the mayors' conduct that's *missing* from Lowe's report reinforces the need for a public inquiry: Were the mayors provided with enough information by Gallivan's investigation that they should have immediately dismissed Elsner for cause?

Lowe's report observes that Judge Baird Ellan determined Elsner should be dismissed from policing for each of two specific actions he took: First, Elsner lied to the mayors' investigator, Patricia Gallivan, during the mayors' internal investigation in 2015. Secondly, Elsner attempted to procure a false statement from another VicPD employee. This, too, occurred during Gallivan's investigation. Indeed, Baird Ellan's commentary on Elsner's misleading of Gallivan, which Lowe included in his report, notes: "There is authority for the proposition that providing a false statement in an administrative investigation can be a criminal obstruction of justice..." Yet Lowe's report sheds no light on whether or not Gallivan informed the mayors of this misconduct.

If she had—in either case—the mayors would have been in a position to fire Elsner for cause back in the fall of 2015. That would have saved Victoria and Esquimalt taxpayers close to $1M in costs that were incurred as a consequence of the mayors' handling of the matter.

Focus asked OPCC if Gallivan had provided the mayors with information about Elsner's attempt to mislead her and his attempt to procure a false statement. Deputy Police Complaint Commissioner Rollie Woods acknowledged that the attempt to procure a false statement had occurred during Gallivan's investigation, but told *Focus* "there is no evidence to suggest that the investigator was aware of this conduct."

What about Elsner's attempt to mislead Gallivan, which earned him "dismissal from policing" and could be, as pointed out by Judge Baird Ellan, a case of "criminal obstruction of justice"? Did the mayors know about that?

In a written statement, Woods noted that this deceptive conduct was identified after OPCC reviewed "the evidence summaries contained in Ms. Gallivan's November 16, 2015 report to the mayors." Woods added, "The investigator did not address this conduct as a specific allegation of misconduct in her report; it would be up to the co-chairs to determine based on all of the evidence, what if any misconduct has been proven."

In other words, the evidence that Elsner had attempted to mislead Gallivan was in her report to the mayors; it had been up to the mayors to decide whether that evidence warranted an additional charge of misconduct. Again, if the mayors had contacted OPCC and asked whether Elsner's attempt to mislead Gallivan was misconduct, an early resolution of Elsner's fate might have been had. But the mayors did not ask questions. Why not? Did the mayors not understand that Elsner was engaged in a cover-up? Later, Judge Baird Ellan determined that Elsner's deception of Gallivan was the most serious case of misconduct, one that warranted dismissal from policing.

While Mayor Helps claims that she has been defamed by Lowe's report, Commissioner Lowe appears to have pulled his most serious punch. During the civic election, supporters of Helps and Desjardins characterized Lowe's report as being everything from a fascistic attack against community-based policing to the patriarchy attempting to put strong female leaders in their place. But it appears, based on the evidence available so far, that the mayors simply engaged in an expensive cover-up, and Lowe has called them on it. Is he right? A public inquiry would settle the matter. If the mayors don't support such an inquiry, it's reasonable to conclude that Lowe has called it correctly.

David Broadland is the publisher of *Focus*.

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All photos by Molly Cameron

—Reverend Al Tysick and friends

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Great politics vs. good governance

ROSS CROCKFORD

What will close the divisions laid bare by Victoria's election?

The line of voters at Margaret Jenkins Elementary ran along the wall of an entire hallway, and then back on the other side. Upon seeing it, one guy groaned aloud: "How long do we have to wait to get Lisa Helps out of office?"

The queue for the single vote-reading machine in the gymnasium took over an hour, and during the wait I heard more grousing. "She probably planned this, to keep us from voting," muttered one woman. When asked why she distrusted the mayor, the woman replied, "She won't clean the streets!"

I've lived in the City of Victoria for 21 years now, and I can't recall a civic election as vocally acrimonious as the one held on October 20. In the past, City politics often seemed like professional water polo—an obscure sport, passionately followed by a few. No longer. Voter turnout was 43.5 percent, the highest in decades, and the stakes seemed bigger too. In various ways, the campaign touched upon reconciliation with First Nations (the Sir John A. statue), economic inequality (luxury condos vs. affordable housing), homelessness (tent cities), sexual harassment (the Elsner affair), and climate change (automobile parking vs. bike lanes)—issues far more exciting than the rezonings and bylaw rewordings that occupy most municipal councils.

Victoria is the only municipality in the capital region that tends to vote "ideologically," Royal Roads communications prof David Black told CHEK on election night, "where ideology or political identity is a strong feature of how people make their choices. In other municipalities, it's often about policy points, council governance, whose version of pragmatism you prefer. But in Victoria people vote in a way guided by political philosophy, and how what happens locally attaches to the political spectrum and to the world." True enough, but what Black missed is that it's a relatively recent phenomenon, amplified by Mayor Helps herself—and alienating many residents who simply want the City to issue permits, fix pipes, and protect them from fire and crime.

Certainly, "social media" played a part in sowing discord among Victoria's voters.

Virulent anti-Helps sites appeared and vanished from Facebook, and BC Proud blowhard Aaron Gunn cranked out videos calling the mayor a "disaster"—one released five days before the election racked up 18,000 views—which only ended up rallying her supporters. (The online enmity didn't come only from one side. When the City posted the election results on its Facebook page and commenting seniors bemoaned the outcome, younger posters mocked them: "We're just waiting for you to pack up, leave, and make it all better by not being here.")

Stephen Hammond and Lisa Helps discuss a "committee for the reparation of the social fabric"

What was new was that the vitriol spilled over into personal conversations. Just before the election, I went doorknocking with Mayor Helps, and then with newcouncil.ca candidate Stephen Hammond, in areas of Fernwood just a few blocks apart. The neighbourhood became a kind of Rorschach inkblot—it looked different, depending on who answered the questions.

Helps encountered only kind words at the doorstep. "I like what you've been doing," one woman said. A single father in social housing was grateful that he could cycle Downtown with his daughter on Pandora's protected bike lane. "I'm looking forward to this," said another woman, bracing for a hard-fought contest.

Hammond asked Fernwoodians, "Are you looking for a change of mayor and council?" and got completely different responses. "I'm so done with her," said one gardener, wearing a nurses' union t-shirt. "We've talked and talked and she won't f***ing listen." Another was frustrated with the mess regularly left by campers around the Sobering Centre nearby: "We've lived here for 14 years, and we'd like to see some solutions." The potential loss of trees and park space for a new Crystal Pool, the huge 207-unit development going up on the 1000-block of Pandora—the residents had no shortage of complaints. "The stuff I'm hearing is amazing," Hammond said.

But what is to be done with it? The voting is over, and somehow, the city has to mend its divisions. Helps seemed to acknowledge this on election night: "When you're on the campaign trail, you're the candidate, but after the election, you're the mayor," she told reporters. "That means I'm the mayor for everybody, even those who didn't vote for me, and I will work really hard on their behalf as well." Hammond came over to congratulate her on her victory, and they discussed creating "a committee for the reparation of the social fabric," she told CHEK. "Everyone has the best intentions of the community in mind."

However, the following Monday, she published an open letter to supporters, portraying her opponents quite differently. "We did it! Love, connection and a shared vision for our future triumphed over fear and anger," she wrote, claiming a "strongly renewed mandate"—as if the 57 percent of electors who didn't vote for her weren't just

THE MOST REMARKABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT of this year's election was the success of all three council candidates fielded by Together Victoria—Laurel Collins, Sharmarke Dubow, and Sarah Potts—all in their 30s, with backgrounds in community organizing.

PHOTO: JASON GUILLE

With three new councillors from Together Victoria, City of Victoria will be led by a new generation

wrong, but dangerously irrational. "As I move forward with my new council and as we take bold action for the future, we're going to continue to need your support," she encouraged the troops, "[s]o when we take bold action, please stand up and support us: in letters to the editor, on social media, and most importantly, in good old-fashioned, face-to-face conversations—this is how we truly build understanding."

Or tune out dissenting voices, perhaps. Since the mayor has already said she's not running for re-election in 2022, and has an apparent council majority on her side, one wonders if she will govern with ever-greater certainty—and whether the "reparation committee" is just warm air, like the "wider community conversation" promised about relocating the Sir John A. statue. (Prediction: the statue will remain in storage until the Council, unable to agree to any public site for it, sells it to a private buyer who installs it inside a pub.)

Newcouncil.ca says it will hold meetings in the coming weeks to discuss whether the organization will continue, and how. ("Given the fact that 8 of 9 votes on council are left of centre I think there will be a significant desire for a vocal opposition once the council starts making decisions based on ideology," one insider told me.) I asked Hammond if he'd remain involved, and if he'd join the mayor's "social fabric" committee. "Will see," he texted in reply.

WHETHER THE DIVISIONS IN VICTORIA will be healed depends not just on the mayor, of course, but on the council too—and whether it is able to properly oversee the management of the City and provide sensible directions to its staff.

The most remarkable accomplishment of this year's election was the success of all three council candidates fielded by Together Victoria—Laurel Collins, Sharmarke Dubow, and Sarah Potts—all in their 30s, with backgrounds in community organizing. Allied with returning councillors Ben Isitt and Jeremy Loveday, who kept their campaigns separate from Together's until just before the election, they'll form a five-vote majority, either approving the mayor's agenda, or able to set their own.

As journalist Sid Tafler recently reported in his online *Victoria Record*, one reason for Together's success was it spent the summer meeting with community groups across Victoria to find out what voters wanted, and accordingly develop their platform. Free transit for everyone under the age of 18, for example, more covered bicycle parking, more child care, more food gardens, more participatory budgeting and consultation on developments, and a new arts hub in the former Maritime Museum—all positive, appealing ideas, if light on details about how they'll be paid for.

The main issue for Together, though, is dealing with the crisis of affordable housing, which undoubtedly won them votes from Victoria's many renters, hit by renovictions and huge rent increases over the past decade. Together says it will ensure that 50 percent of all new housing built in the City is affordable (costing less than 30 percent of average household income), and demand greater amenity contributions from developers. Soon, as projects already in the pipeline come before council, we will see if Together sticks to these requirements, or developers pack up and decide to build elsewhere.

The new council will also have to deal quickly with a mess of detailed, practical issues, which the Together platform didn't fully anticipate, and for which ideology will provide few solutions.

In December, City staff will present possible alternative locations for a new Crystal Pool, and the associated costs, with the aim of applying for federal-provincial grants by the January 23 deadline; the grant guidelines also suggest that any one project is unlikely to get more than $13.5 million, meaning the City will likely need to find another $39M early next year to meet the pool's $69.4M budget.

Millions more will likely need to be found to pay for fendering on the Johnson Street Bridge, and to settle a lawsuit filed against the City by its contractors.

VicPD hasn't increased the size of its force in a decade, and is sure to demand funds for more officers in next spring's budget.

The neighbourhood plan for Gonzales was deferred until after the election, and James Bay's comes up next year, guaranteed to spark fights over the dense "urban villages" the City envisions there. And on it goes.

If Mayor Helps and our very new council successfully juggle all these issues, and oversee a well-run, financially stable civic government, they truly will bring Victorians together. But they'll also need to acknowledge that they don't know everything, and that they can't make huge decisions without listening to the public. Making the City work is up to them, but it's also up to us to keep talking about how best to do it.

Ross Crockford congratulates Victoria's recently elected officials, and wishes them the best. Really, he does.

Tent cities make the homeless more visible

JUDITH LAVOIE

Anger is often directed at the leaders of tent cities, but they seem to get results.

A heavy turquoise necklace complements the dress that Chrissy Brett is pulling on as she changes out of sweat pants and heavy boots that have warded off the chilly morning air at the temporary homeless encampment on West Saanich Road.

Brett is dressing for a meeting with Saanich Police Department representatives and, given the prickly history between homeless campers and Saanich police—including Brett's arrest after she blew an air horn at a firefighter—she is not sure how it will go.

It's another day of negotiation, media interviews and searching for the next likely camping spot for Brett, a compelling and polarizing figure who first came to the attention of Vancouver Island residents when the 2015/2016 tent city sprang up beside Victoria's courthouse.

Since then, as the homeless camp has moved around Greater Victoria, Brett has acted as spokeswoman and advocate, inevitably becoming a lightning rod for the criticism and abuse that comes with the emotionally fraught issue.

Called Mama Bear by campers, Brett, 43, sees her role more as a buffer than a leader. Decisions are shared, rules are enforced and a degree of protection is offered the most vulnerable, she explained.

Campers agreed that consensus guides the camp. "But, it's very helpful to have Chrissy as a spokesperson—and it's time we let a woman lead," said one man as he helped distribute juice made from donated fruit and fresh vegetables.

While some taxpayers, renters and homeowners complain bitterly about crime, discarded needles, and safety concerns when tent cities move into the area, Brett contends that most of the problems come from hangers-on and "weekend warriors."

"I think this has worked really well," she said, looking around at the scattered tents. "Well, maybe not from the public's point of view, but, look at the no-violence agreement that we have. It's created and enforced by people here, so there's that buy-in," she said, while patting Loyalty, an overweight, mixed-breed dog. That view is not shared by RCMP and Saanich police who say that trespassing, open drug use and theft is rampant in the vicinity of encampments. While the camps certainly draw attention to homelessness, the hostility they provoke can be destructive and divisive, and anger is often directed at leaders, who are accused of exacerbating the problem.

PHOTO: JUDITH LAVOIE

Chrissy Brett

A recent letter to the *Times Colonist* accused activists of turning the homeless into political pawns. A Saanich petition—calling for illegal tent cities to be shut down—pointed the finger of blame at political activists. Social media includes references to Chrissy and her crusaders, while a Facebook page, opposing tent cities and temporary modular housing, is crammed with bitter comments accusing homeless campers of trying to get something for nothing at the expense of law-abiding taxpayers.

Kathy Stinson, executive director of Victoria Cool Aid Society, which operates 472 units of housing in the city (with 166 more in development), said tent cities are polarizing because they make homelessness visible. "People don't always want to be confronted with these issues in our community. People on the margins are saying 'hey I am here, recognize me,'" she said.

Many of the campers have disabilities, mental health problems or addictions, and both supporters and critics agree that a certain amount of organization and leadership is needed for such a disparate group.

Reverend Al Tysick of the Dandelion Society said the homeless are a "hellish group to organize," and, during the courthouse tent city, there was major conflict between Brett and some campers. "It certainly needs leadership in respect of pulling together as much as you can and [Brett] did that," Tysick said. There were complaints about Brett coming in as an outsider telling them what to do, and she is often criticized for her showmanship and unwillingness to listen to the other side, said Tysick, but, against the backdrop of broken government promises, he understands why radical tactics are necessary. However, Brett's voice is weakened by a lack of support from community, church or First Nations leaders, Tysick said. "You need people who have got some credibility in the community, not just the shit-disturbers," he said.

Also, Brett's group of followers, despite consuming much of the oxygen, is dwindling in size, while unofficial camps proliferate around downtown Victoria, said Tysick, whose organization deals with some of the most needy.

Brett believes she does listen to critics and emphasizes she is willing to work with anyone interested in bettering life for the homeless population. Her work is based on integrated case management and experience gained from years of working as an advocate, combined with the teachings of elders from the Nuxalk and other First Nations, she said.

"Some authorities are totally willing to work with me and there are others, like Saanich PD and the RCMP, that see absolutely no value in community policing, which, in this day and age I think is pretty dangerous. They're the old-school, military type," said Brett, quickly pointing out that not all Saanich cops are hostile and that the Victoria police department sets an example of more enlightened policing.

She also dismisses a frequently-repeated story that she is not really homeless.

The story, however, has its roots in truth, for when she first felt compelled to light a sacred fire at the courthouse, she did have a home up-Island. But in July last year, the landlord took back the house and, because she was spending increasing amounts of time at the tent city, Brett decided to move her two youngest children to Victoria.

"I found a place and then in October I was cut off social assistance for investigation of fraud, so, for four months, I had no income and I lost the place. Then they decided there was no basis for the fraud investigations, but they decided the kids were not with me for 50 percent of the time, so they pay me as a single person on welfare—I get $382 a month," Brett said. She gets no shelter allowance (an additional $375). "So I am homeless."

> "UNFORTUNATELY, I THINK TENT CITIES ARE NECESSARY until government creates enough affordable options for people."—*Chrissy Brett*

Paul Christopher, founder of Better Choices Outreach, a group that provides comforts such as cigarettes and toothbrushes to homeless people, has watched Brett in action since the courthouse tent city. "I had some very good teachers at that tent city and one of them was Chrissy," he said. "I applaud what she is doing… She has great leadership skills. She's very good at dealing with the police, fire department and media and she is passionate about what she does." Brett has the ability and personality to hold things together when dealing with a difficult group of people, Christopher said, echoing others who refer to Brett's charisma.

In Nanaimo, where DisconTent city swelled to 300 and local hostility is palpable, campers were being guided by Surrey-based Alliance Against Displacement.

Organizer Amber McGrath, who is not homeless, said the group helps educate the homeless community about their rights, rather than act as leaders. "Just because they are homeless doesn't mean that they don't have a voice and that they can't politically make changes. We are trying to empower people to take control of their own autonomy, their own lives," she said.

Initial local government promises fell through and that is when the Alliance offered its experience and advice, McGrath said. That relationship has been extremely beneficial, "although I know a lot of people are angry with them right now," she said, adding that people have spat at her, thrown bottles and yelled obscenities.

But it has been worth it, she said. "[The Alliance] helped empower these people and showed what could be done through protest. I saw people's confidence grow and I saw people get some sense of stability," she said.

There is no doubt that tent cities have played a major part in forcing government to act on the homelessness crisis.

Since the disbandment of the courthouse camp in Victoria, 292 units of supportive housing have been created at 844 Johnson Street, Mount Edwards Court on Vancouver Street, the former Super 8 Hotel on Douglas Street and the former Tally Ho Hotel on Douglas Street, plus additional shelter beds. In addition, Our Place Society is on the verge of opening a new therapeutic recovery community for 50 men in the former youth detention facility in View Royal.

The Province has promised 2,000 units of modular housing, with a mix of temporary and permanent units, to be distributed around BC. So far, in the Capital Regional District, only 21 units for homeless Indigenous women are slated for Victoria because of difficulty in identifying suitable plots of land.

In Nanaimo, 170 temporary modular housing units are on order to be placed on city-owned land and on another lot purchased by the Province for $2 million. In all, $3.6 million is being invested by the Province. Pacifica Housing will operate the supportive housing.

This is a testament to the efficacy of tent cities, said McGrath. "I am so proud of them that they have done this. It's really empowering to say 'look at what you people did. You got housing,'" she said. "It's not enough for the people that we have here, but it's a darn good start."

Tysick agrees that tent cities have raised awareness and brought benefits, even though they take away from public sympathy, especially when campsites are left in disarray. "Without them, you wouldn't be doing this story. It's a constant topic around the council table. I think it's doing a lot of good and it's causing some money [for housing] to come to the city," he said.

Stinson agrees the tactics have forced governments into action."Keeping it front and centre has been very effective. It has certainly been constantly in the news," she noted.

The bottom line, however, is that although the new units have made a dent, the idea of permanent homes for all that need them remains a distant dream. Brett appreciates the improvements that have been made, but, repeating her homes-not-shelters mantra, she said there is still a long road ahead. "Unfortunately, I think tent cities are necessary until government creates enough affordable options for people," she said.

Judith Lavoie is an award-winning journalist specializing in the environment, First Nations, and social issues. Twitter @LavoieJudith.

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LNG Canada—a stranded asset?

RUSS FRANCIS

Canada's biggest-ever white elephant may never produce one gram of LNG—if we're lucky.

On October 2, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Premier John Horgan and LNG Canada CEO Andy Calitz announced the joint venture foreign partnership would go ahead with its "green" greenhouse gas (GHG)-spewing facility in Kitimat. In the days leading up to that announcement, several government news releases provided hints of what was to come in the effort to make it somehow compatible with realizing climate action targets. This is an old trick: When a government is planning to announce a significant project certain to be unpopular with a substantial portion of the population, not to mention climate scientists, chuck a few popular, green crumbs out the door beforehand.

Sure enough, on September 24, a mere eight days before LNG-Day, a news release told of a $10 million top-up for the existing Clean Energy Vehicle (CEV) Program. If the government will chip in $5,000 to help buy a Tesla Model 3 or a Nissan Leaf, what's not to like? The additional 2,400 CEVs expected under the top-up should avoid a total of 144,000 tonnes of GHG emissions over the vehicles' lifespans, which government documents typically estimate as 15 years. In other words, 9,600 tonnes annually.

Four days later, the government told us of another green-oriented taxpayer handout. On September 28, barely making it under the wire before the announcement, came the EfficiencyBC program, a revamp of an earlier version. In its present incarnation, each homeowner can collect up to $14,000 in incentives to upgrade heating systems, windows and doors. Commercial businesses can receive up to $200,000. The $24-million federal-BC program is expected to result in GHG reductions totalling 490,000 tonnes, accumulated through 2030. Over 12 years, that averages to approximately 40,800 tonnes annually.

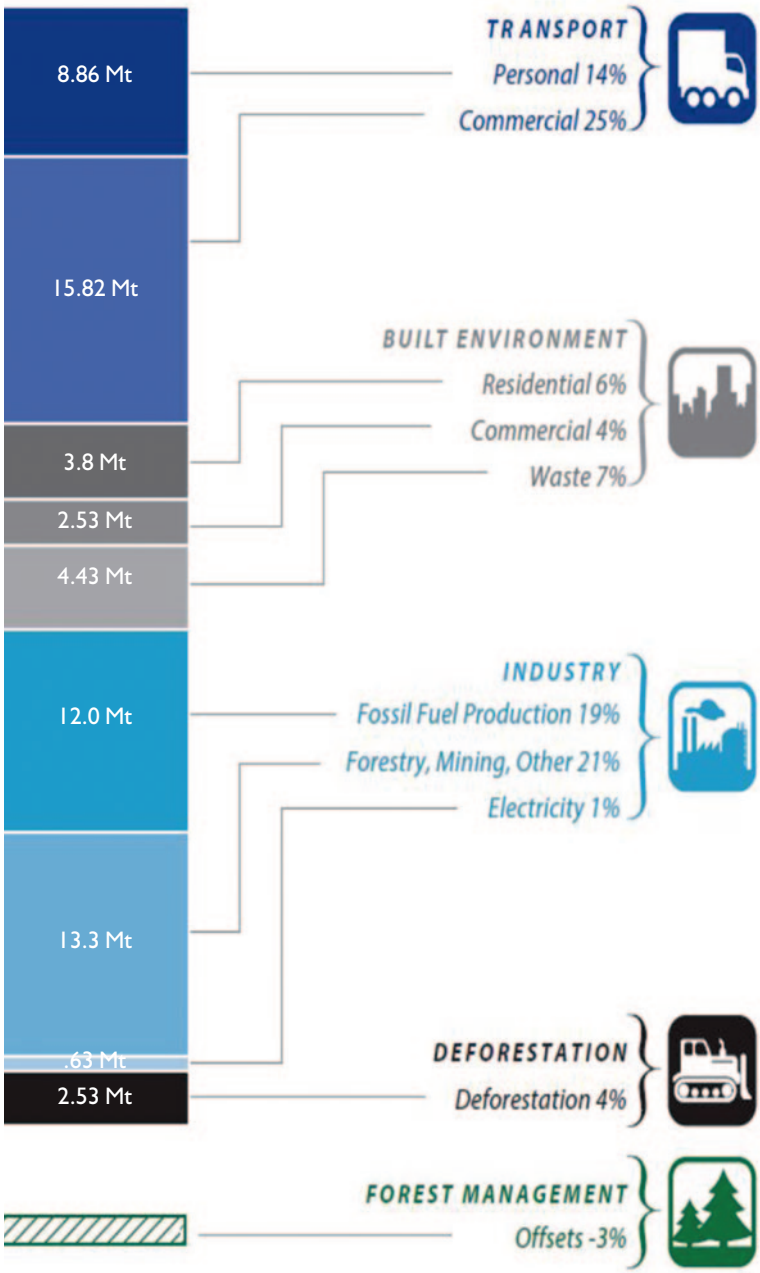
Increasing home and business energy efficiency is a praiseworthy, job-intensive move. And like the CEV program, even voters who are not especially green love getting subsidies for upgrades that will save them money.

So will the CEV and energy efficiency programs make up for the extra 8.14 megatonnes (Mt) of GHGs emitted annually by the Kitimat plant when fully operational? Hardly. Together, the CEV program and energy efficiency program add up to a total of 50,400 tonnes of annual avoided emissions. This is *less than two-thirds of one percent* of LNG Canada's annual BC emissions once fully operational. To look on the bright side, that leaves a mere 99.33 percent to go.

And while the $34 million in federal and BC funds for the two programs may not be peanuts, they amount to just one-half of one percent of the $7 billion cost of the federal-BC tax and hydro giveaways to LNG Canada. But one really, really important goal *will* have been reached: Increasing the chances that the NDP will be re-elected in 2021. Maybe.

The BC government's promised climate action strategy, purportedly aimed at reducing the province's GHG emissions targets as laid down in last spring's *Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act*, is expected in late November or early December. I would be surprised if the CEV and building efficiency programs were not part of the strategy. In 2015—the last year for which figures are available—BC's emissions totalled 61.6 Mt. Under the *Act*, these would need to drop to 38.8 Mt by 2030, 25.9 Mt by 2040, and 12.9 Mt by 2050. So the rest of the strategy is going to have to make a much bigger dent in emissions than encouraging a few more electric vehicles and heat pumps. And even those targets in the *Act* may not be nearly sufficient to keep the planet liveable, as we shall see below.

The Province's account of BC's emissions in 2015. Total emissions were 63.3 megatonnes. The Province estimated offsets at 1.7 megatonnes, reducing the official count to 61.6 megatonnes.



THE REASONING, if it can be called that, is that since natural gas burns cleaner than coal when used in aging plants to generate electricity, displacing the coal with natural gas will reduce emissions worldwide. It's a convenient argument, made by virtually all supporters of LNG. The only difficulty with the argument is that it's complete hogwash.

UNDER THE ACCOUNTING RULES FOR GHGs, emissions from burning fossil fuels are counted in the country where they are ignited. As mentioned, LNG Canada will release 8.14 Mt annually in BC once operational. However, the global result of LNG Canada proceeding to full operation is 76 Mt, when the 68 Mt of GHGs produced by burning the natural gas in Asia are counted. After all, the BC government has insisted that a prime reason for approving the Kitimat plant is to help *reduce* global emissions. The reasoning, if it can be called that, is that since natural gas burns cleaner than coal when used in aging plants to generate electricity, displacing the coal with natural gas will reduce emissions worldwide. It's a convenient argument, made by virtually all supporters of LNG. The only difficulty with the argument is that it's complete hogwash.

In its October 2 statement, LNG Canada said the following: "LNG Canada will provide natural gas to countries where imported gas *could displace* more carbon intensive energy sources and help to address global climate change and air pollution." [Emphasis added.]

"Could displace"? If the foreign-owned partners are so sure, why didn't they say "will displace"? Will there be clauses in every gas sale from the Kitimat plant demanding that an equivalent coal plant be shut down when a new natural gas-fired one starts up? LNG Canada had yet to respond by *Focus'* deadline to an emailed request as to whether sales contracts would contain such clauses. Nor did they return a phone message in time.

Sierra Club BC senior forest and climate campaigner Jens Wieting agreed there is no requirement that coal plants will shut down to be replaced by gas ones. "There is no such mechanism," he said in an interview, adding that LNG's relatively low cost when used for purposes such as generating electricity may have a secondary negative effect on the planet. "The real risk is that LNG will compete with renewable energy," said Wieting.

CONSTRUCTION HAVING BEGUN AT THE KITIMAT PLANT, LNG Canada projects finishing the plant in around six years. Does that make it a done deal? Not quite. For all the hoopla, for all the tens of billions of dollars in private and public funds poured into it, the Kitimat plant may never produce one gram of LNG, making it, to paraphrase Trudeau and Horgan, Canada's largest-ever white elephant.

First, the projected completion date for the plant leaves plenty of time for the appeal by Smithers environmentalist Mike Sawyer—now before the National Energy Board—to force a review by the energy board of TransCanada Pipelines Ltd's proposed 675-kilometre Coastal GasLink pipeline, designed to ship gas from Dawson Creek to Kitimat. A decision is expected by the end of the year. If the board rejects his application, he plans to take it to the Federal Court of Appeal. "There's a real possibility they'll have to shut the whole bloody thing down," Sawyer said in an interview with *Focus.* In case anyone suggests Sawyer is tilting at windmills, let's not forget that in 2017, Sawyer surprised experts by winning a similar case concerning a different pipeline, when the appeal court ruled that TransCanada's since-abandoned Prince Rupert Gas Transmission pipeline required federal approval.

The second threat to LNG Canada ever operating is admittedly more speculative: It is that our government, industry and societal leaders—at last awakened perhaps by the October 8 release of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report—take the radical actions urgently required to decarbonize the economy. The report summary for policy makers, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, makes for some disturbing reading. For instance, the goal of limiting global warming in 2050 to 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels is too high if we are to avoid a range of catastrophes. Since those 1850-1900 levels, the globe has already warmed by 1° Celsius, and on current trends will probably pass 1.5° some time between 2030 and 2052. If we do reach 2° Celsius, it is very likely that there will be at least one ice-free Arctic summer each decade, that much more permafrost will thaw, coral reefs will all but disappear, food production will drop significantly, and heat waves, flooding and droughts will all become worse.

Based on an earlier draft of the IPCC report, Hannah Askew, an environmental lawyer and now the executive director of Sierra Club BC, wrote to Horgan, Environment and Climate Change Strategy Minister George Heyman, and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources Minister Michelle Mungall. In her September 20 letter, Askew called for sharp cuts in BC emissions, warning that "2°C would be a nightmare; and 3°C or more would likely precipitate a breakdown in the global economy and human civilization as we have known it."

If we cut net global emissions to zero by 2050, however, it is possible to avoid the 2° increase. The needed actions will be drastic: Nothing less than a U-turn is called for. As of last year, global carbon dioxide emissions were going the wrong way. Energy-use emissions of carbon dioxide hit an all-time high in 2017, according to a June 13, 2018 *Bloomberg News* report, supported by data from the International Energy Agency.

Despite this, worldwide at least, there are some signs of hope. On October 10, two days after the IPCC report summary's release, Members of the European Parliament voted to boost the European Union's emission cuts by 2030 from 40 to 55 percent.

At the Vancouver October 2 announcement, a cargo-cult atmosphere prevailed in the room, the carefully-chosen rah-rah crowd repeatedly applauding as untold goodies were promised. As with the original Melanesian cargo cults, the anticipated bringers of incredible gifts from afar are all foreign entities.

The other defining characteristic of cargo cults may also be present in the case of LNG Canada: Those life-changing goodies, bringing eternal joy and happiness for all, may never show up. If things go well, the $40 billion plant will become a giant dust-catcher, a stranded asset, a tribute to the present government's vision-free attitude toward the planet's future.

That would be the best outcome of all.

Russ Francis formerly taught energy policy at the University of Western Ontario, and has toured Fortis BC's largest LNG plant, at Mount Hayes, northwest of Ladysmith. He has been published widely.

Feds move to divide and conquer local First Nations

BRIONY PENN

Some local First Nations leaders fear the next rounds of "consultation" around the Trans Mountain pipeline may be even worse.

Gwen Underwood, a member of the Tsawout First Nation, chokes back her emotions as she leafs through a binder that contains some of the voluminous materials used to assess and fight the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMEP) between 2014-2016 for her community.

In her capacity as then-lands-manager, it was her task to assemble the legal and scientific team, and the traditional knowledge keepers, to help review the proposal and assess the impacts to "existing Aboriginal and treaty rights."

Hereditary Chief Eric Pelkey

In that binder is a picture of her grandmother and great-grandfather and the map of SENĆOTEN place names describing the wealth of sea life that has fed her community for millennia throughout the Saanich Peninsula and Salish Sea. She stops at his photograph and says, "I believe our ancestors were with us too," then pauses; "That's what makes what is happening now so hard."

What is happening now is that Ottawa—after losing the court challenge by Tsleil-Waututh and other First Nations for not considering Aboriginal concerns—is returning to "consult" again. Trudeau directed the National Energy Board (NEB) on September 26 to complete what he is calling the "reconsideration process," with a report due February 22, 2019. The NEB provided only five working days to amend the scope of the environmental assessment to be sent by fax by October 3 (their fax machines were jammed with protest complaints).

Many legal experts predict that the timeline is so unrealistic and egregious that it will lead to new court challenges.

This time round, Gwen Underwood will not be on the Band's reviewing committee. In 2016, Tsawout were poised to join the other First Nations in the court challenge, but a new council was elected and they pulled out. "Tsawout did an excellent job on their report submissions. We had the strongest legal case and RAVEN said that they could fund part of it. But our new council said we can't afford it," said Underwood. The council is now divided on the issue, and Underwood has resigned from her position. The stress has driven her to a new job with a non-profit, but she is worried for her community's future.

"The government still is not obligated to listen," notes Underwood; "so my question is: Why are the feds trying again? First Nations still cannot veto the decision." She fears "that some might see it as 'it is going to happen anyway so they might as well get something out of it.'"

Underwood and I are meeting at the Tsawout Reserve with another member of the original review committee, elder Belinda Claxton, who tells me: "The government tries to starve First Nations out. They wait for people on council who will sign on. It ultimately gets down to divide-and-conquer mentality."

The original committee also included Hereditary Chief Eric Pelkey. For 30 years he has held positions, both elected and staff for the Band, including most recently the position of Douglas Treaty Officer. But he was dismissed in 2015, a decision he is challenging in the courts as unfair. He believes his outspokenness on the Trans Mountain pipeline could have been a factor. "That is what is so maddening in terms of those type of tactics. I think that we have experienced it a number of times in our territory where we go out and fight for our rights and title, and then Canada or BC goes behind our backs and offers resources to come to some kind of side agreement and undercuts negotiations that we are trying to put forward. And that is the type of thing Trans Mountain seems to be doing all the way through the territories—undermine any kind of unity in terms of opposition to the pipeline."

Flipping through the binder and reading the briefings, it is apparent that Tsawout would have won alongside the other Nations had they gone ahead with the court challenge. They experienced the same litany of concerns. As Underwood notes: "We gave [NEB] a full list of our impacts and concerns backed up by our marine traditional use and scientific reports, and they didn't address it. We asked about cumulative impacts and they didn't address that. Climate change wasn't even in the terms of reference. My brother Harvey Underwood's submission talks about how important the orca are, and how once they start disappearing, we aren't too far behind them. The federal government representative said: 'Well they are dying anyway.' That was his response; we have that recorded in our minutes. Everything we did, they didn't address it."

Pelkey adds, "The federal government had already made a decision—even before we made our submission to the National Energy Board—that the transport of dilbit in these ships was in the 'best interest of Canada.'" Pelkey's experience was that "the NEB decisions always fall on the side of the proponent. [The federal] government says NEB is flawed but they continue to use it."

Underwood says the length and complexity of the process itself has worn down communities, forcing them to agree to the pipeline. "It is a completely overwhelming process. They sent us five boxes of binders and then we have information requests and you have to understand all the legal and scientific terms. How do councils cope if they don't have the background or the time to review it? You realize how projects like this go under the radar, if they don't have good scientific and traditional knowledge experts and a legal team."

In order to hire the legal and scientific experts to do the studies, review the proposal, and argue the case, councils sign "capacity agreements" to receive funding for those purposes. These agreements are often misrepresented by some as agreements to support the pipeline, another tactic that confuses both the public and some members of the community. As Pelkey notes, "We said in our [capacity] agreement that just because we were accepting funds to do the independent research, we were not obliged to give them a thumbs-up to increased tanker traffic in our territory. I personally spoke out against the pipeline because I didn't want even myself as hereditary leadership to be seen to be bought off by any kind of…agreement."

The *binding* agreements are "Benefit Agreements": once accepted, they have to be paid back if a community changes its mind about increased tanker traffic under a new council (they change every two years). The benefit agreement offered by Kinder Morgan in July of

> "THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT had already made a decision—even before we made our submission to the National Energy Board—that the transport of dilbit in these ships was in the 'best interest of Canada.'"—*Eric Pelkey*

2015 to Tsawout was a $3-million payout over 50 years. The Tsawout community members rejected this offer outright. Claxton, Underwood and Pelkey all fear that this offer might be reopened to the new council, who might be more open to the prospect for a variety of reasons, including the costs to Tsawout council for the process to date which have already put them in debt.

The reason councils find themselves in debt, despite capacity agreement funding, is that the agreements do not necessarily cover the unpredictable costs of the process. As Underwood tells me, "Even with capacity agreements, there wasn't enough to cover the changes in strategy by Trans Mountain or through Intervenor Information Requests (IIRs) that were thrown at us. We ended up spending a lot of our own money because they changed some of their witnesses. Canada should provide the capacity for us to address any changes, but they wouldn't allow it."

One such Intervenor Information Request reads as follows: "We are seeking feedback from you on the completeness and accuracy of the concerns and issues you have raised and your views on concerns and issues that may have not yet been addressed by proposed mitigation measures or proponent commitments to this point in the process." These kinds of questions take hours of professional time—first to determine what they are actually asking for, and then to answer them adequately. How can the accuracy of a concern about impacts of dilbit spills to a traditional fishery be measured?

In his capacity as hereditary chief, Pelkey continues to speak out against the pipeline. Although the courts have determined that there is a requirement to consult traditional governance leaders, Kinder Morgan made no effort to approach Pelkey, or other hereditary chiefs of the W̱SÁNEĆ Nation, who have responsibilities for the Salish Sea, Gulf Islands and Saanich Peninsula and live in the five reserves of Tsawout, Tsecum, Tsartlip, Pauquachin and Malahat. Kinder Morgan only approached the elected councils of each Band. Malahat and Pauquachin signed a benefit agreement. Claxton states, "It is important for our full council to stand up for our people, recognize our rights and honour our W̱SÁNEĆ way of life in our traditional waters and territory."

According to Pelkey, this is the kind of conflict that is a direct result of the *Indian Act* governance model. When Tsawout successfully challenged the development of the Saanichton Marina in a court case years ago on the basis of Douglas Treaty rights and aboriginal rights, their lawyers advised council to put their hereditary leadership up front in terms of rights and actions on behalf of the whole W̱SÁNEĆ Nation. According to Pelkey, that hasn't happened yet on the pipeline project. But it might now. Pelkey notes, "I believe that the time is right for that type of unified position of the entire W̱SÁNEĆ Nation. The main problem is that the *Indian Act* divided us up and created these little kingdoms. The W̱SÁNEĆ Nation includes all of us."

Briony Penn is currently working with Xenaksiala elder, Cecil Paul, Wa'xaid, on *Following the Good River*, due out in 2019. She is also the author of the prize-winning *The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan*.

Voting for democracy

RUSS FRANCIS

The horrors of proportional representation? Faster climate action, more women elected, lower debt, increased voter turnout.

The situation sounds as though it were tailor-made for scare-mongering by defenders of BC's current First Past The Post (FPTP) electoral system.

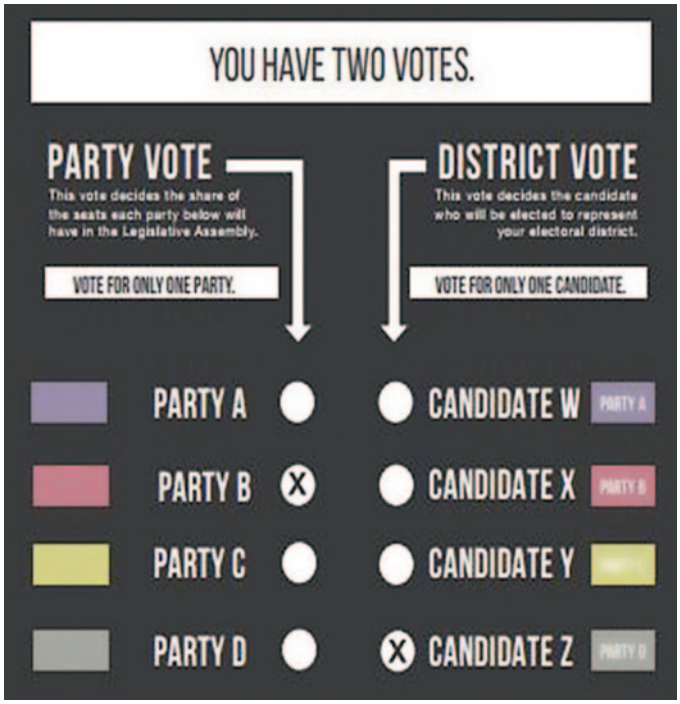
Nearly a month after the New Brunswick election, it is far from clear which party will form the government. Two longstanding, mainstream parties are just one seat apart, neither with a majority. Two much smaller parties each hold a handful of seats. One, populist and right-of-centre, was formerly regarded as fringe. An agreement between either of the two smaller parties and one of the mainstream ones would resolve the impasse. But weeks of uncertainty have produced no such agreement. One week before the legislature was to resume, the continuing standoff between the two main parties meant that the legislature may be unable to elect a speaker. In that case, another general election would be called.

But this is not an example of the kind of untold disasters that anti-democrats love to claim befalls jurisdictions under Proportional Representation (Pro Rep). Rather, it occurred in New Brunswick after the general election last September 24—under FPTP. Liberals won 21 seats, Tories 22, Greens 3, and People's Alliance 3. The People's Alliance supports economic conservatism and opposes parts of the Province's official bilingualism and language duality policies. And until this September, it had never won more than 2.1 percent of the popular vote nor elected an MLA . After the September election, however, it potentially held the balance of power, though neither the Liberals nor the Tories wanted to link with them. As of *Focus*' deadline, a new general election appeared likely.

All this could have been avoided had New Brunswick been operating under a Pro Rep electoral system, as the accompanying table (below) shows. Under Pro Rep, New Brunswick would now have a Liberal majority government, with a workable three-seat margin. And the NDP, which was wiped out in the seat count despite winning just over 5 percent of the popular vote, would have ended up with two seats in the 49-seat legislature.

To be sure, minority governments not only occur under Pro Rep, they are more likely except in special circumstances, such as when the electorate is evenly divided between just two parties. But it's false to suggest that FPTP inevitably results in stable, majority governments, while Pro Rep does not. Look at both New Brunswick and, to a lesser degree, BC.

Stephanie Smith presides over the 76,000-member BC Government and Service Employees' Union, which represents the majority of non-executive BC government staff. "You don't have to look far to find examples of how our current first-past-the-post system delivers skewed results that essentially waste votes," she said in an email to *Focus*. "I'm not sure why anyone would say no to having a stronger voice and more robust democratic institutions," Smith added.



Sample of the ballot used in a MMP election

The FPTP system is so completely undemocratic it's hard to believe it has any defenders at all. But it does. Consider Bob Plecas and Lawrie McFarlane. Both are former BC deputy ministers. Also on the status-quo side are former Glen Clark sidekick Bill Tieleman and former (unelected) NDP Premier Ujjal Dosanjh. And, *naturellement*, those well-known defenders of democracy, the Fraser Institute. Plecas and Tieleman are both directors and founders of the No BC Proportional Representation Society.

McFarlane was deputy minister of health during the 1990s NDP government. He said in an email that he knows of no deputy minister in favour of Pro Rep. "For that matter," McFarlane said, "I don't know

New Brunswick General Election Results — September 24, 2018

Party	Seats Under FPTP	Seats Under Pro Rep
Liberals	21	19
Progressive Conservatives	22	16
Greens	3	6
People's Alliance	3	6
NDP	0	2

a single former colleague from government who supports it. That doesn't mean there is no support, only that the people I know are opposed." In a *Times Colonist* December 29, 2017 column, McFarlane wrote that Pro Rep could result in perhaps a half dozen parties, some of them representing single issue constituencies such as anti-abortionists. Because the commitment of such parties may be to single agendas, they have little room to compromise, he wrote. "This isn't a legislature, it's a chamber of irreconcilable differences."

Admittedly, Pro Rep can allow parties without a hope under FPTP to hold seats. However, the risk of minuscule parties blocking any chance of compromise is partly alleviated by the proposed 5 percent popular vote threshold for a party to be awarded any district seats for the only Pro Rep system currently in use, the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. (For details, see the Elections BC site.)

What do FPTP's defenders find so loveable about the system? Research on the respective electoral systems provides a hint. Netherlands-born political scientist Arend Lijphart compared 36 democracies over 55 years and found that Pro Rep countries outperformed FPTP ones in 16 of 17 measures of sound government and decision-making. His work is summarized on the Fair Vote Canada website, from which this information was taken. Countries with Pro Rep electoral systems have lower income inequality, faster climate action, more renewable energy, lower national debt, enhanced civil liberties, higher voter turnout and more women elected. No wonder the Fraser Institute hates Pro Rep, except maybe the bit about debt.

But why do deputy ministers dislike it, assuming McFarlane is right about that? Evert Lindquist is the editor of *Canadian Public Administration*, and teaches in the University of Victoria's School of Public Administration, where he has served several terms as director. Among his numerous research specialties are the public service and government transitions. Responding to emailed questions from *Focus*, Lindquist said he knows of no published research regarding senior government executives' attitudes towards electoral systems. However, he said that all other things being equal, one would expect deputy ministers and other public service executives to prefer more certainty to less, and more clarity in direction to less. "Adding even more ongoing, rolling negotiations (which of course is already a part of their jobs) is not something they would likely prefer," added Lindquist, "unless they thought it might provide more opportunities for dispassionate advice to be heard and considered."

Even if deputy ministers might prefer FPTP, Lindquist said a switch to Pro Rep should not be career-changing for them. "Preferences are one thing, but could they adapt and function well in such an environment? Yes, of course."

Over the coming few weeks, BC voters have the chance to ensure the first general election after June 30, 2021 will be held under Pro Rep. All BC households were due to receive a voter's guide by late October, and registered voters a voting package by November 2. Voters can answer either one or both of two questions: (1) Choose between FPTP and Pro Rep (2) Choose between 3 Pro Rep systems, only one of which (MMP) is currently in use. Completed mail-in ballots must be received by Elections BC no later than 4:30 pm, November 30. For more information, see: www.elections.bc.ca/referendum/

Formerly a political columnist and reporter, Russ recently returned to journalism after a stint as a BC government analyst. During his 10 years with the government, he worked in strategic policy, legislation and performance management for a number of ministries.

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Orcapocalypse

STEPHEN HUME

The perils faced by killer whales forewarn of an über-threat—the unravelling of the ecosystems upon which humans also depend.

An orca at sunset in the Strait of Juan de Fuca (Photo by MarkMallesonPhotography.com)

Edged by powerful riptides and the foam-laced menace of Boiling Reef, muscular currents that once bedevilled Spanish sailing masters still churn past cliffs fringed with peeling arbutus. Gulls wheel and squabble over bait fish pushed up by predators below. Vigilant eagles perch in ancient Douglas firs that were saplings when the Magna Carta was yet unsigned.

This is the southernmost tip of Saturna Island, easternmost of British Columbia's scattered Southern Gulf Islands, whose name is taken from the schooner captained by explorer José Maria Narvaez more than 200 years ago.

East Point still evokes a primeval atmosphere. Yet at night the habitation glow from 6.2 million city dwellers casts its milky arc over the Salish Sea from Victoria through Seattle to Vancouver. And the throb of oil tankers, bulk cargo carriers, cruise ships and container vessels pulses insistently through the darkness.

Oasis of the pristine that East Point may appear to be, a favoured spot for observing killer whales in the wild, it is nevertheless an illusion cocooned in the reality of the heavily modified, chemically saturated landscapes of a 21st century megalopolis.

So perhaps it's the ideal place from which to contemplate what some fear is a looming "orcapocalypse," an existential crisis that threatens regional extirpation for one of the province's most iconic creatures.

New research suggests a perfect storm of threats now makes the extirpation of 10 out of 19 global killer whale populations an imminent possibility. The 74 that survive from the Salish Sea's Southern Resident killer whale population are among those at greatest risk.

The three Salish Sea pods of the Southern Residents, J, K, and L, were among the first listed as endangered under a new federal *Species at Risk Act* in 2003—two years before the US made the same designation. But a damning report from Canada's Auditor-General this year points to botched, incompetent and laggardly responses by almost every federal department with responsibility for protecting them.

While there has been plenty of high-minded talk, meetings, workshops, action plans and strategic mission statements, bureaucratic inertia was encouraged by the lack of enthusiasm for environmental issues oozing from the decade-long Conservative government of Stephen Harper. It took 14 years for Ottawa to begin to implement mitigation and recovery strategies that on the surface seemed self-evident.

Indeed, in September, six conservation organizations launched a lawsuit asking a federal court to review two federal ministries' failures to recommend an emergency order to protect the Southern Resident killer whales.

The threats are wide-ranging and complex. Human activity, from industrial pollution to

NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS a perfect storm of threats now makes the extirpation of 10 out of 19 global killer whale populations an imminent possibility. The 74 that survive from the Salish Sea's Southern Resident killer whale population are among those at greatest risk.

municipal waste water, to disruptions in the food chain to apparently unconnected activities that range from taking a shower to driving the car to the supermarket, are all driving this gathering ecological storm.

East Point represents more than symbolism or a vantage point on orca. It was here, 54 years ago, that scientists harpooned the killer whale that was to become the first of its kind to be put on live public display—all done in the name of art.

In hindsight, it seems one of those benighted schemes that reeks of an entitled craziness. Youth might have been turning to the mellow attractions of Flower Power in 1964 while the grown-ups fretted over the movement's "get high and get out of the rat race" morality. But the grown-ups also thought it a splendid idea to shoot a large, sentient mammal for art's sake.

Mind you, just three years earlier, under the supervision of the federal government, a .50 calibre machine-gun had been mounted at Seymour Narrows to shred the orcas deemed a threat to commercial and recreational fisheries. The orcas didn't show, the scheme proved a folly, and a month later the machine-gun was removed.

A subsequent plan was to kill one of the orcas known to congregate off East Point and tow the corpse to Vancouver where an artist could use it as a model. The sculpture would adorn the foyer of the new Vancouver Aquarium. Its skeleton would provide a specimen for the science exhibit.

The scheme went sideways fast. An orca was harpooned off East Point but then impertinently refused to die. The aquarium's director decided instead that the wounded animal should be dragged to Vancouver Harbour and "studied."

But Moby Doll, as the wounded killer whale was misnamed in a testament to ignorance—it was male, not female—became such a sensation (it went viral, we'd say today) that it quickly became the first captured killer whale to be put on public display.

Sadly, Moby Doll seemed disoriented and grief-stricken. A few months later he died. Then Seattle Public Aquarium bought a big male orca from a BC fisherman in whose nets he had become entangled. Namu, named for the place his freedom ended, was trained and became the first performing killer whale. Alas, he too died after 11 months.

Nevertheless, the marketing teams saw a promotional gold mine.

A two-decade rush began to kidnap ocean-ranging killer whales from their complex, tightly-knit family groups and put them on display. It reached its zenith in 1970 when the Seattle Public Aquarium's collectors deployed helicopters and explosives to herd 80 terrified orcas into a small cove on Whidbey Island. Several whales died from the stress. As their bodies washed ashore, public opinion ebbed from unbridled enthusiasm to appalled distaste.

The barbarity of the killer whale gold rush did have one upside. It triggered a world-spanning interest in learning more about these magnificent animals. Knowledge in turn launched an evolution in awareness. And so, over the intervening decades, orcas have evolved in the public imagination from ravening wolves of the sea, to trained circus acts, to highly intelligent, gregarious, family-centric creatures deserving of their freedom and our protection.

Today, Vancouver Aquarium, which started the cycle, is prohibited by municipal law from capturing any cetaceans from the wild for public display. It may obtain them only from other facilities if they are either born in captivity or deemed to be so acclimatized to captivity they would not survive a return to the wild.

The changing sentiments have been reflected in a growing desire by the public to see whales of all kinds in their natural environment rather than as dead specimens in natural history museums, or performing for treats in aquarium tanks that might reasonably be compared to prison cells.

The so-called "killer whale"—it's really one of the dolphins—is now the key driver for South Vancouver Island's successful whale-watching industry, itself part of a global business that attracts 13 million watchers a year and generates more than $2 billion in annual economic activity.

In BC, about half of Canada's million annual whale watchers spend close to $200 million a year just to see orcas, grey and humpback whales in their natural state.

There's growing concern, though, that the public is loving its beloved marine mammals to death. All whales orient themselves, navigate, locate and identify food sources using highly-evolved echolocation. But marine noise from close-running whale-watching boats, along with that from more than 13,000 large vessel transits a year requiring Canadian pilots, 164,000 annual BC Ferries sailings, and almost 40,000 pleasure craft with engines larger than 10 horsepower accumulates to create a kind of acoustic fog in the water for the Southern Resident killer whales, whose numbers have steadily dwindled downward by almost 25 percent from 98 in 1995 to 74 in late 2018.

One recent study for the Port of Vancouver assessing the effects of marine noise found that the more distant background noise from commercial vessels, combined with the foreground noise from whale-watching boats, resulted in lost foraging time for feeding orcas of up to five-and-a-half hours per day.

The problem is of sufficient magnitude that from July to November this year, large vessels passing through the Salish Sea to and from Vancouver, Seattle, Tacoma, Bremerton, Crofton, Nanaimo and other points were asked to voluntarily reduce speed. Researchers hope to determine whether reduced engine speed means less marine noise and results in greater killer whale feeding success.

Pair the reduced feeding opportunity with historic lows in the abundance of chinook salmon which are the killer whales' primary food source, then add the toxins carried into the sea from industrial source points, and the problem quickly begins to look profound.

Chinook are critical to Southern Resident killer whales because they are available in the Salish Sea all year round, unlike chum, another important food source, which is available only in the late fall.

John Ford, a scientist at Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo who has been studying

killer whales for almost 50 years, says observers noticed that population loss and reproductive decline for Southern Resident killer whales tracked chinook abundance. As soon as chinook numbers rose, the killer whales bounced back, too.

Complicating matters however, Ford says, is the fact that while Southern Resident killer whale populations have been in decline, Northern resident killer whales now number 300 and are thriving. So are the transient killer whales that feed on seals and sea lions, and resident populations in southern Alaska.

And it gets even more confusing. Transient killer whales, which feed on seals, carry a much higher load of PCBs and other contaminants, but remain healthy. Possibly it's because with abundant food sources, they don't go into nutritional stress. PCBs, banned almost 50 years ago, are maddeningly persistent toxins, but can remain benignly sequestered in killer whales' blubber. The Southern killer whales, deprived of adequate food, start metabolizing their fat; PCBs stored there emerge and suppress their immune systems, making them more susceptible to disease, parasites, and reproductive failure.

Yet this is just one factor among the many. There are hydrocarbons from road runoff carried by storm drains so numerous that Metro Vancouver couldn't provide a cumulative number. There's leakage from tens of thousands of untallied septic fields throughout the Gulf Islands, the hinterlands of Greater Victoria, and around the Georgia Basin.

It's a popular pastime among the green-leaning residents of Saanich and the Gulf Islands who elected the only Green candidate to the federal parliament and one of only three Greens in the BC legislature to point an accusatory finger at urban Victoria and Vancouver over sewage effluent. Yet they are a significant part of the problem, too. Almost a million people in BC dispose of household sewage and wastewater through septic fields, which can leak into aquifers and adjacent watercourses, including much of the rural Saanich Peninsula and the Gulf Islands.

This, too, points to one of those amplifying factors in ecosystem disruption. Dispersed residential communities at the fringes of urban areas throughout the province create the dilemma of the urban-rural interface that's most at risk from the increased frequency and intensity of wildfires caused by global warming.

Flame retardants used in fighting increasingly intense forest fires, particularly those threatening human settlement, are flushed by the province's great rivers from the distant Interior into the sea. The Fraser River alone, for example, drains 235,671 square kilometres, an area that dwarfs entire European countries. Another 951 smaller watersheds drain into the Salish Sea.

Last summer, during the worst fire season on record—climate science projects much worse to come—the BC Wildfire Service dropped eight million litres of flame retardant in airborne operations. While flame retardant is an essential weapon in the fire suppression arsenal, particularly in that vulnerable urban-rural interface, it's also bad for the fish that sustain killer whales.

In 2014, a study by the US government's National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration showed that although the chemicals in current use are far safer than those deployed in the past, widely-used flame retardant remains especially toxic to chinook smolts. The lethal effects linger right until the migrating smolts reach saltwater.

These contaminants, however, pale by comparison to those from urban areas.

Over 1.3 trillion litres of treated sewage effluent flow into the Salish Sea each year from about 100 Canadian and American treatment plant outfalls emptying into Puget Sound and the straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca. Basic treatment of sewage doesn't remove all toxic compounds. The discharge contains heavy metals like lead, mercury, chromium and copper, but also includes persistent organochlorines and hydrocarbons. Then there are trace levels of persistent organic pollutants—now banned, but still lingering in the environment—like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

There are pharmaceuticals that can act as hormone-disrupters which are excreted in human urine. Contaminants like plastic microparticles occur in cosmetics and sunscreens, and can affect marine larvae insect, small aquatic organisms, and juvenile fish. Some sunscreen compounds are now implicated in declines in insect and coral reef larvae. Recent research by Washington State's Dr James Meador has shown that the survival rate of chinook juveniles smolting in effluent-impacted estuaries is cut in half compared with juveniles emerging from uncontaminated estuaries.

A study by the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation found that untreated stormwater effluent from the Metro Vancouver region is about the same volume annually as treated sewage effluent.

Storm drain contributions, it appears, may double that amount, the report warns. Thousands of storm drains empty into the almost 1,000 watersheds that dump road runoff, ditch effluents and, in some cases, untreated sewage into the Salish Sea. That means the vector for exposing marine organisms to toxic compounds is mind-bogglingly large.

And there is the long-known spike in hydrocarbons that occurs in the first hour after rains wash the accumulated surface film from roads into storm drains and to the sea. That problem is getting worse, not better.

There are 10 million motor vehicles registered in BC and Washington.

The Insurance Corporation of BC's statistics show motor vehicle registrations have increased at double the rate of population growth over the last five years. Incredibly, the motor vehicle population is growing faster than the number of people. Put in simple arithmetic, the province added 250,000 people to its population over that period, and it added 320,000 motor vehicles, most of which contribute hydrocarbons to the road runoff that affects the Salish Sea.

Most important for killer whales, many of these contaminants migrate up the food chain. If one of the key components threatening orca survival is a declining abundance of the chinook salmon that provide their main food source, the T. Buck Suzuki Foundation report also points directly at chemical contaminants.

"There is evidence," it says, "that these chemicals can also disrupt the complex hormonal processes as juvenile salmon acclimatize to the saltwater environment. This is bad news for the billions of juvenile salmon that spend months in the shallow waters around Vancouver"—not to mention Puget Sound and near centres like Campbell River, Nanaimo and Victoria.

"Heavy metals and persistent chemicals that stay in the body bio-magnify as they work their way up the food chain," the report observes. "Larger fish eating large numbers of contaminated smaller fish can end up with thousands or millions of times the level of toxins than the organisms that first absorbed them."

This poses a double jeopardy for killer whales. Declining abundance of Georgia Basin chinook, coupled with bio-magnification of toxins in their body fat, amplifies the risk.

The chemicals accumulate in the blubber that protects whales from the oceanic cold. But when whales are starving, their bodies consume the energy stored in their fat, and that's precisely where toxins which damage nervous systems and other organs are not only stored but concentrated over time.

PHOTO: MARKMALLESONPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Transient orcas, this one known as "T123A," made two rare visits to Victoria's harbour in 2018, creating a false impression of orca abundance.

Which, the Pacific Biological Station's John Ford explains, is one of the apparent reasons for the health of Northern Residents and transients. As long as they can stay fat, they have a chance to thrive.

On Saturna, East Point's 130-year-old lighthouse presides over a stunningly beautiful littoral of tilted sandstone terraces, tide pools, and echoing galleries sculpted by epochs of wind and storm surge. The tawny rock was quarried by homesteader George Taylor more than a century ago. It was used in constructing Victoria's new legislature buildings, a Neo-Baroque expression of Victorian colonial authority commissioned on lands the Lekwungen people had been forced to vacate.

The choice of this Cretaceous rock for a government building seems ironically appropriate. The structure exudes a faux sense of permanence, evoking the Roman "imperitas" of which the British assumed themselves natural inheritors. But the materials actually offer only evidence of impermanence, a reminder that the present authority will prove as transient as that of *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, who reigned in the Cretaceous, or the Southern Resident killer whales on their tottering throne.

East Point's 65-million-year-old sandstone is part of a deposit that sweeps up the east coast of Vancouver Island to the Comox Valley. Paleontologists celebrate the spectacular marine fossils these ancient sediments yield: ammonites, long-necked plesiosaurs, pickup-truck-sized mosasaurs, dolphin-like ichthyosaurs, all now extinct following what's called the Cretaceous-Paleogene Event, an abrupt extinction of three-quarters of the Earth's plant and animal species.

Scholars argue over whether the catastrophe was sudden, caused by abrupt climate change, an asteroid impact, volcanic eruptions, or some slowly unfolding evolutionary apocalypse that we don't yet understand. But what's not in dispute is that there was a mass extinction. It occurred at the beginning of the rise of mammals and, ultimately, of the recently arrived hominids—that's us. We, it appears, so successful that anthropologists now call our era the "Anthropocene," may also be presiding over what writer Elizabeth Kolbert calls the "sixth extinction," a collapse in species survival unfolding around us with such rapidity and on such an immense and varied scale that it's difficult for most people to perceive.

Most visitors to East Point come not in search of fossils or evolutionary philosophy but simply hoping for a glimpse of killer whales. The whales have become a central symbol of the province's self-aggrandizing mythology of tourism branding; a totem for powerful First People's clans; and inspiration for artists and marine biologists alike. They may no longer be the marquee show-stopper at aquariums from Victoria's Inner Harbour to San Diego, but they still command attention.

If visitors to East Point are lucky, as I was 20 years ago, they will have a close encounter with a species that's arguably as intelligent as ours and perhaps even exceeds human intelligence, although how or in what way remains mysterious.

My experience came in the face of a freshening breeze out of the American islands when I heard what sounded like a rifle shot. It was followed by another and then a third. I went to investigate. It wasn't some ignorant yahoo shooting at sea lions. It was a family of killer whales, tail-slapping. The tide was in flood and a swift, smooth-as-glass current

raced past the ledge. Two females patrolled its perimeter while two calves cavorted in the swooshing jet.

They seemed as excited as a couple of human children enjoying a water slide at the neighbourhood pool. They rode down the current, then zipped back to the top and rode down it again.

I stood at the water's edge mesmerized. Then I noticed a shadow in the luminous depths. Before I could react, the immense, gleaming head of a male orca emerged. It rose the full length of my body out of the water. It stopped at precisely my height, held upright by the sculling of that mighty tail. One enormous eye swivelled, scanned me up and down, and then, seemingly satisfied I represented no threat to the playful youngsters—or maybe just satisfied to have observed me with the same wonderment with which I was observing him—slid back down into the depths as silently as he had come.

I took it as a hint, though, and moved back a respectful distance—well, considerably more than that—and watched until the whole family, moving almost as one, suddenly vanished. I considered then how I'd been granted an astonishing look into a deep, pre-human past.

But now, reflecting through the prisms of the current news, I wonder if it wasn't really the future I was experiencing. And not through the whales, but through the rocks from which I was watching them. Perhaps the telling moment wasn't their arrival in my field of view, but their abrupt disappearance.

The killer whales' ancestors emerged into the evolutionary record not long after the sandstone ledges from which I observed them were laid down as sediments. They have been travelling these waters about a thousand times longer than the entire span in which modern *homo sapiens* arose.

Orca—the now-common name derives from the scientific name for the species—is generally preferred in these more language-sensitive times to the once-ubiquitous term "killer whale," yet the earlier term is not inaccurate. It derives from the species' undisputed place as the alpha predator of BC's marine environment.

For all its power and dominance, there's a growing risk that this iconic creature may be about to join the ammonites and Elasmosaurus in extinction. And that suggests we might be on track for an extinction event that includes us, too, because the perils faced by killer whales may be indicative of an über-threat, the unravelling of the ecosystems upon which humans also depend.

IT'S NOT FAR-FETCHED to wonder if the plight of our Southern Resident killer whales isn't a harbinger of what awaits humanity, too.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a report by 91 scientists from 40 countries who examined more than 6,000 independent research studies, now warns that the rapidity and the massive scale of human-caused climate change is much more dire and immediate than previously thought.

Even scientists seasoned in the bad news of climate change research expressed shock at the gathering portents, which include increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather, more and longer drought, fiercer and more extensive wildfire conflagrations, mass species die-offs, super-storms, abrupt ecosystem shifts, dwindling food security, and growing world hunger as agricultural production degrades.

As atmospheric carbon increases, it turns out, the protein yield in key field crops decreases. To feed growing global populations, we'll have to produce even more food than initially predicted.

In fact, the evidence is clear. We're already losing the race as food production falls and population grows. Researcher Leah Samberg, writing in *Scientific American*, says that after decades of decline, world hunger is once again on the rise. And the United Nations reports that while hunger is most prevalent in regions of armed conflict, these are also the places experiencing increasingly powerful storms, more persistent crop-and-livestock-killing drought, and more frequent flooding caused by intense and unpredictable rainfall events.

Acidification is already affecting the foundations of ocean food chains once thought inexhaustible, from commercially farmed mollusks unable to properly form protective shells, to the fatal bleaching of coral reefs, to collapsing salmon runs, among them the chinook upon which the local orcas depend.

The Salish Sea's littoral is one of the world's miracles, a gigantic salmon factory. Even now, after a century of industrial harvest, habitat disruption, and landscape modification, as many as 800 million juvenile salmon may ride the spring freshet to the sea. Up to 20 million salmon can populate the Fraser River estuary on any given day.

But we've taken this gift from nature for granted. We've behaved as though salmon stocks were limitless. We've dammed spawning tributaries, logged headwaters, clogged the river with blasting debris, converted crucial rearing wetlands habitat to agriculture, mined gravel for construction, altered river flows, dumped mine tailings into watersheds, and polluted the river with industrial effluent, farm fertilizer and storm drain runoff.

Those salmon that return run a gauntlet of commercial trollers, seiners and gill netters; a recreational fishery that itself is heavily commercialized; and First Nations' food and ceremonial harvests. We've even managed to alter the evolutionary course of fish like the chinook. For a century we've selected the biggest fish, the trophy fish, out of the gene pool. Now chinook salmon are much smaller on average than they were historically, says scientist John Ford. Feeding orcas are paying the price.

All this exacerbates the impact of climate change, which has been speeding snow melts, reducing summer discharges, raising river temperatures, and changing food abundance for salmon in the ocean—and the availability of salmon to other species like killer whales.

It's not far-fetched to wonder if the plight of our Southern Resident killer whales isn't a harbinger of what awaits humanity, too.

Here in the Salish Sea, a small resident orca population now teeters at the brink of what could quickly become a downward spiral into oblivion. Breeding populations aren't breeding successfully. Baby whales aren't surviving. Mature whales are more susceptible to disease, and some show signs of malnutrition. Salmon runs, upon which killer whales depend, are collapsing or have already collapsed, most prominent among them chinook salmon.

All of these are key indicators in a larger ecosystem that sustains humans as well. Salmon are a resource for which humans compete with killer whales.

Canada's federal government recently intervened with closures of commercial and recreational chinook fisheries in an attempt to preserve dwindling food stocks for the declining Southern Resident killer whale

population. The State of Washington struck a special task force to grapple with the problem. Some communities, where recreation fishing is big business, predictably objected.

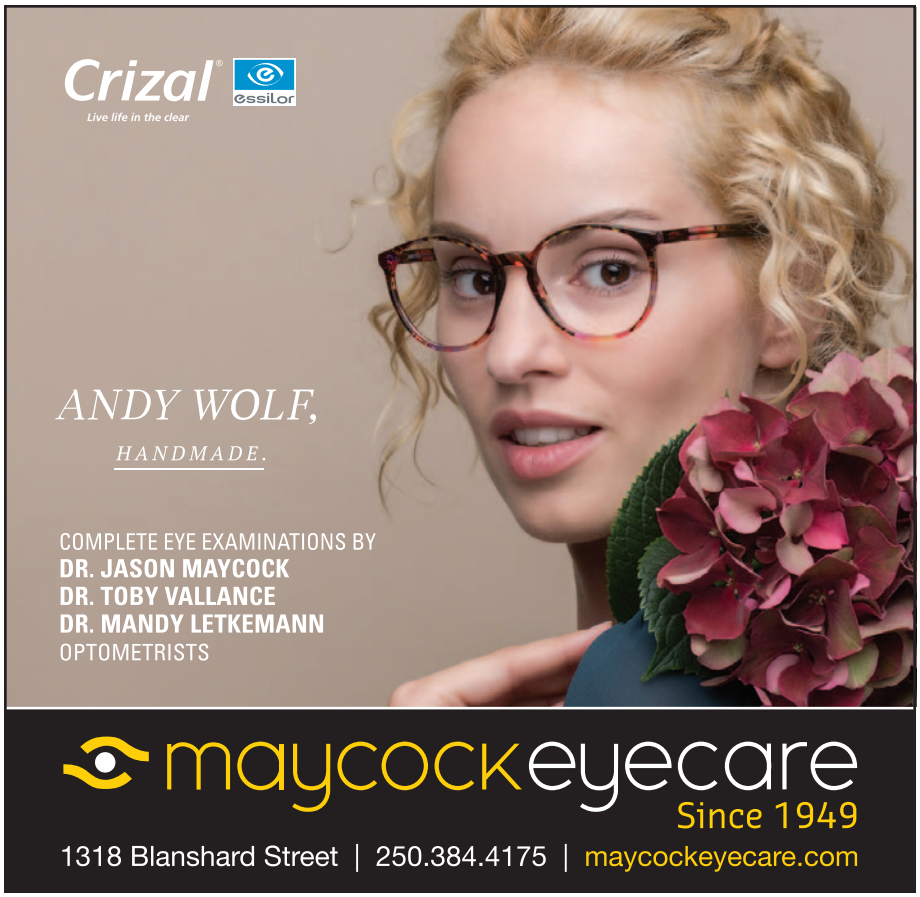
"Community politicians, ocean anglers and chambers of commerce from Sooke to Tofino are objecting to the possibility of closing two ocean zones to sport fishing," Victoria *Times-Colonist* writer Richard Watts reported last July. "Such a closure would devastate the small towns that rely on sport fishing to attract tourists."

And yet, we are where we are in part because of fishing. Despite declining chinook abundance due to habitat loss, disruptions in rearing areas caused by toxic runoff from storm drains, contaminants in sewage effluent, degradation of spawning areas by logging, hydroelectric and flood control dams, gravel removal for construction and urban development—despite all of that, fishing of chinook stocks continued uninterrupted. Since 1975, when the Southern Resident killer whale population stood at close to 100, federal and state authorities in BC and Washington have supervised the harvesting by First Nations, recreational and commercial fisheries of 32 million chinook salmon bound through the Salish Sea to spawn in the rivers and streams of the Salish Sea.

It's a reminder that the threats to the Southern Resident orcas are complex, long-lasting and far-reaching. In any event, the chinook closures may be too little, too late.

One day, I hope, I'll be able to return to Saturna's East Point and again look into the huge eye of a flourishing fellow species. If I can't, if the orcas have gone to join the other extinct creatures buried in those Cretaceous sediments, what good will our wealth of commerce have proved? If, for all our wealth and power we can't ensure survival of the ancient, sentient marine species with which we share this corner of the Salish Sea, what certainty is there that we can ensure our own survival?

Stephen Hume has lived in many parts of BC since 1948. He spent half a century as a journalist writing about Western Canada, the Far North, BC and the Island. His byline has appeared in most major Canadian newspapers; he's written nine books of poetry, natural history, history and literary essays.



palette 34 arts highlights 38 vibe 48 curtain call 52 coastlines 56

Creating order out of chaos

KATE CINO

Martina Edmondson begins each new piece with an internal investigation.

PHOTO: IVAN HUNTER PHOTOGRAPHY

"Nature's Bounty" (scroll book); eco print on various papers, found objects; 7 x 20 x 12 inches (open)

Martina Edmondson's home studio is in full production mode for her upcoming show at the Gage Gallery. Titled *Nature Bound*, her exhibit will present nearly 30 pieces in a variety of media including collage, sculpture, wall-hangings and assemblage.

Projects, ongoing and completed, cover her studio's walls, shelves and over-sized tables. As we chat, one wired sculpture goes "ping" and slips out of place, causing balls on strings to bounce up and down in the air. "That one's not quite finished," says the artist, calmly pinning the wire armature back into place.

Peering closely at her artworks reveals feathers, driftwood, pebbles, animal bones and fragments of glass and metal. Some objects are wound tightly in wire. Hand-made books are expertly stitched, some bound with clasps of wood or bone. Eco printed scrolls and wall hangings glow with warm, textured hues. Fragments of text, unusual images, a yellowed dictionary page collaged with scraps of fabric, all create order out of chaos.

"All of Us–Rebound"

Edmondson is an avid collector of all kinds of treasures, both natural and manufactured. "Whenever I begin a new project," she says, "I unpack a box and begin to investigate the contents." The artworks evolve slowly from working with the materials. By reassembling words and objects, new meanings are shaped. On a creative level, the repetition and fine detail work are both meditative and informative for the artist. For instance, her collages utilizing dictionary pages are done intuitively, without regard to meaning, yet on completion, notes Edmondson, can usually be related to a word found somewhere on the page.

An award-winning artist, Edmondson is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design. While living in Toronto, she participated in many solo, group and juried shows in Canada and abroad. The variety, depth and technical excellence of Edmondson's mixed media artworks are admired by both colleagues and collectors.

This will be Edmondson's second solo exhibit at Gage Gallery Artist Collective, which she joined a few years ago after moving to Victoria from Toronto. She has enjoyed ongoing support and inspiration from her fellow artists at the gallery.

The artist, sharply tuned to social issues and the collective human experience, often incorporates her musings on such subjects into her work.

In January 2018, *O Canada*'s lyrics "All Our Son's Command" became "All of Us Command" after a 38-year struggle. Before the change, in 2017, Edmondson protested the sexism with a multi-faceted paper sculpture for the Canada 150 show at Gage. It was then titled "All of Us." To celebrate the gender-neutral language correction, she took apart "All of Us" and reassembled the paper pieces into "All

PHOTO: KATE CINO

Martina Edmondson

of Us—Rebound." "As a mother of daughters, I am concerned about equality and inclusion," she says.

"All of Us—Rebound" now resembles a neck ruff. A ruff is a stiff, starched collar, fashionable with Dutch nobility during the 17th century. The artist transformed this traditional symbol of wealth and power to one that symbolically includes all people. Edmondson emigrated from Holland in 1966, and feels passionate about being Canadian. "We are bound together," she says, "by a common gratitude for being able to live in this country."

Another work in the upcoming show, "All of Us—Manipulated," is a stack of eco-printed papers, crumpled then stiffened with starch. The papers appear to float aimlessly, lacking order or purpose. This refers to the artist's concerns about individual autonomy in the face of political, corporate and media manipulation. "We are not always told the truth about situations and events," says Edmondson.

The artist has a lot of experience with eco printing, and does this work in her studio kitchen area. Eco printing (or botanical printing) uses vegetation and found materials to imbue paper with rich earthy tones. Edmondson gathers windfalls like blossoms and leaves, adding cuttings and flowers from the garden, and employs all kinds of papers—oriental and watercolour, as well as various kinds of cloth. These ground materials are treated with a chemical binding agent called mordant to assist the image transfers. Once her collected treasures are laid on the prepared ground, they are tightly bound and put in a dye bath or steaming tray. The artist makes her own dyes from kitchen

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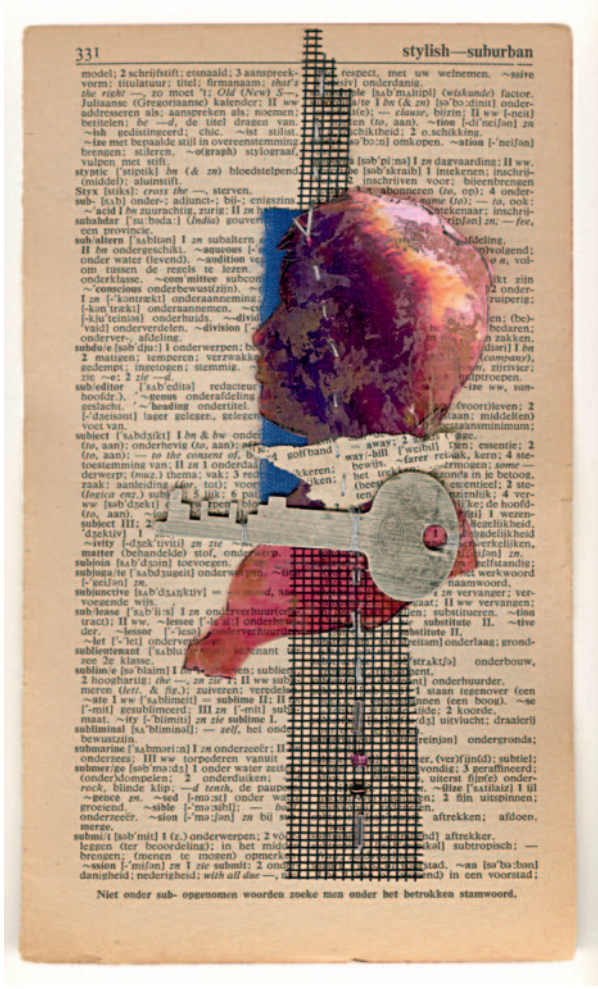
Nathan Davis | The Colours of Fisgard (detail) | 24"x36" | acrylic on board


331
stylish—suburban
Niet onder sub- opgenomen woorden zoeke men onder het betrokken stamwoord.

Page opposite, clockwise from left: "The Present" eco prints on oriental papers, 32 x 13 inches; "All of Us – Manipulated" (detail) eco prints on oriental papers, Konnyaku starch; "Stylish" collage with dictionary text, found objects and printed fabric, 15 x 12 x 1.5 inches

scraps (onion and avocado skins, rooibos tea and coffee) or plants harvested from nature. She also purchases natural dyes in wood chip form from a company in Vancouver.

"The Present," a scroll-like wall hanging, will also be in the fall exhibit. The layers of its eco printed papers include Taiwan oriental paper, Japanese Washi paper, and Masa paper. The word "present" means "here and now"—but it can also mean "a gift." By using this homonym, the artist adds a second poignant association. The dried spray of roses attached to "The Present" was a meaningful gift. "I went back and forth," she recalls, "trying to decide whether or not to include the flowers and their special memory. Finally, I decided they needed to be added."

Two of Edmondson's recent artworks will not be part of the upcoming show—they are travelling across Canada with the 2018 Art of the Book exhibition. This year, the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild celebrated 35 years. The anniversary coincided with a juried exhibition including members' work. This international travelling exhibition includes entries from Australia, China, the UK, USA, France, Spain and Singapore. Edmondson was honoured in two ways. First, her scroll book *Nature's Bounty* (see page 36) was selected for the frontispiece of the catalogue and featured in the Paper Decoration section. Second, her pamphlet of original poems, *Tree Poems*, received the Colophon Book Arts Award. Jurors praised *Tree Poems* as an outstanding example of using decorated paper for inner pages as well as covers. The judges also praised the artist's practice of eco printing.

The poems themselves were composed at an artist residency in 2016. This week-long event on Toronto Island with Monica Bodirsky reawakened the artist's connection with the natural world. "I found my voice," she says, "and composed these simple words that celebrate trees."

Many artists at the Gage Gallery exhibit smaller works in its back room. In her series "Unbound," Edmondson presents eco printed miniature squares in lovely muted earth tones. These small gems can be displayed in group settings or separately, and will be available throughout the exhibit's run.

Sometimes, the artist's experiments end with exasperation. Edmondson shows me a hand-made book with a humorous title: *Manipulation and the Artist's Frustration*. Spilling out of the open side of the book are many crumpled pieces of brown paper. "These are eco prints that didn't work out," she says. "I do try to keep my sense of humour when I'm working."

So it's OK to chuckle at Edmondson's witty inventions and alchemical wizardry. She won't mind at all.

Nature Bound runs from November 20 to December 8, 2018 at Gage Gallery, 2031 Oak Bay Avenue. The opening artist reception is November 25 from 1-4 pm.

Kate Cino writes about the arts for Victoria publications and her own website www.artopenings.ca. She has an Art History degree and Public Relations certificate from the University of Victoria.

"CANADIAN LANDSCAPE" KIMBERLY KIEL, 48 X 40 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

Throughout November/December

KIMBERLY KIEL

The Avenue Gallery

Kimberly Kiel expresses herself through a wide variety of subject matter: landscapes and treescapes; figure pieces and florals. She loves the creaminess of oil, the opportunity to blend, the fact that it doesn't dry too quickly. Looking at her work, it's obvious that colour is a major source of inspiration. She greatly enjoys playing around with the surface on the canvas, getting different layers and textures. She acknowledges that her goal is to create something subjective, intriguing and stimulating. She wants her art to touch and engage heart, mind and soul. Kiel's artwork is currently showcased and sold in galleries from BC to Quebec, as well as in Switzerland. 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

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"LIVING IN A SEPARATE WORLD" (DETAIL) MARIANNE MEYER, 36 X 72 INCHES, ACRYLIC & MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS

Throughout November/December

MARIANNE MEYER

The Avenue Gallery

Born and raised in Switzerland, Marianne Meyer has been living in BC's Okanagan Valley since 2000. Like many, she started out painting in a realistic manner but soon wanted more freedom to express emotions—and to be able to throw around vibrant colours in wild experimentation. For Meyer, textures and images emerge spontaneously and seduce her to go further. Her work is usually a combination of sketches, drawings and layered paint applied with a spatula, using acrylic paints, charcoal and art pencils. 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

"EARLY EVENING STROLL" ALEKSANDRA, 36 X 60 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

December 1–31

ADORN WITH ART

West End Gallery

This group exhibition showcases a variety of colours, techniques and inspiration to celebrate the season. Landscapes, still lifes, abstracts, impressionistic, urban and figurative styles are all represented. Painters include: Aleksandra (shown), Steven Armstrong, Alain Bédard, Bill Brownridge, Naomi Cairns, Claudette Castonguay, Rod Charlesworth, Ken Faulks, Greta Guzek, Dana Irving, Patricia Johnston, Paul Jorgensen, Annabelle Marquis, Elka Nowicka, Glenn Payan, Guy Roy, Sabina, Jeannette Sirois–along with stunning glassworks. 1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

"DIVERGENT POINTS OF VIEW" AGNES ANANICHUK

December 11–29

TALKING POINTS: WHERE IDEAS CONVERGE

Gage Gallery

18 artistic voices combine in this show featuring this artist-run gallery's artists, sparking a rich discussion through varied visual presentations–among themselves and viewers. Agnes Ananichuk, Ilka Bauer, Frances Beckow, Josephine Bohemier, Anita Boyd, Margo Cooper, Jim Dodd, Donna Draper, Martina Edmondson, Frances Harber, Hazel Harris, Barry Herring, Aengus MacIntosh, Dawna McGowan, Jane Michiel, Haren Vakil, Heather Midori Yamada. Reception with artists December 16 (Sunday), 1-5pm. 2031 Oak Bay Avenue, 250-592-2760. www.gagegallery.ca.

"NEIGE DU NUIT" CLAUDE LANGEVIN, 24 X 30, OIL ON CANVAS

December 2-31

DECK THE WALLS

Madrona Gallery

In the 9th annual Deck the Walls exhibition, Madrona Gallery presents a special collection of works created by each artist to celebrate the season. Artists in the show include Clayton Anderson, Nicholas Bott, Rick Bond, Meghan Hildebrand, Claude Langevin, Luke Ramsey, Halin de Repentigy, Ernestine Tahedl, Sean Yelland and more. In addition to the gallery artist, this show also contains a special collection of historic Canadian art by Toni Onley, Gordon Smith, Jack Shadbolt, Takao Tanabe and others. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

November 2-18
Hannah van Adrichem
& Libby Oliver
"Alterations"
Opening reception:
Friday Nov 2, 7-9pm
Photographic works and stretched, abstracted textile compositions explore people's relationships to clothing and fabric.

December 7-16
Annual Xchanges Members Exhibition
"Darkens Into Light"
Opening reception: Friday Dec 7, 7-9pm

The artists of Xchanges explore the timeless, opposing forces of darkness and light in their annual exhibition.

Xchanges Gallery
2333 Government Street
250.382.0442
www.xchangesgallery.org
Saturdays & Sundays, 11am-4pm

Xchanges Gallery gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the CRD

PENINSULA Gallery
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"Yellow and Purple Arrangement"
by Jerry Markham
18 x 24 inches, oil on board
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Untitled drawing by Shuvinai Ashoona, 30 x 23 inches

Shuvinai Ashoona • November 3-17

MADRONA GALLERY will host a solo exhibition of drawings by renowned Inuit artist Shuvinai Ashoona in November. These contemporary drawings use pen, ink and pencil crayon to map out imaginative worlds and psychological spaces in a surrealist style.

Full of vibrant colour and startling dreamlike imagery, these confident artworks are captivating. The artist weaves together fluid shapes and complex forms using impeccable linework and a free-association style. A myriad of finely wrought details augment the visual puzzles.

Shuvinai Ashoona

Ashoona represents the third generation in a family of successful carvers and print-makers. Born in Cape Dorset (also known as Kinngait) in 1961, a time when most Inuit lived in settled communities, their traditional ways disrupted by colonization, Ashoona's family took a unique path. For several years, beginning in her late teens, her extended kin lived in remote outposts, surviving on hunting and fishing. They returned to Kinngait briefly each summer for supplies. These experiences on the land are graphically recalled in her earlier black and white drawings.

Ashoona's technical skills evolved over 25 years of consistent work at Kinngait Studios (formerly West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative) in Cape Dorset. Encouraged to experiment at Kinngait Studios, coloured pencils became her medium of choice around the year 2000.

Michael Warren, owner of Madrona Gallery, enjoys the bold colours and compelling imagery of Ashoona's work. "These are very different from the type of images people associate with Inuit prints," he says. The drawings in the exhibition come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Some are on oversize paper in both horizontal and vertical formats. Others are more compact scenes of mayhem and mystery. Most images are expertly drawn to the borders of the paper.

Shuvinai Ashoona's cousin is Annie Pootoogook (1969-2016), who won the 2006 Sobey Art Award after a solo show at The Power Plant in Toronto. This critical attention encouraged collectors, curators and art enthusiasts from Canada and abroad to focus on drawings as well as prints. Pootoogook's drawings of contemporary life in the north include stark interior views of children playing video games and scenes of family violence. Sadly, Pootoogook died at the young age of 46 in Ottawa.

During 2006 and 2007, Ashoona's drawings were featured in several group shows across Canada. In 2009, she was paired with Toronto artist Shary Boyle in an exhibition called Noise Ghost. Since that time, Boyle has travelled to Cape Dorset twice to collaborate with Ashoona. In 2015, their two-person exhibition in Montreal, called "Universal Cobra," was praised as "spellbinding" and "provocative."

Boyle resonates with Ashoona's artwork, which she eloquently describes as both "horrific and hilarious." Commenting on her friend's creative process, Boyle likens Ashoona's free flow of imagery to a running faucet. "It's like a dream" says Boyle, "where there is no value system between good and bad. It just is."

The opening reception is November 3, 1-4 pm at Madrona Gallery, 606 View Street, 250-380-4660. You can see many of the works at www.madronagallery.com.—Kate Cino

THE AVENUE GALLERY

ALL THAT GLITTERS VI

Victoria Hospice Fundraiser

November 29 – December 24

Gala Evening & Oak Bay Gallery Walk

November 29, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

2184 OAK BAY AVENUE VICTORIA

www.theavenuegallery.com 250-598-2184

"SEINER: PHYLLUS CORMACK CROSSING HECATE STRAIT" MARK HOBSON, 24 X 36 INCHES, ACRYLIC

Throughout November/December

MARK HOBSON

Peninsula Gallery

Mark Hobson, a Tofino-based artist, is best known for his passionate portrayals of the wildlife and landscapes of the Canadian Pacific coast. From pounding surf to misty coves, from rain forests to the underwater realm, the careful use of light is always present enhancing subtle drama in his work. His many awards and honours include being named Artist of the Year by Ducks Unlimited (2006), designing coins for he Royal Canadian Mint collector's editions, and being a featured artist for the National Geographic Society. 100-2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1282, www.pengal.com.

"SHE CAN DO IT ALL" KATHIE GUTHRIE, 40 X 30 INCHES, ACRYLIC & SOLVENT TRANSFER ON WOOD CRADLE BOARD

November 16–25

KATHY GUTHRIE: SIFTING—THE BEAUTY OF LIFE

errant artSpace

Mixed media works. Guthrie, a graduate of Vancouver Island School of Art: "My intuitive multi-media work is informed by life experiences and the intrigue of connections from one generation to the next. A handwritten note, an article of clothing or even part of a conversation may spark a faded memory through which I translate into intimate works of art. I combine delicate lines and simplified shapes…. assembling materials to build up layers." Opening, Nov 16, 6-9 pm. Continues Nov 17, 18, 24, 25, 1-5 pm or by appointment. 975 Alston St, www.errantartspace.com, www.kathyguthrie.com.

UNTITLED, DETAIL, HANNAH VAN ADRICHEM

November 2–18 / December 7–16

ALTERATIONS: HANNAH VAN ADRICHEM & LIBBY OLIVER

DARKENS INTO LIGHT: ARTISTS OF XCHANGES

Xchanges Gallery

In the November show, photographic works and stretched, abstracted textile compositions explore people's relationships to clothing and fabric. Opening: Friday, November 2, 7-9pm. In December, the artists of Xchanges explore the timeless, opposing forces of darkness and light in their annual exhibition. Opening Friday, December 7, 7-9pm. Otherwise Saturdays & Sundays 11am-4pm. 2333 Government St, Suite 6E, 250-382-0442, www.xchangesgallery.org.

INTERACTIVE DISPLAY AT AGGV

Continuing to February 23, 2019

BRAINSTORM: IMAGINE THE FUTURE

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

The AGGV as it exists today is a modestly-sized art museum that was built when Victoria was a much smaller, quieter place. An expansion project is planned to provide thoughtfully-designed spaces. BRAINSTORM is an interactive project space in which everyone can imagine how to move the AGGV into the future. It will feature a range of hands-on activities; opportunities to share ideas about the future of the AGGV's programming; insight into the gallery's history and future; and innovative explorations of the AGGV collection.1040 Moss Street. www.aggv.ca.

West End Gallery

Teakerne Arm, 48 x 60 inches, oil on canvas

Naomi Cairns

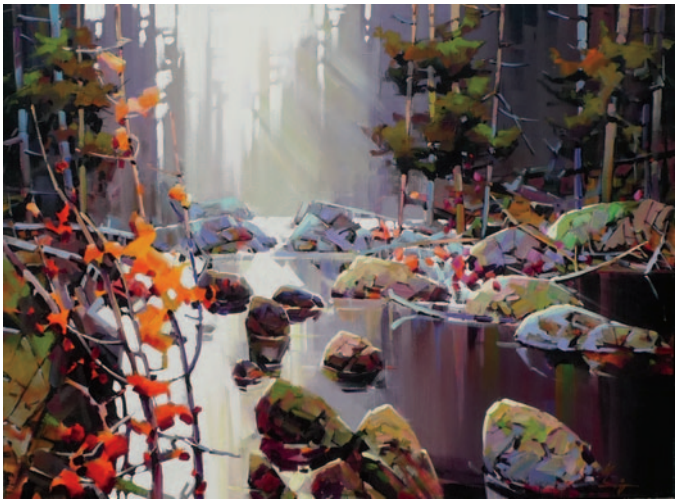
Exhibition of New Paintings

November 10-22, 2018

1203 Broad Street Open Daily

250-388-0009 | westendgalleryltd.com

THE AVENUE GALLERY



Dawn in Valley, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches

Bi Yuan Cheng – Radiant Vistas

November 8 – 18

Artist's Reception: November 10, 1-3pm

2184 OAK BAY AVENUE VICTORIA

www.theavenuegallery.com 250-598-2184

Vanishing Point

by Susan Point

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MADRONA GALLERY

Shuvinai Ashoona

November 3 - 17

606 View St. • www.madronagallery.com • 250 380 4660

Dance Me: Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal • Nov 16 & 17

A moment from BJM's "Dance Me"

THE SYMBOLISM we read into our ever-shifting relationship with the sun means a huge percentage of our art has "seasons" as a theme. When we acknowledge these cycles, we speak to life and death, celebration and mourning. "Dance Me," Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal's epic and sensual "seasons of life" collection of 15 choreographed dances, set to the late Leonard Cohen's songs, embodies all of this.

An international team of three choreographers have created "a blockbuster show," says Tracy Smith, Dance Victoria's marketing manager. "They made a point of going through all his albums to get the full picture of his work." Neither biography nor "greatest hits," it's "more about his sensual side, and his poetry" seen through a lens of "five seasons, the fifth being Indian summer," which, she says, is "specifically Canadian, and highlights the passage of life and death."

The artists were in the midst of setting the show when Cohen died last November, and there is now a whole new meaning for its audiences and creators. It sells out everywhere it tours—Europe, Asia, and, of course, throughout this country that claims him as a native son.

"We're so fortunate to have this happening in Victoria," Smith exults. "We had to add a matinee because tickets were selling so fast."

If you did miss out, there's another Dance Victoria offering on tap: The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's touring production of "The Nutcracker," which certainly provides a way to celebrate the sun cycle's "season of giving." Smith says the show is loaded with engagement and visual entrées that make it a joy for all ages. To include more kids, she invites ticket purchasers to add donations in increments of $65 to give tickets to clients of Women's Transition House. Many children who attend a performance through this program experience "their first time being in a theatre, watching a live show with their family," she says.

"Dance Me," a tribute to Leonard Cohen, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, Nov 16 & 17, Royal Theatre. Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker," Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Nov 30, Dec 1 & 2. Tickets at www.rmts.bc.ca or 250-386-6121.—Mollie Kaye

"DOUBLE HEADED GOLDEN EAGLE" 2016, SHAIN JACKSON, CEDAR AND COPPER

Continuing to December 22, 2019

TESTIFY: INDIGENOUS LAWS + THE ARTS

Legacy Downtown

Testify: Indigenous Law and the Arts puts the idea of reconciliation into practice by creating a space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians to dream a way forward which respects and reflects the diversity, strength and hope embodied within Indigenous traditions. Everyone is invited on **December 6** at 7:00pm for a Chancellors' evening with Sheila Rogers (University of Victoria) and Louise Mandell (Vancouver Island University). Details at legacy.uvic.ca. 630 Yates St. Wed to Sat 10am to 1pm. More info: www.legacy.uvic.ca, 250-721-6562.

GAGE GALLERY
ARTS COLLECTIVE

First I Fold the Mountain: An Exhibition of Book Arts

Terry Ann Carter

Oct 30 - Nov 17

Chapbook Launch:
Sunday afternoon
Nov 4, 1:30 – 3 pm

Shown: Detail from "the Hanging Books for Kurt Schwitters"

Nature Bound: Assemblages, Books, Collages and Sculptures

Martina Edmondson

Nov 20 - Dec 8

Opening Reception:
Sunday, Nov 25
1 – 4 pm

Open for Oak Bay Gallery Walk Thursday
Nov 29, 5 to 8 pm

Talking Points: Where Ideas Converge

Group Show

Dec 11 - 29

Opening Reception:
Sunday Dec 16
1 – 5 pm

Open Dec 23, 1-5pm
Closed Dec 25 & 26

Agnes Ananichuk, Ilka Bauer, Frances Beckow, Josephine Bohemier, Anita Boyd, Margo Cooper, Jim Dodd, Donna Draper, Martina Edmondson, Frances Harber, Hazel Harris, Barry Herring, Aengus MacIntosh, Dawna McGowan, Jane Michiel, Haren Vakil, Heather Midori Yamada

2031 Oak Bay Ave • 250 592 2760 • gagegallery.ca

Rockin' out to ancient music

MOLLIE KAYE

Modern day minstrels, the Banquo Folk Ensemble is about to release another CD.

L-R, back: Eric Reiswig, Lael Whitehead, Bill Jamieson. Front: Gwendolyn Jamieson, Amy Reiswig

Basking in the Pacific Northwest's balmy insistence that October is still summer, I'm on the patio of the Steamship Grill on Belleville Street, anticipating my lunch meeting with Amy Reiswig. You know her as a veteran writer for *Focus* who adroitly covers local literature (alas, you'll find her farewell contribution in this month's edition), but did you know this multi-talented woman's musical sideline has her wearing Elizabethan gowns and rockin' out on potato slicers as a professional percussionist in an ancient music band?

Personally, I need to know a *lot* more about all of these hijinks, so with the glorious, sunbathed Inner Harbour as a backdrop, I impose on Amy to reveal the behind-the-scenes info on Banquo, Victoria (and Mayne Island)'s very own folk ensemble specializing in collaborative, creative riffs on ancient tunes. Their latest CD, *Whither Are They Vanished*, is set to be released at their November concerts, and though only one member has been there from the start, this tight band's joyful devotion to making ancient music a living, breathing thing through their playful, toe-tapping shows hasn't wavered in 20 years.

Amy is one of many musicians who have been part of the Banquo family over the years. Keeping the band alive has been easy; the group's passionate founder, sibling Eric Reiswig, is a skilled multi-instrumentalist and seasoned performer who attracts a steady parade of top talent to the group. Eric grew up in Montreal (as did Amy), and moved to Victoria in 1996, then founded Banquo in 1998. The deft and handy musician plays (and builds) a smorgasbord of sound-makers, including bagpipes, cittern, mandolin, dulcimer, recorders, whistles, flute, hurdy-gurdy, vocals, and percussion. I recall encountering Eric at Irish music sessions when I first moved to Victoria in 2004— it was always a delight to have the plaintive notes of a skilled Uilleann piper lending some much-needed texture to that vast sea of fiddles.

A veteran performer of Irish traditional music, Eric's "jam session" sensibilities are a large part of Banquo's creative process in making their music. The arrangements are not assiduously historic; neither are their instruments (or costumes, for that matter). Their process is organic, Amy says, "melding the Irish session with the classical…historical interest and quirky weird instruments, playing everything by ear and seeing what bubbles up in that soup."

It's a savoury soup indeed. Listening to Banquo's latest recordings elicit several types of giddiness in me, from revelling in a thick, lush wood, surrounded by nymphs singing in a forgotten tongue, to laughing with a bunch of tipsy troubadours at a 13th-century watering hole. This ease of musical escape can only be facilitated by great chops. Banquo's five musicians are so skilled, one can go along with whatever visions, pranks or diversions they offer. And let's face it, by virtue of their timbre alone, some of these medieval—and found—instruments Banquo throws into their Macbethian cauldron are simply hilarious.

"I've played a kitchen slicer," Amy confesses. I ask her if the slicer happened to be a mandolin. We laugh. "No, it's kind of like a knife, like a wavy potato chip. I'd hold it by its handle, and it made a sound like a wooden fish or frog, but ping-ier because it's metal. A lot of what we do is serious, but we have a playful side… we've used bird whistles, [a "moo can"], other things. It's always an adventure."

This amalgam of playful spirit and stellar musicianship is what attracted Bill Jamieson to the group four years ago. Bill founded the Ancient Music Society of Victoria, and is, Amy says, "our most historically inclined member." A scholar and French horn player with a classical background who also plays in A Great Noyse, a group of symphony woodwind players performing ancient music on historically accurate instruments, Bill had to shuck off some of the rigour of those other idioms to join in with the fun and frolic of Banquo. Is the looser, interpretive approach sometimes just too much for him? "We've informed each other's approaches and languages; it's a great collaboration that way. Bill did get concerned at first about historical accuracy, but it brought us up in our level. Ultimately, it wasn't about what was appropriate. It's about what sounds good…we like to put percussion on it, and a bottom end, and rock out sometimes."

Banquo's costumes on stage follow a similar spirit. "We have the tickle closet at Eric's house," Amy reveals with a smile. "Shirts, skirts, bodices, vests, coats, circlets, belts—there's quite an array, with lots of mixing and matching going on." This melange of elements can conjure regal lady and nobleman, troubadour and fool. "[It's] not historically accurate, it's just a way

to participate in that time. Sometimes I love wearing a beautiful gown, sometimes I just want to wear something multicoloured and a little bit crazy, like a joker."

"One of the things we love to do is remind people that old music is not stodgy music," she says. "People are constantly reinterpreting it, making it relevant, and having fun. When we played at the Folk Club recently, watching people dancing in their seats was such a thrill." When the group convenes, either on Mayne Island or in Victoria, it's always in a room full of instruments. "We joke that we all have a bad case of GAS: Gear Acquisition Syndrome… if you play something on a different instrument, it has such a different mood."

All five in the group contribute vocals, but Lael Whitehead and Gwen Jamieson are featured. "Gwen studied at the conservatory with Nancy Argenta, and Lael is endlessly writing countermelodies. The tunes come out in a new line, never before heard…but sounds for all the world completely right for it. Lael and Gwen bring very different vocal traditions; when they sing together, it's so beautiful."

These two ethereal, pure sopranos weave many beguiling textures on the CD, evoking ancient scenes. "We try to take people out of time," Amy explains. The Banquo mission is to transport their audiences to "a time when music was more important, when gathering around music was what people did…it was part of life. We want to remind people that music is a community builder. It's brought us together—that's what we want to create for those two hours."

The bells of the carillon tower suddenly burst through the air as we wind up our lunch on the deck. I shiver with delight, knowing I'm sharing that moment with all the other people in town who happen to hear it. Yes, Amy is right. Music *is* a community builder, and it's so worth gathering for.

Banquo Folk Ensemble's 20th anniversary concerts and CD release: Sat, Nov 17, 3pm, St Andrew's Anglican Church, Sidney; Sun, Nov 18, 3pm, Oak Bay United Church; Sat, Nov 24, 2pm, St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, Mayne Island. Tickets at Munro's, Ivy's Bookshop, Tanner's and at brownpapertickets.com. Also see www.banquo.ca.

Mollie Kaye is a writer, musician, communication specialist and community builder who also tries to embrace the joy—and hilarity—in all things.

Box office 250-386-6121 rmts.bc.ca
earlymusicsocietyoftheislands.ca

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THE GALLERY
AT MATTICK'S FARM

"Luminous Fog" (detail) by Kylee Turunen, 12 x 12 inches, oil on canvas

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in Support of Children's Hospital Foundation
Nov 1 – Dec 31 Meet & Greet Sat Nov 17, 1-4pm

IN SUPPORT OF BC Children's Hospital FOUNDATION

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109-5325 Cordova Bay Road • 250-658-8333 • www.thegalleryatmatticksfarm.com

Goodnight Mister Tom • November 7-24

I'VE BEEN NOTICING a recent, steady transformation at Langham Court Theatre. Victoria's 90-year-old, well-loved community theatre is evolving; it has quietly begun to establish a place of serious consideration among the professional-level performance offerings in town. Its latest production, *Goodnight Mister Tom*, promises to fulfill two tricky mandates: learning and growth opportunities for "developing" artists, and top-notch entertainment for audiences.

PHOTO: DAVID LOWES

Michelle Buck, Langham Court's general manager, joined the theatre in 2016 after holding administrative roles at the Belfry and Intrepid. "Raising the bar" is a theme she mentions several times as we talk about the last couple of years' offerings; the highest-calibre volunteer talent these productions keep attracting is a blessing—and a challenge. "We're not profit-driven, but we are quality-driven," she explains. There is a balance to be struck between *all-comers* and *all-pro*, and Langham now edges more and more toward the latter. "Just our [physical] theatre brings about a different expectation," she says of the 77-seat, well-appointed jewel-box of a performance space, which boasts a comfy "lounge" area for intermission—complete with bar and servers for thirsty patrons.

The November staging of *Goodnight*, a WWII-era drama about the relationship that develops between a young London boy, William Beech, and the curmudgeonly elder ("Mister Tom") he is placed with in the English countryside as war looms, is replete with growth and learning opportunities for all 17 of the auditioned (many of them young) performers who comprise its cast.

Veteran volunteer Langham artist Bill Adams contributes cutting-edge, professional-quality set design and property elements. "We have a different mandate because we're not paying people," Buck explains. Equity theatres have cost limitations, which leads Langham to explore the question, "What can we do that they can't, because the cast is too big [to be profitable]?"

Goodnight is one such play. Based on a book by Michelle Magorian, David Wood's 2012 drama has not been performed much, if ever, in Canada. It has reached wider audiences in the British Isles, with its youth and puppetry elements appealing to all ages. Mister Tom's dog, "Sammy," is a life-like, fully-articulated puppet character created by Adams; it has a lead role, and will be skillfully manipulated on stage in *bunraku* style by one of the actors, who remains visible. A sparrow and a squirrel round out the roster of puppet performers.

"It's a cast with a lot of kids in it, which is unusual for us," Buck comments, "and the puppets are just stunning."

Shauna Baird is an equity actor with Blue Bridge Theatre; she's volunteering on the *Goodnight* production to take a turn in the director's role. "As we up the bar, it seems like people want to increase their skills so we can increase their trajectory—but how do we remain so open that people without a full skill set can still [participate]?" The answer, she says, is for Langham to continue to give newbies more workshop opportunities to learn, be seen, and become "known" in the community. In this way, Langham Court's evolution is upping opportunities for learners *and* audiences.

Tickets $10-$23 at 805 Langham Court, 250-384-2142 or www.langhamtheatre.ca.

—Mollie Kaye

"BEARDED ALCAZAR IRIS #1" JEANNETTE SIROIS, 47 X 35 INCHES, COLOURED PENCIL ON PAPER MOUNTED ON CRADLED BOARD

Throughout November/December

INTRODUCING JEANNETTE SIROIS

West End Gallery

Salt Spring Island artist Jeannette Sirois' detailed paintings use graphite, wax/oil pencils, charcoal and pastels. Jeannette works in her studio full time exploring and investigating the intricate details seen in portraits of people, plants and the West Coast shoreline. She continues to push her work into areas that give the viewer opportunities for dialogue around issues related to social change, the speed of our lives, and the peace instilled by the natural environment. Sirois holds a Diploma in Design, a BFA with distinctions from Concordia University in Montreal, Art Teacher Certification, and an MEd from UBC. 1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

Ensemble Laude
Women's Choir
Dr. Elizabeth MacIsaac, Artistic Director

Glimmer

Sunday December 16, 7:30 pm
Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Ave

Saturday December 22, 2:00 pm
Church of the Advent, 510 Mt View Ave, Colwood

Tickets: $20/ $25 door/ $15 student/ under 13 free
brownpapertickets.com, alixgooldenhall.com
Ivy's Bookshop, Long & McQuade

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How history haunts the theatre

MONICA PRENDERGAST

Echos of past performances reverberate through the years in our theatre spaces.

This fall took me to Greece for the first time. There, at the Acropolis in Athens, I found myself standing in the ruins of the Theatre of Dionysus. This amphitheatre—perched downhill from the Parthenon and other temples that sit on a plateau overlooking Athens—is where Western theatre began. It was there that the great plays of Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes competed in the theatre festivals of the 4th and 5th century BC. The plaque mounted at the entrance to the open ruin told me that at one time statues to the great playwrights stood here as testaments to their great works. I found myself moved to tears walking through and photographing this space. To say it felt sacred to me may seem an overstatement, yet I suspect that anyone who has devoted their life to the theatre would feel the same way.

Theatre of Dionysus, Greece, where Western theatre began

There is a remarkable quality of haunting that happens in the theatre. I felt haunted by the presence of those playwrights and actors who first stood onstage at Dionysus. It was there that an actor stepped out of the chorus for the first time to embody a character. It was there that playwrights began to write dialogue rather than a choral narrative, pitting character against character and creating what we call dramatic tension and dramatic action.

I first learned about this theatre space 40 years ago in Theatre 100 at the University of Regina at the age of 17. To finally stand in this space was a timeless feeling of moving full circle through my life, from that starting point as a theatre student until today, as a professor of drama and theatre education, a theatre reviewer, columnist and occasional actor.

This fall also marks 20 years since my family and I moved from Toronto to Victoria. I have been going to the theatre, and making theatre, in this city over these 20 years. To mark this anniversary, I want to consider in what ways I've been haunted by theatre in this city.

The Belfry Theatre is a converted church, and a beautiful theatre space. During the years that I facilitated the Belfry 101 audience education program, many actors would tell my students how much they enjoyed performing in this intimate space. I recall some fine work seen on this stage, and some that was less than perfect. My memory takes me back to some of the productions that moved me most: watching the great Nicola Cavendish in Michel Tremblay's homage to his mother, *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*; or Jenny Young performing Joan MacLeod's solo play *The Shape of a Girl* that was provoked by the murder of Victoria's Reena Virk (and how the audience held the space for her so movingly that night); seeing Celine Stubel taking on leading roles many times and enjoying being able to witness her growth from ingénue to leading lady; appreciating a moment in former artistic director Roy Surette's direction of Michel Marc Bouchard's *The Coronation Voyage* when a character drops a book from one level up into another character's arms below that was laden with metaphor and meaning put into action; grasping how well artistic director Michael Shamata sees the stage in three dimensions and moves actors within that space with such ease; grumping occasionally when the programming was not to my taste, but always respecting the high level of professionalism in evidence.

Another theatre that offers haunting memories to me is Langham Court Theatre. This historic space is said to have its own ghost! I have performed at Langham twice and seen many shows over the years. It was at Langham that I first saw Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons* and was quietly devastated when the protagonist speaks the title late in the play. His words, "They were all my sons," reflects his guilt in sending out faulty airplane parts during World War II that led to the deaths of a number of pilots, including the likely shame-induced suicide of his own son.

It was also at Langham that I have seen musical productions of an impressively high quality—*The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Urinetown*, and *Cabaret*, among others. Langham has also given me the chance to see plays such as *Elizabeth Rex* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* that I have read but never seen performed. And for me, personally speaking, it has allowed me to perform in two plays in which the central characters are sisters: *Dancing at Lughnasa* by Brian Friel and *Les Belles-Soeurs* by Michel Tremblay. I am the oldest of four sisters, so plays about sisters have always held great appeal. They are a good way for me to exorcise any ghosts that may linger in my subconscious around growing up in a household of girls.

The theatre spaces at the University of Victoria's Theatre Department also offer me memories, as both a student and a theatregoer. I appeared in two Phoenix productions during my graduate studies, both performed in the Roger Bishop proscenium theatre (*Glace Bay Miners' Museum* by Wendy Lill and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* by Bertolt Brecht). Each production offered me the chance to work on stage with talented acting students, many of whom have gone on to have successful professional careers. I knew, for example, that Meg Roe was destined for success when I appeared as her mother in Wendy Lill's play. Roe, then 19, was a force to be reckoned with even at that young age; she was seen here last season when the Belfry brought in the touring

IT WAS AT DIONYSUS that an actor stepped out of the chorus for the first time to embody a character.

production of *Onegin*. Another cast mate, Jay Hindle, has also worked consistently in the profession, most often in Vancouver at the Arts Club or Bard on the Beach. It is not surprising that every time I walk into the Bishop, I am haunted by these lived experiences. I have yet to work in the University's Chief Dan George "thrust" theatre space, but once I do, my memories will linger there as well.

Other theatre spaces that offer me the layered sense of history whenever I enter them include the Metro Theatre and Theatre Inconnu. I still recall the Metro in its early days of being run by Intrepid Theatre, when the basketball marks on the floor of this former gymnasium were still visible. It was exciting to see a new theatre space developing in Victoria, especially in the wake of the sad loss of Kaleidoscope's Herald Street Theatre not long after I moved here. I was impressed with Janet Munsil and Ian Case's determination to create a viable Downtown performance space. So many local and touring productions have made use of this space. My memory is marked by seeing Tim Crouch's remarkable *An Oak Tree*, or Marcus Youssef and James Long's fascinating and challenging duel of masculinity *Winners and Losers*, or the amazing puppet master Ronnie Burkett's *Daisy Theatre*.

Finally, a shout out to Clayton Jevne's Theatre Inconnu. I have followed this small theatre company during its move from Market Square to Fernwood and then through the years at Little Fernwood Hall when columns created staging challenges in the black box space. Finally, the hall is column-free and Jevne still programs eclectic seasons of plays from here and around the world that always invite me to recall what else I've seen in that space, and how these hauntings resonate with what is on offer tonight.

So the gift of theatre keeps giving, over time and space, from the Theatre of Dionysus to the stages of Victoria. Here's to the next 20 years of memories made, on and off the stage.

Monica's latest book, *Web of Performance*, is available as a free ebook through the University of Victoria Library.

The Giller Light Bash • November 19

THE GILLER LIGHT BASH—a collaborative, seven-city fundraising event/simulcast of the Scotiabank Giller Prize gala in Toronto—has been going on in major cities for many years. Munro's Books has signed on to make 2018 Victoria's debut year, a welcome opportunity for Jessica Paul, Munro's assistant manager and events coordinator. She's on the organizing committee for Giller Light Victoria, along with journalist/editor Margo Goodhand, a recent transplant from Winnipeg, who spearheaded the effort to get this city on board with the Bash. "It's such a literary town," says Paul. "It's crazy we didn't have it here."

The Crystal Ballroom at the Fairmont Empress is the setting for an elegant three-course dinner and evening of literary entertainment, with all ticket proceeds going to support Frontier College, Canada's oldest national literacy program. "They've been very involved with literacy across the country for years," Paul explains. In hard-to-reach places where development of literacy is an especially difficult issue, Frontier's programs aim to deliver and increase awareness.

This year's Giller should be especially exciting, as one of the five finalists is Victoria-based Esi Edugyan's book *Washington Black*. Edugyan won the Giller in 2011 for *Half-Blood Blues*. The other nominees are *French Exit* by Patrick DeWitt; *Songs for the Cold of Heart* by Eric Dupont, translated by Peter McCambridge; *Motherhood* by Sheila Heti; and *An Ocean of Minutes* by Thea Lim. The inaugural 1994 Giller Prize of $25,000 has since increased to $140,000.

Esi Edugyan

At the local Giller Light gala, the five books will be represented by a panel of five local luminaries: The Honourable Janet Austin, 30th Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia; Dan Dagg, president and CEO of Hothouse Marketing; Monique Gray Smith, writer and storyteller; Rob Fleming, BC's minister of education; and author Susan Juby. Each will have five minutes to convince the audience why their book should win.

Paul told *Focus* that before they decided to go forward with Giller Light, Goodhand, who hosts the evening, "suggested we investigate who would be interested in attending. Well, we sold out nearly just from that," Paul reveals. "Hopefully, if people hear about it [too late], it will make them just that much more excited to plan to attend the next year."

On November 19, 5:30-9pm. Tickets, $75, in tables of 10, at www.munrobooks.com's event page. —*Mollie Kaye*

"IT TAKES LIFE" GAIL JOHNSON, 24 X 18, ACRYLIC

Throughout November/December

GAIL JOHNSON

Peninsula Gallery

Gail Johnson has been painting full time since the sale of her family's successful organic farm in 2001. Working mainly in acrylics and oils on canvas, Gail paints intuitively, often referencing imagery inspired by her farming life, her proximity to Vancouver Island's impressive coastline, her favourite fly fishing locations, and her love for all things growing. Confident strokes and a bold, colour-saturated palette define her acrylics and oils, whereas her work in pastels is mostly represented in large, sensitively rendered life drawings. 100-2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1282, www.pengal.com.

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November Events

PROGRAMS IN EARTH LITERACIES

Communion with the Divine through the Earth

A Retreat Day with **Margaret Walters**

Saturday, Nov 3; 10am –5pm

$65; please bring lunch, refreshments served

Mary Lake Nature Sanctuary, 1772 Millstream Rd, Victoria

(Do you need a ride or can you offer a ride? Please let us know.)

Where Spirituality Meets Community Cultures in a Climate Changing World

with **Mike Bell**

Friday Nov 9, 6:30 – 8:30 pm and Saturday Nov 10, 9:30 – 3:30 pm

$165 includes snacks and lunch (Please let us know by Oct 26 if you have any dietary restrictions)

Bethlehem Centre, 2371 Arbot Rd, Nanaimo

Re-engage & Reconnect to Life, A transformative process for difficult times

with facilitators **Jackie Larkin**, **Maggie Ziegler** and **Maxine Matilpi**

Saturday Nov 24, 9 am – 6 pm and Sunday Nov 25, 9 am to 5 pm

$185.00, please bring lunch, refreshments are served.

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Mamaskatch: A Cree Coming of Age

AMY REISWIG

Recently nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award, Darrel McLeod's memoir will break hearts in the best possible way.

Mamaskatch! We're free!" *"Tapwe! Mamaskatch. MAMASKATCH!"* The triumphant call and response is from a group of Cree girls who just ambushed two nuns at residential school and escaped into the woods, heading for home. Years later, in an altogether different kind of homecoming, Darrel McLeod would drive the casket bearing his mother, one of the daring escapees, to the small town of Smith, Alberta, near the Athabasca River, recalling lost hope for a happier return he'd imagined: "Mother showing me off and bragging: This is my son—he went to university; he's a teacher now, *mamaskatch*."

McLeod's new memoir takes its title from the word his mother would use when something amazing happened and she wanted to share the moment. And it is, indeed, something amazing. *Mamaskatch: A Cree Coming of Age* (Douglas & McIntyre) generously and bravely invites us into intimate stories of McLeod's family, their experiences with trauma, racism, violence, sexual abuse, addiction and, through it all, a deep and complicated love.

Written in his retirement, McLeod takes us back to his tumultuous childhood in Treaty 8 territory in northern Alberta, through his searching young adulthood and up to the early days of his career and his mother's passing, the latter in some ways key to the book's beginnings.

"When Mom died, I felt lost," McLeod tells me, his usual cheerfulness muted. He had been teaching French immersion in Vancouver at that time, and was separated from her geographically and socially. "I felt I'd lost my connection to my culture with her passing, so I looked for ways of getting it back." After applying to jobs on reserves all over the country, McLeod landed the principalship of a school north of Prince George, in a community of about 200. It was there that Catherine Bird, one of the Elders, planted an important seed. "We used to exchange stories sitting around visiting in the evenings or around the campfire on the weekend," he recalls fondly. "She said: 'You have to write those stories down. They'll help somebody some day.' So I had that in the back of my mind, but I never had time!"

Absorbed in a whirlwind career of curriculum and program development, federal treaty negotiation and so much more that took him from Victoria to Ottawa, Mexico and the UN (a career so full of its own stories that it's the subject of his next book), McLeod waited to write, which brought its own blessings. "If you start at the age I started," he laughs, "you have time to process things, put it all in perspective." He says he also needed time to find a confident voice, not surprising given that he had become protective and secretive for much of his life.

Not a linear memoir, the 17 chapters unfold more like short stories, focusing on certain moments, sliding tangentially over others, and lingering over resonant details. For instance, huddled around a radio hooked up to a car battery listening to the news: "I have a dream… I heard." And the first chapter hints at McLeod's lifelong love of and escape into music, as his 13-year-old self is called downstairs at one in the morning. to listen to his mother's troubling stories as record after record plays, from Elvis' "There Goes My Everything" to Merle Haggard's "The Fightin' Side of Me."

PHOTO: ILJA HERB

Darrel J. McLeod

It's not my place to try and tell or even summarize McLeod's stories—a life he's waited long and worked so hard to finally tell. But what I found so remarkable about the book is its fearless intimacy. It allows us to come indoors, sit at kitchen tables and at the edge of nighttime beds, peek around the corners of glass-strewn hallways, sit at schoolroom desks or along for lonesome bus rides and listen to conversations, whether in English or with snippets of untranslated Cree, and to a child's painful and self-discovering questions. It allows us to also meet the man that child became: thoughtful, funny, strong,

WITH FEARLESS INTIMACY, Darrel McLeod's memoir shares his family's experiences of trauma, racism, violence, sexual abuse, addiction and a deep and complicated love.

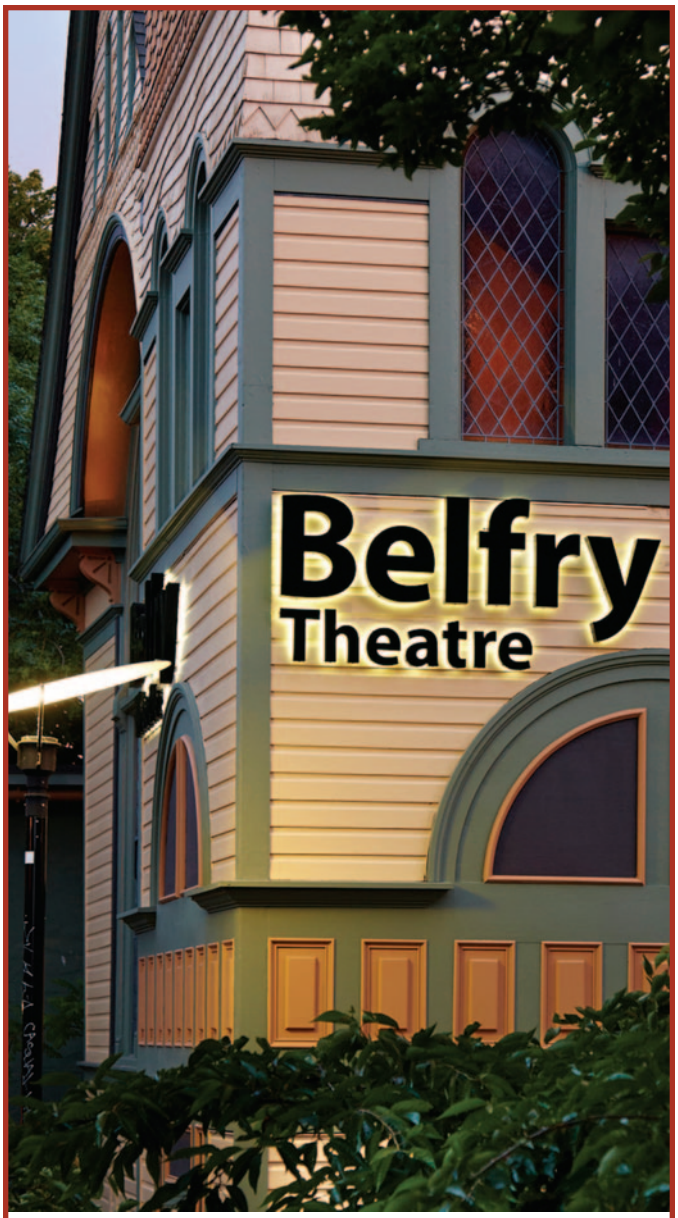
proud, resilient, creative and still questioning. And it allows anyone who has experienced violence—or, like McLeod, witnessed violence both by and against people he loves—to know that they are not alone.

"You know, Catherine Bird said I should write these stories down because they would help someone someday," he says again, passionately, acknowledging some of the risks he took. "And I realized I had to bare it all. I had to show people—particularly youth, but it could be anybody my age or even older—who are carrying around a big load of shame and guilt and self-condemnation that they can get their stories out, they can deal with their issues. They don't need to carry around that guilt and that fear: fear that people will find out, fear about if people find out your deep, dark secret, will they still love you or like you? In the feedback I've been getting, everyone has been so loving."

Recently nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award, *Mamaskatch* will break hearts in the best possible way. Years ago, my friend Richard Van Camp gave me a copy of his collection *Angel Wing Splash Pattern* with the inscription: "I hope these stories break your heart with beauty." At first I wondered why a friend would wish me heartbreak, and I puzzled over the relationship to beauty. But I came to see that the beauty of art and honesty and bravely inviting others in and sharing truth is how you crack the shell of another's heart, break it open to its glowing hidden place where it is molten, malleable, ready to be receptive, changed.

This is my last column for *Focus* magazine, and I leave it, after nine years, incredibly changed by all the conversations, in person and in pages. I am honoured to have shared time with so many wonderful writers and to have tried, in turn, to share that with you. Darrel McLeod sends me off with a softer heart and a big smile, as the last two words of his book, *Ekosi etikwe*, mean "See you later" or "It's done" or "that's it—for now." It's a beautiful ending because the story, McLeod reminds us all, is never over.

Amy Reiswig humbly thanks all of you for reading over these past nine years. May our stories cross again. *Editor's Note:* see page 48 for some of Amy's other contributions to culture and community.



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What, me worry?

GENE MILLER

To solve homelessness, we need to build homes for the marginalized and support them. The only thing holding us back is…

There's no such thing as a problem without a solution. It's the nature, the "job," even, of problems to have solutions, a structural requirement; just like there's no such thing as a one-sided door, or a *here* without a *there*.

So it is with the homeless "problem." It has a solution; possibly several. One would be for all of us to be homeless (goodbye *problem*, hello *trend* or *new normal*); but, of course, that's foolish to imagine, given current social and political stability, coupled to rosy global prospects.

The homeless problem…oh, you want me to start by defining the homeless problem? Well, the homeless are a problem for themselves: they don't have homes. And we are the homeless's problem because we won't house them, or do so by miserly and unsuccessful increments. And, of course, what do our crossing-the-street avoidance and averted gaze mean, if not that the homeless are a problem, a problem for us, like some design flaw in the otherwise promising human project. Everybody knows it, nobody says it. Instead, we speak in a kind of code. With wan conviction, we say we want "housing to be provided in appropriate locations," etc. Translated into English, that means we want them to disappear.

And ask yourself how well all of that's working.

Ron Rice, executive director of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, claimed in early October: "There are over 2,000 homeless people in the city. Although the Goldstream tenters have become sort of the spotlight on the crisis we're experiencing as a city, there's a lot of homeless people in the city." Over two thousand homeless? Jesus! That's roughly one in two hundred over the entire regional population. Maybe it won't be too long before the number is 3,000. You never know about the tricky and changeable future. I mean, if you do a casual inventory of your near-future expectations for society and hopes for security, isn't economic risk and its consequences at or near the top? Well. I'd love to be wrong, but I sense that the pendulum is swinging toward risk, which may well yank the broomstick props from under a significant number of the just-hanging-on. (There are currently a surprising number of folks living in their cars in Victoria. Does that qualify as homeless? I don't know.)

Rock Bay Landing (l) and Our Place

So, now we all share a clear picture of the homeless problem? Good.

Here is my coarse-grained solution to the homeless problem: we create places that can house 500 or more in clusters or "communities" of individual suites and present like a residential version of Uptown Shopping Centre (walk its internal "boulevard" to get what I mean). House and feed them, look after their physical and mental health needs. Provide calming wallpaper and nutrition breaks, counselling and life skills training and education. Lots of efficiently delivered services (society is spending a fortune now, anyway). Show movies every night. Deliver support cheques. Provide needed transportation. Consolidate all the usual homeless services, provide social and recreational spaces, make sure to include coffee joints. Give such places cozy monikers…is The Uplands taken? Resist the temptation to place these facilities out on the flatlands of the Saanich Peninsula, or out past Stewieville on the way to Sooke. There's plenty of available land in both directions, but the isolation sends a horrible message.

More logically, identify available sites closer to the city centre. I just drove past a vacant square block—a whole block!—east side of Douglas, immediately north of Mayfair Mall, right at the Victoria/Saanich border. Or make deals with one or several of the car dealerships on Douglas, between Mayfair and Uptown. Their surface parking areas are enormous and, in some cases, contiguous. Purchase the air rights, leave the car dealership surface parking as-is, and build up and over. Toss in property tax breaks in perpetuity. My guess is that the owners would jump at the opportunity, considering that, courtesy of increasingly non-negotiable demands of the climate change agenda, the private automobile has 10 to 15 years left. After that, it's all going to be non-private-car-owning Moto, share-car, car-on-demand and cleverly engineered new bicycles built for two or more.

But, you exclaim, the costs of all that housing and services! The costs!

Society is paying now—not just financially, but also through social wounds that are real if hard to price. And I say: a small price to pay for a job well done.

The reason the homeless represent such a potent threat is that we know deep down those protective walls around the human project are not solid, but just images, membrane-thin, projected on shifting, filmy surfaces, like cloud. We understand exactly who and what we are, one layer below the surface, and what lurks in us, individually and together: darkness, danger, deconstruction, and all the violence that brings. Please, don't scoff; this is just Nature 101. It's a jungle in there! You would no sooner want "the homeless" living next to you than you would anything else that carries risk of infection—or the power to depress the resale value of your home. *Border Crossings*, the Winnipeg-based quarterly, in an interview piece about filmmaker David Lynch, quotes Lynch: the mind "is a big beautiful place, but it is also pitch-dark."

Pitch-dark.

These are especially hard times. The drumbeat has been quickening, the skies greying, for a while, and at present you can feel social climax

BY MY ROUGHEST OF ESTIMATES, we could eliminate regional homelessness for about $120 million in capital costs—roughly the cost of the new bridge.

in the air; not in, or just in, Victoria, but everywhere. Civilization has an itch, and is beginning to scratch; not for the first time on the long voyage. If your sensitivities are appropriately tuned and your knowledge of history sufficiently well-informed, you must wake up gasping these days. It's scary. Uncertainty, the sense of risk, is spreading over the entire landscape, challenging normalcy, the very structure of the everyday, on every front.

You can put it all on Trump and the burgeoning extreme right if you want, but that still leaves the unanswered question: why did our, uh, cousins elect a demonstrably crazy narcissist psychopath criminal sonofabitch? In your heart, you know there were years of prelude in which social irritation was building...everywhere, not just America. Germany, for example, is gearing up for the return of heady "*Sieg Heil!*" days. The reason? Turkish and other immigrants polluting the ra—oh, sorry, taking German jobs.

Operating under laws and corner-points of existence too mysterious for me to figure out, it seems that just when we're lost in orgies of self-congratulation for our social, political, and economic accomplishments, that's when the next valley, the next sorrow, forms and grows. You recall, in Voltaire's *Candide*, the protagonists echo each other in bursts of lunatic Leibnizian optimism: "This is the best of all possible worlds!"

Friends, history really does happen—not elsewhere, or elsewhen, but in front of us, right now. Did you imagine that "end of the liberal order" was just editorial page punditry? History is ever-poised to turn into…foreground. History loves headlines.

Spend a candid moment with your own state of mind, not your the-city-should-undertake-longer-range-infrastructure-cost-planning upstanding citizen mind, but the in-the-bathroom-staring-at-your-spreading-middle/between jobs/trying-to-make-sense-of-life's-changes one. Now, let your imagination drift. Be homeless. Work it. Follow your thoughts, minute by minute. Dinner? The discarded pizza crusts in somebody's garbage can. Beer and soda can empties for income, wherever you can find them, maybe the same garbage can; or panhandling on the Causeway. Where are you going to sleep? After you lost the house, you slept in the car; then, you couldn't pay car insurance; now, you crash in a doorway. How many days before you can pick up your next government cheque? Pills to straighten that roller coaster in your head. Somebody boosted your pack the other day? Aw! Need a new prescription? Tough shit.

And now that you're in the mood, reflect on those homeless activists screaming for housing, lifting the corner-flap so high you can see revolution and social anger and anarchy on a red boil.

Meanwhile, back at the garden, "This place, Victoria, is so charming." "Quite a tech hub you're developing here." "Omigod, you pay such a lifestyle premium shopping at Thrifty's!" Folks are moving here by the planeload. Companies and businesses are locating or relocating here. "Welcome to Victoria. Net Worth Statement, Please."

So, why, given our social talents, expertise and worldliness, don't we successfully house the homeless? Why do we remain poised—paralyzed, actually—between terror, resentment, anger, sympathy (at a proper remove) and understanding? Given the levels of human talent in this place, can't we design a new solution to this old problem?

By my roughest of estimates, we could eliminate regional homelessness for about $120 million in capital costs—roughly the cost of the new bridge. And much of the dough is already in place in the $90-million housing fund of the CRD, Province and Feds.

I know, I know, you're tired and you just want the world to work. Still, work's never done, and we disregard those discordant notes beneath the community's happy song at our peril.

Finally, you ask: "And if we do this, actually succeed in providing reasonable housing and support services, do you promise that nothing else bad will happen and things will settle down?

I promise, unconditionally.

Founder of Open Space and co-founder of *Monday Magazine*, Gene Miller is currently promoting ASH, an affordable housing concept.

STRUGGLING WITH LIFE?

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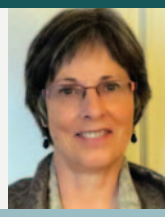

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Robin Hood's dream

MALEEA ACKER

In the face of ecological disasters, art and science together can lead to hope and resilience.

PHOTO: JUSTUS LOWRY

Robin Hood

"I caught the dream of the orca," Robin June Hood tells me in Demitasse Café during Fall's first rainy period, "and it was so full in meaning that I knew something had been transmitted. I had to do something about it."

Coming from a cultural geographer, a consultant for community-based research and development projects who holds a PhD in global education, this might sound like an odd thing to say. But Hood is anything but ordinary. She focuses her attention on protecting the natural world, but also on how the cycle of life and death make us the temporally-bound creatures we are. It's this attention to deeper meanings—shaped by her learning, but also by her own experience—that makes her work so important today.

Born in Quebec but a longtime resident of BC, Hood took a degree in geography and then began an activist career in Guatemala, where she was sent by an international aid agency. She arrived ten days before a major earthquake, and instead of fleeing, she stayed, travelling back and forth from Vancouver to Guatemala for years while working in war zones and refugee camps, setting up schools and "listening to people." The experience cemented her respect for indigenous knowledge, community-based learning and grassroots initiatives.

Two years ago, orca whales cried to her for help, Hood explains, a dream that occurred far before the recent and tragic events in the Salish Sea pod's history. In August, a member of J Pod carried her dead baby for 17 days through the Salish Sea, capturing the world's attention and bringing many to tears. In September, J-50, a four-year-old female in the pod died, bringing the population down to 74. All three pods—J, K and L—converged in a superpod off Race Rocks soon after she disappeared, some say to mourn her loss.

Hood and colleagues from Salt Spring Island set about creating and carving wooden orcas, one to represent each member of the pods. They have been shown and circulated in events in Vancouver, Victoria, and Salt Spring, acting as a visual reminder of the orcas' plight and endangered status. In September they fund-raised for RAVEN Trust, an Indigenous legal defense fund that supports First Nations' constitutional rights. "We do education around acoustic noise, traffic and salmon habitat," she tells me. "It's been a dream and a heart project" that has Hood dipping again into art as a method of informing and impacting citizens through grassroots efforts—a track she's been on for nearly a half century. "Art keeps me hopeful," she explains.

Hood put the knowledge she gained from Mayan communities to use after her return to Canada, consulting in education, community and international development, and teaching at Royal Roads University. For several years, she was director of the Community Based Research Institute at Vancouver Island University (before the university shut the program down). She has worked as a filmmaker, was part of the negotiation team for the creation of the Great Bear Rainforest, and has worked extensively with Indigenous peoples both here and in Latin America. "I tend to be a seeder," she explains, "I like to get things started." Hood's doctorate work examined how to revitalize traditional ecological knowledge in Guatemala, a skill she has applied on the island with the Cowichan Nation. A book, *For the Love of Nature: Solutions for Biodiversity*, co-authored with writer and naturalist Briony Penn, appeared in 2010.

Until last year, Hood was involved with the *Xwaaqw'um* project in Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring Island. *Xwaaqw'um* is a historic Cowichan settlement that existed in the bay's provincial park. The resurgence project is now a cultural learning hub for First Nations and settlers. "It's an amazing project, where elders have put together a series of workshops, like 'Cowichan 101,' which are open to settlers and indigenous," she says. The program recently received funding from the Vancouver Foundation to take the model to five other First Nations communities in BC.

A year ago, Hood lost her husband, the social justice activist and The Land Conservancy director John Shields, to a rare blood disease. In 2015, they had survived a serious car accident only to learn he was terminally ill.

A traumatic life event can be a catalyst—for refocus or for introspection. Many turn inward, eschewing community and work to heal on their own. The unexpected loss catapulted Hood into a period of flux. "I realized I needed a couple of years to be quiet and think about next steps." But though she downplays her achievements when we talk,

> "IT IS OUR BELIEF SYSTEMS and our philosophy that we need to change and align with the Earth's carrying capacity."—*Robin June Hood*

Hood has continued to be a force for positive change, mostly on a volunteer basis. Part of that work has been acknowledging the importance of slowing down, recognizing our bonds with the Earth, learning how to age and die well, and realizing that grieving, in the age of the Anthropocene, is an essential act. "I think we're in the middle of a big [ecological] collapse. So I'm holding at the same time the grief and upset of this time."

Hood is a board member and facilitator for the Centre for Earth and Spirit, which offers workshops and programs on aging well, death and dying, community conversations and the importance of story-telling, and thus the importance of elder involvement in our society. "We are asking older people to step up, and to be mentors and create opportunities for younger people," she says.

She does not shy away from taking a hard look at her community. "There are very few mature, nurturing, regenerative adults out there." The solution, she argues, is acknowledging our lack of deep environmental awareness. "We are in an age of education for global survival. We need to make sure people have knowledge of the Earth." This education, she argues, is also tied in with grieving. "It is our belief systems and our philosophy that we need to change and align with the Earth's carrying capacity…When I look at the lurch to the right, globally, the last gasp of capitalism…" she trails off, she looks grief-stricken, but recovers quickly, saying, "If we settle into touching how we're feeling, then we become more whole, more mature, balanced, and resilient."

Resilience, for Hood, is about reconciliation—with nature, with First Nations, and with ourselves and our consumerist society. Hood is also a special advisor to the Greater Victoria Greenbelt Society, which has galvanized support across the region to save Mary Lake and its surrounding 67 acres of forest in the municipality of the Highlands. The Coastal Douglas-fir and related endangered ecosystems are increasingly imperiled by encroaching development in Langford (and recently, by a proposed gravel-mining operation in Highlands itself). The lake's former residence, Highlands Nature House, will serve as a meeting space, artist-in-residence space, and environmental education facility.

It's that kind of mixing of art and science that makes so much sense to Hood. "Art has been a deep underground river that I've dipped into a few times. Now the river is turning into a waterfall." When art and conservation is combined with Indigenous knowledge, like the learning she's facilitating at the Centre for Earth and Spirit, or that's taking place through Cowichan's *Xwaaqw'um* project, her work becomes a way of not "discounting our time of dreaming, which is another way of knowing."

Maleea Acker is the author of *Gardens Aflame: Garry Oak Meadows of BC's South Coast* (New Star, 2012). She is currently completing a PhD in Human Geography, focusing on the intersections between the social sciences and poetry.

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Everything we do counts

TRUDY DUIVENVOORDEN MITIC

Until governments get serious about tackling greenhouse gas emissions, citizens must take the lead.

Have you seen the urgent report that was released last month by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change? You know, the one that spells out how we're currently barrelling towards disaster and misery unless the world starts taking extraordinary measures to reduce carbon emissions. It was intended to prod governments into action, but let's face it—when it comes to the climate change train, our politicians have been riding in the caboose for years. Only when the polls assure them that the masses have finally started stumping for real change will they cast off corporate control and come scuttling up to the locomotive to grab the microphone and take it from there.

Until that happens, it's up to ordinary denizens everywhere to start reining things in right now. True, what we do individually only adds up to a speck of difference. But multiply that by a collective groundswell of thousands and then millions of small, unspectacular actions, and we have the catalyst to turn our dismal destiny around. It all starts with just one change becoming engrained, and then another. Starting now gets us practised and ready for the official fix because when it finally comes, it will definitely decree that we do our part.

A solar-powered clothes drier

Understanding that almost everything comes with an energy price-tag—in the mining, making and/or use of it—helps us see near-endless ways to reduce our own carbon footprint. Here are some starter ideas: Combine errands and make fewer car trips. Participate in a clothing swap. Mend your clothes. Drink tap water. Stop using plastic water bottles. Buy only what you can eat before it spoils. Use cereal box liners instead of plastic wrap. Turn your leftovers into the next day's lunch. Eat less meat (animal agriculture is a high-emission industry). Get cozy in a sweater. Wear slippers in winter. Shun the dryer and hang-dry your clothes—they'll last longer too. Try going plastic-free for a week. Turn brown bags or any used paper into giftwrap. Make Santa bags and ditch Christmas wrap forever. Embrace all the little free libraries popping up around town—200 at last count. Shop the used goods market (and prepare to be amazed). Give the gift of your time. Carry a travel mug and quit paper cups and plastic lids. Buy powdered dishwasher detergent and lace with baking soda—no rinse agent required. Make your own greeting cards. Swap out toxic household cleaners for a single all-purpose biodegradable product. Boycott glossy magazines that feature huge exclusive homes seemingly for the purpose of breeding discontent.

In your yard, plant a food garden. Stop watering the lawn. Embrace a native plant or pick something heat and drought tolerant. Adopt a struggling boulevard tree. Be kind to birds, bees, the soil, water and your own health by eschewing all garden pesticides.

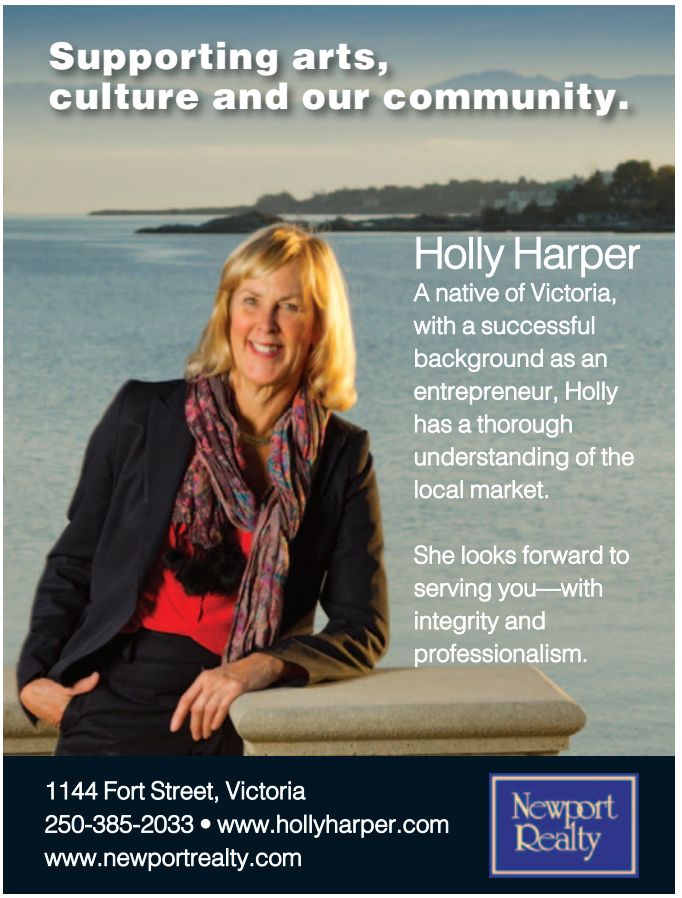
Buy good shoes and have them repaired. Reduce your personal-care products by one item. Go vegetarian one—or more—days a week. Ride your bike to work. Stop thinking of shopping as recreation. Turn your Halloween pumpkin into soup, pies or muffins. Co-own a lawnmower with your neighbour. Borrow and share so not everyone needs to own everything. Keep stuff organized so you don't end up buying something you know you already have but can't find. Use less paper. Avoid fast food, a source of mediocre nutrition and mountains of single-use plastics and other materials. Carry a small real fork in your purse or briefcase and wave away all the plastic cutlery.

Participate in a beach clean-up. Get stuff fixed at a Repair Café. Go for a walk instead of a drive. Find new homes for the "stranded assets" in your storage locker. Make your own laundry detergent—online recipes make it easy. Embrace regular "buy nothing" days. Reconsider your list of essential needs. Pretend you're downsizing and cull accordingly. Downsize when the time is right. Grow your own window-sill sprouts and micro-greens. Check out all the improved reusable offerings for feminine protection and bladder control. Buy trendier fashion second-hand (yes, it's there!) and donate it back when you're done with it. Remember that children don't need every toy on the market. Same for pets and pet accessories. Be content with last year's line of electronic devices. Extend the life of your cell phone by investing in a good case. Use biodegradable soaps and shampoos. Refill liquids at a soap exchange. The list goes on…

Given that the fossil fuel industry and transportation are Canada's top two leading greenhouse gas emitters, here are some ways to dig deeper: Buy local whenever possible (the trucking of goods has a huge carbon footprint). Start saving for an electric car (many new models will soon be available). Install a heat pump. Take vacations closer to home. Ensure your retirement savings are invested in ways that reflect your values. And vote for candidates committed to tackling climate change.

Change begins with us. Every single thing we do counts.

Trudy wishes everyone a truly happy holiday with just the right balance of everything that gladdens your heart.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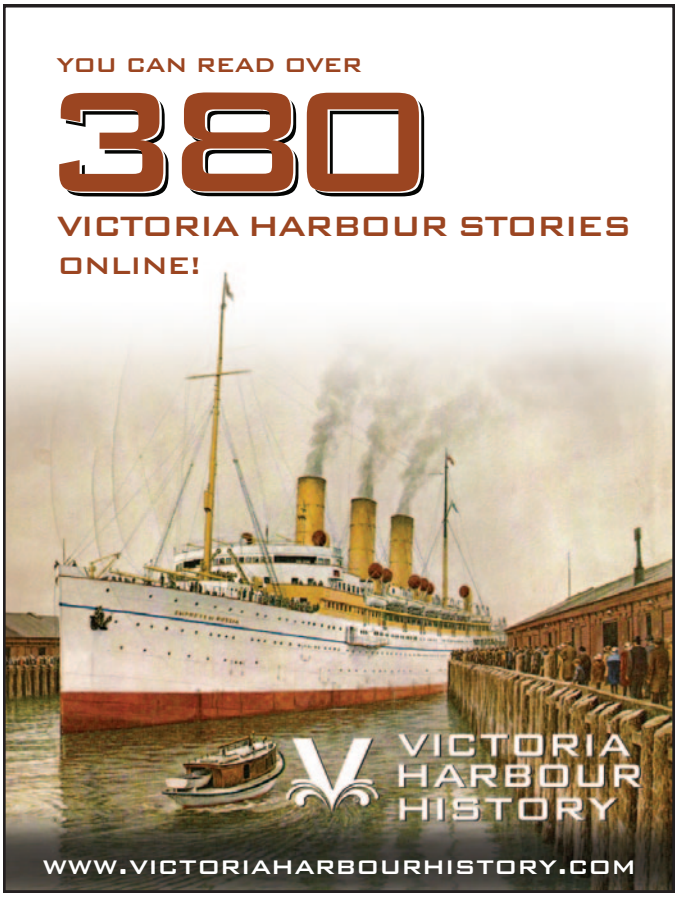
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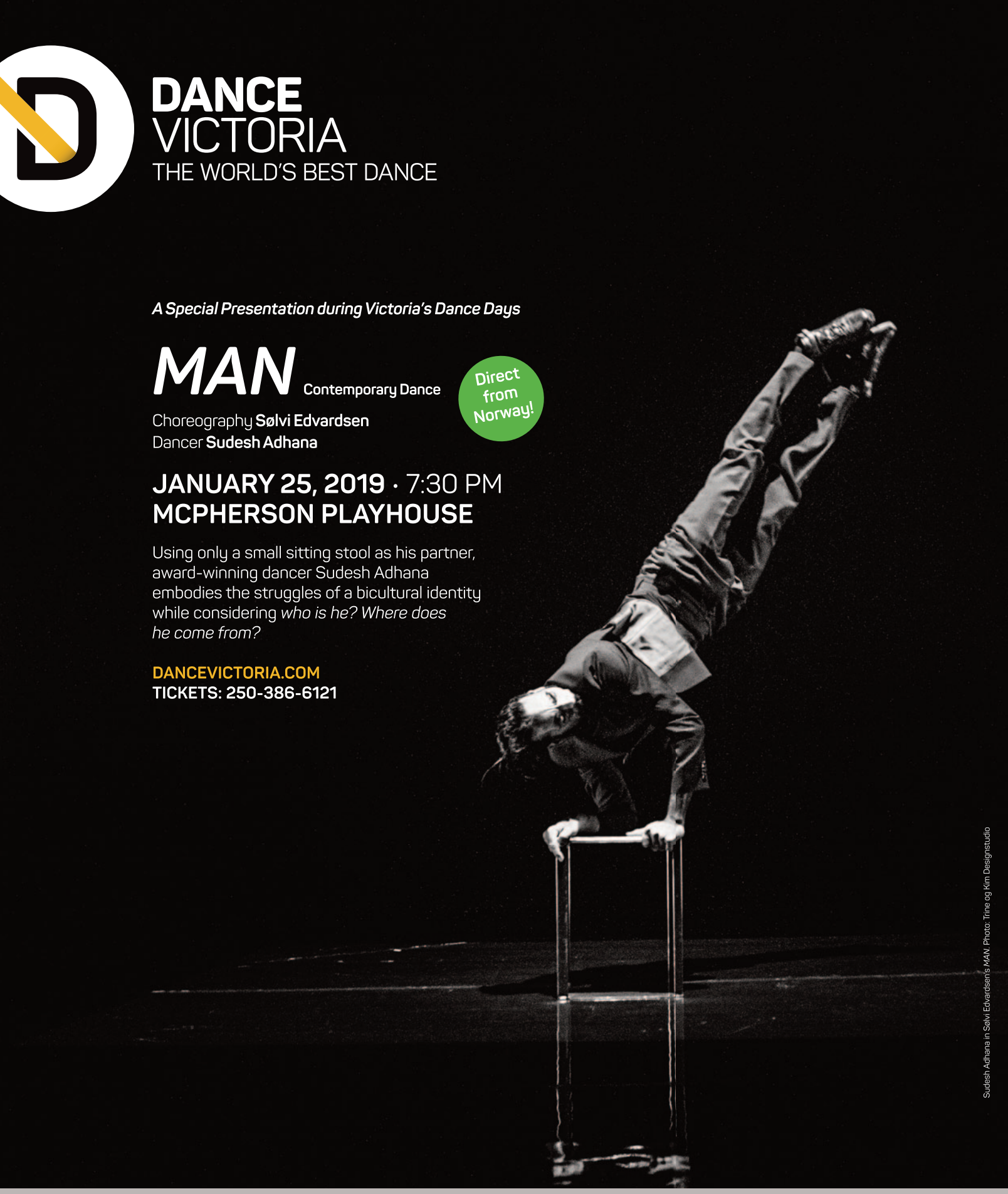

Sudesh Adhana in Sølvi Edvardsen's *MAN*. Photo: Trine og Kim Designstudio

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