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An airport in our midst

LESLIE CAMPBELL

Victoria boasts one of the busiest water airports in the world—some think it's too busy.

PHOTO: DAVID BROADLAND

Floatplanes coming and going on the busy Victoria Harbour Airport

It's quite unusual—and ambitious—to have an airport smack in the middle of any city, on water or land. According to Transport Canada, which runs the harbour aerodrome, "Victoria Harbour is Canada's only certified water airport and port that is home to cruise ships, floatplanes, passenger ferries, recreational boaters and kayakers." And don't forget the big yachts in the new marina. Did you know Victoria is now the busiest port of call for cruise ships in Canada? Or that the airport has earned the title of Canada's, and sometimes the world's, busiest water airport, averaging 100 flight movements (take-offs or landings) a day?

As Transport Canada's graphic depiction of the harbour's transportation avenues shows (page 6), all of the traffic in the harbour is occurring in a small space, one surrounded by dense development of the waterfront, including hotels and thousands of condos. Note the pinch-point between Songhees Point and Laurel Point, a narrow channel that all vessels, including aircraft, must squeeze through to get into or out of the Inner Harbour. And notice that airport runways are superimposed on the lane for boats over 20 metres in length.

The airport might even get busier if recently-announced plans to convert Harbour Air's fleet to electric motors come to pass. Harbour Air is the main airline operating out of the harbour, with flights to downtown Vancouver, South Vancouver (YVR), Pitt Meadows, and Whistler. With over 40 aircraft, it is possibly the largest seaplane airline in the world. It has won numerous awards over the years, including Canada's Best Managed Companies (for 10 years), and Business of the Year in Victoria. Its founder and owner, Greg McDougall, was just inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. It claims to be the world's first fully carbon-neutral airline (accomplished through an offset program). And now it plans to become the first commercial airline to be powered by electric propulsion.

When electrification of its fleet is complete, flight costs could come down as much as 70-80 percent, according to Roei Ganzarski of magniX, which is developing the new engines. If flight costs were reduced, it follows that fares might come down, too—certainly the offset charges would be eliminated. That would likely translate into greater demand—from tourists, business people, government employees, and even for freight. Typical fares now are over $200 to Vancouver, but imagine a $100 fare: the 30-minute trip could become enticingly convenient and affordable to a lot more folks.

When I suggest such a possibility to Harbour Air President Randy Wright, he said, "Fuel costs will come down, but it will take a while to convert the entire fleet. There is also a significant capital cost

MADOFF BELIEVES the reasons for the delay—19 years now—is the requirement that the regulations and standards will be subject to a 30-day public notice and thereby be held up to scrutiny.

involved in this refit. As a result, at this point, it's difficult to say what the impact will be on fares." He also doesn't think flight numbers will increase.

Residents with ringside seats on the harbour have expressed concerns for many years about the airport's safety, noise and exhaust fumes. While Harbour Air's electrification plans—if they are carried out—will eventually help on some fronts, the safety concerns will not go away, whether flight numbers increase or remain the same.

IN THE EARLY 1990s, when construction of condos began on the Songhees, floatplane flights numbered about 11,000 annually. Though they have ranged as high as 34,000, they've been hovering around 25,000 in recent years. (Helicopters not included—they add another 9,000 or so.)

In 2000, the harbour aerodrome was certified as an airport by Transport Canada, which regulates the Port of Victoria—basically from Ogden Point to the Selkirk Trestle Bridge. In 2008, the City of Victoria, in response to growing citizen concerns about safety, noise and emissions, set up a committee to look at the airport. In the minutes for a meeting that included representatives from Transport Canada, the anger of residents comes through loud and clear.

One resident, an experienced pilot with over 1600 hours of flight time, including in floatplanes, stated: "it's an accident waiting to happen…Any experienced pilot is astonished. If it was grass between the shores there'd be no airport." He and others commented that they had given up complaining because of the apparent futility. As one person put it, "Complaining to Transport Canada is a big black hole, nothing happens."

Another argued, "There has to be some limitation [of flight numbers] and some people think the carrying capacity has long been exceeded." A Songhees resident described how "on a typical day I wipe off my balcony and the rag is filthy [from plane exhaust]."

That committee's final report in 2009 made clear that the City had no real power over the airport. It could ask Transport Canada to play nice, but that was about it. Among the things it "urged" Transport Canada to do were conduct an independent aeronautical study, and study the impact of noise and air quality.

No such studies have been done.

Former Councillor Pam Madoff, who chaired the committee on the airport, describes the issue as "one of the more frustrating files to have dealt with" over the course of her 25 years on council—largely because of Transport Canada's "lack of responsiveness and a level of disinterest that was quite extraordinary."

Another key "urging" of her committee was to finalize the *Water Airport Regulations and Standards*, after adjusting them to address "quality of life factors and the dense urban environment." The regulations have never been adjusted or formalized—they have been in draft form since 2000.

Songhees resident Susan Woods has shown me an almost comical two-decade record of annual promises from Transport Canada that the final regulations, along with a 30-day public comment period, were just around the corner.

Focus presents: Iyengar Yoga Centre ADVERTISEMENT

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Variety: No two yoga classes are the same: teachers select yoga poses from the different groups of poses to emphasize the various aspects of the practice.

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The continuing delay led Victoria City Council, in July 2017, to pass a resolution to ask "the Government of Canada move forward with publication of *Canadian Aviation Regulations and Standards for the Victoria Harbour Water Airport*, to allow for public comment… and provide certainty for residents, operators and passengers." In May 2018, after a motion by Councillor Ben Isitt, who noted the years of "runaround" by Transport Canada, the City sent another request for the regulations.

Madoff believes the reasons for the delay—19 years now—is the legal requirement that the regulations and standards will be subject to a 30-day public notice and thereby be held up to scrutiny—scrutiny, it's implied, that could upset the airport applecart.

Marg Gardiner, president of the James Bay Neighbourhood Association, has been studying the harbour and the airport for decades. She uses words like "shameful" and "depressing" to describe how neglectful *both* the City and Transport Canada have been in addressing and protecting local residents from unhealthy levels of exhaust and noise, as well as potential accidents. She believes the City encouraged development around the harbour knowing about the liveability issues around a busy airport. She says it's only through citizen action that airport traffic hasn't increased more over the years: "It's a political game." Referring to the City's committee and its recommendations, she adds, "There was lots of talk, but in the end nothing…no one demands anything from Transport Canada."

HARBOUR MASTER MARIAH McCOOEY, who also acts as the airport manager, assures me that, over the years, Transport Canada has developed measures to ensure all harbour users can coexist safely. Key among these measures is "a detailed traffic scheme, which has been in place for almost 20 years. It includes runways, lanes, and different zones that keep traffic flowing for all the diverse users." She admits, "From shore it looks a bit random, but it's actually well organized."

Besides wall-to-wall windows on the water side of her Fisherman's Wharf office, McCooey, who holds a Masters in Maritime Management, has a number of large high-resolution video screens providing views from 23 cameras around the harbour. The Coast Guard has access to these videos as well. The data is kept for 120 days so recent incidents can be reviewed if necessary.

Victoria Harbour Airport operates under a "Prior Permission Required" system: not just anyone can land their plane. All pilots flying into the harbour airport do special studies and take an exam, McCooey tells me.

NAV Canada provides "flight services" including up-to-date weather and water conditions for pilots, but, unlike at larger airports, no air traffic control (though NAV Canada's tower on the harbour looks like an air traffic control tower at a regular airport, it isn't). Pilots can communicate with NAV's flight service advisors and with each other.

McCooey oversees on-the-water patrollers—a couple in the winter and seven in the summer. The biggest safety issue, she says, are

Transport Canada's "Traffic Scheme" for the Public Port of Victoria

PHOTO: LESLIE CAMPBELL

Victoria Harbour Master Mariah McCooey

"transient" boat operators who don't know harbour rules. Towards their enlightenment, she and the patrollers give out 2,500 brochures over the summer. These include the map, with its highlighted warning telling boaters to stay away from runways.

McCooey is not worried about the amount of traffic. "We have a lot of coordination [among partners], with lots of safety meetings… A lot of top professionals are looking at the harbour to make sure it works and is safe," she says, mentioning representatives from NAV, the Coast Guard, City of Victoria, and the RCMP. All the partners meet every six months to make sure everyone's in the loop about any developments and issues. There's also a database that includes all reports of infringements that is available to all the partners. "It's pretty fantastic," says McCooey. Every incident in which a runway is crossed, or there's been a misuse of boat lanes, is included and analyzed. There were 700 such non-serious incidents last year, but no real accidents. The incidents are recorded, says McCooey, as they do pose some risk. "We're always asking what we can do to reduce it."

Regular users, she says, are well-versed in proper procedures. Tug operators know they can go "right up the middle," for instance. The whale-watching boats also use the middle lanes. Harbour ferries have to regularly traverse runways, so are heavily involved in safety meetings, she notes, telling me in all, there are 120,000 ferry movements per year. Each ferry has a two-way radio. A few years back Randy Wright described the arrangements as "working like a Swiss watch."

Still, there are barges coming and going and there will be, eventually, some mega-yachts. As well, the Coho and other big ships have to use the airport runway. It seems an incredible amount to choreograph.

SUSAN WOODS, WHO LIVES IN A CONDO on the Songhees and has a masters degree in marine science, is not reassured by the Harbour Master's confidence. Her main concern is the way planes are allowed to fly close to residential buildings on the north side of the harbour. (Full disclosure: my mother lived in a Songhees condo for 24 years.)

The allowed distance from the edge of the take-off and landing areas to the nearest building is 50 metres. She believes it should be more like that of other airports: 300 metres. She notes, "In the event of a problem with the aircraft, strong gusting winds, momentary inattention by the pilot, or some other mishap, this 50-metre gap would be closed by an approaching plane in about one second." Something Transport Canada calls "vertical transition zoning" has been allowed to get around the fact that buildings poke into the usual amount of transitional surface required for a safe runway zone. In a document online, Transport Canada states this type of zoning "is intended to provide relief for small aerodromes in mountainous regions, used in VMC [visual meterological conditions], where river valleys, etc. are the only sites available. At other locations an aeronautical study and Headquarters' approval is required."

Woods also believes pilots should be prohibited from taking off or landing while there are obstacles (i.e. watercraft) present anywhere on the take-off and landing areas.

Marg Gardiner, who lives in a condo across the harbour in James Bay, agrees, lamenting that runways have been superimposed on the marine arterial highway used by the Coho and other large boats, which means that the unobstructed airspace for the landing and taking off of aircraft—a requirement of other airports—is not being met.

While there have been no accidents in many years, Gardiner says, "There have been close calls." She's seen near-misses between aircraft and buildings or watercraft. She has also seen and reported incidents in which, during rough weather, taxiing planes seemed to lose control and come perilously close to fuel docks.

NAV Canada facility at Shoal Point looks like an air traffic control tower—but isn't. There is no active air traffic control for Victoria Harbour Airport.

PHOTO: LESLIE CAMPBELL

Woods says the only incident she's witnessed (and reported) recently was one in which "a Twin Otter landed eastbound on operating area Alpha, and the pilot had to use probably-maximum reverse thrust in order to attempt to complete the landing prior to crossing east of the line joining the N and S markers. However, it appeared that the plane had neither completed its landing nor was at or below five knots before crossing the line."

Woods and her fellow Songhees residents have pressed for years for an aeronautical study to identify the deviations and the remediation needed for airport safety—one conducted by a qualified, professional, independent consultant. To no avail.

AND THEN THERE'S THE NOISE. Harbour Air's eventual shift to electric planes will definitely help. Wright predicts, "The electric planes will be about 75 percent quieter."

Meanwhile—and it could be a long while— it's noisy, as those living on the harbour or walking the Westsong Walkway can attest. "Especially during the busy summer period," says Woods, "windows and doors have to remain closed due to conversation-stopping noise and the noxious fumes which accumulate inside homes."

A City of Victoria presentation from October 2008 suggested that noise problems were primarily due to propeller noise—not just engines—and that they were "exacerbated by proximity of aircraft to shoreline buildings." (What Gardiner refers to as a concrete canyon over water.) I found a 1995 US study of seaplane noise that stated: "The principal factor in the intensity of seaplane noise is first the type of seaplane…, next the tip speed of the propeller (RPM's), followed by the angle and distance that can be kept between the seaplane and the listener, and lastly the power setting (throttle)." It stated that a Cessna 206 with 300 hp engine and three-bladed propeller has a maximum of 88 dBA.

The only noise study done by Transport Canada dates back to 2000. It found that average noise was "just below acceptable level," and acknowledged a problem does exist. Single-event levels during one three-hour period in the afternoon exceeded 85 dBA 14 times, Woods noted. With more than 100 flight movements a day in summer, such numbers don't seem surprising. (City noise bylaws do not apply, given the federal jurisdiction.)

Noise is more than a nuisance; it's a recognized health hazard, increasing stress, the risk of hypertension, and ischaemic heart disease. It also has negative effects on sleep, communication, performance and behaviour, reading and memory acquisition, and mental health.

When I raised the question of noise with Transport Canada, Simon Rivet, a senior advisor with its Communications Group, listed the noise mitigation strategies that have been implemented: "We only allow three-bladed turbo-prop aircraft, which is the quietest version of a floatplane in existence. Best practices include the reduction of reverse thrust when landing, with sufficient room to allow for a natural slowdown, rather than having to put it in 'reverse,' which is quite noisy." He also noted that rules around runway use dramatically reduce noise levels: the majority of take-offs are from Bravo runway in the Outer Harbour; while the preferred runway for landings is eastbound on Alpha, "because it also minimizes the amount of idling and manoeuvring on the surface." Finally, he noted that no flights are allowed before 7am.

But with no noise-level studies in two decades, how do they know if these measures have been successful, or to what degree? Harbour residents are still finding it very loud. And quieter electric planes could be a long way off.

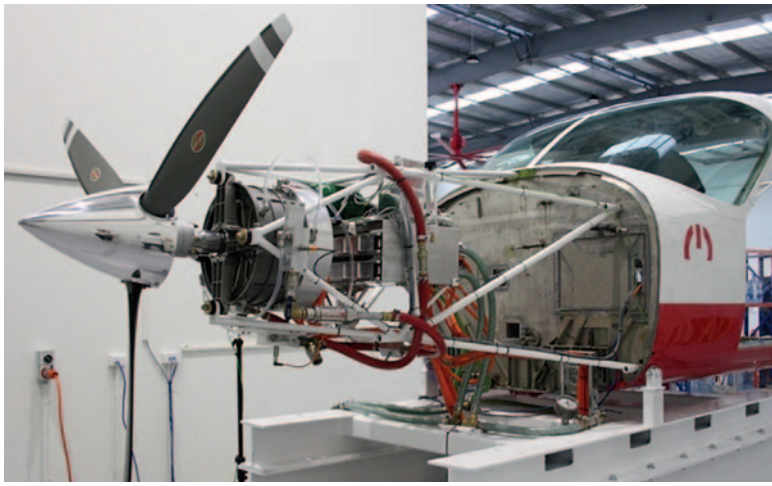

PHOTO: MAGNIX

A shop mock-up of how magniX's aero's electric propulsion system would be adapted to a Cessna aircraft

Gardiner feels that until things change, all prospective harbour condo buyers should be warned about the noise. As I talk with her on the phone, the Coho blasts its horn in the background.

UNTIL SEAPLANES CHANGE TO EPLANES, the city's booming core population means that more people will notice the noxious fumes around the harbour. Susan Woods believes "unburned or partially combusted fuel from floatplane operations at Victoria Harbour Airport result in volatile organic compounds and suspended particulate matter being spewed into the surrounding environment, including the walkways and residences…The sooty, oily film which begins to coat our windows, soon after they've been washed, is a visible testament as to the volume of particulate matter polluting our air each and every day." (I too have seen the greasy film that coats windows on the Songhees side.)

Transport Canada's last study, based on 1998 activity levels, found that VOCs being released into the harbour came from both motorboats and planes. While more VOCs were produced by motorboats (including whale-watching vessels), aircraft emissions, because of their dispersal in the air, tend to affect humans more.

Many floatplanes run on "avgas"—a petroleum fuel with lead added to it. Lead was phased out of gasoline for automobiles decades ago because of its serious health effects. Yet small planes with piston engines still use it. Wright assured *Focus* that none of Harbour Air planes flying to Victoria Harbour use leaded gas. However, Transport Canada's Rivet told me there is no requirement for planes to use unleaded gasoline. So other planes flying into the harbour likely do use it. Rivet also said the airport has no air-quality monitoring program. No one really knows just how bad the air around the harbour is these days.

Beyond the health of locals, of course, is that of the planet. All carbon-burning craft play starring roles in warming the planet. Aviation, however, states the David Suzuki Foundation, "has a disproportionately large impact on the climate system. It accounts for four to nine percent of the total climate change impact of human activity." The industry has been "expanding rapidly in part due to regulatory and taxing policies that do not reflect the true environmental costs of flying." Travelling by air "has a greater climate impact per passenger kilometre, even over longer distances. It's also the mode of freight transport that produces the most emissions," the Foundation states on its website.

Harbour Air has worked hard to be as green as possible under these circumstances. Its Victoria terminal has a green roof and solar panels. Most importantly, since 2007, it has had an impressive carbon offset program. All emissions of the company, 97 percent coming directly from seaplane fuel use, are "offset" through Offsetters Clean Technology, a company that specializes in both calculating carbon emissions and finding appropriate projects to invest in—both regional and international—that reduce carbon emissions. Harbour Air has information about the projects online and makes customers aware of the offsets by showing their cost on ticket receipts. It also tells them that a return flight to Vancouver produces 87 kg CO_2-equivalent per passenger. Nevertheless, Harbour Air's overall emissions have crept up over the years to 12,793 tonnes CO_2-equivalent in 2017.

While offsets may be better than nothing, critics have argued they are a bit of a shell game, allowing people to rationalize their carbon-intensive habits rather than changing them. Most experts agree they are not a substitute for directly reducing emissions, given the urgency of tackling climate change. University of Ottawa Professor, and President of the Environmental Studies Association of Canada, Ryan Katz-Rosene, told *The Georgia Straight* an honest definition of "carbon offset" might be something like, "a framework to enable people to continue to produce carbon dioxide and to absolve themselves of responsibility when they might not even work in the first place and, if they do work, are things that should be happening anyway."

So the Harbour Air electrification moves are potentially very good news for those concerned about climate change and air quality. (Unfortunately, there are no such technological fixes foreseen for larger planes.)

How soon will Harbour air electrify its planes? Wright says, "We plan to have an eplane ready for flight testing in late 2019. But it will take a while for Transport Canada regulations to catch up. We anticipate that it will be a multi-year effort to convert the entire fleet."

Judging from the 19 years Transport Canada has taken, so far, to finalize the airport regulations, we may have a long time to wait for those electric planes.

Marg Gardiner says she'll believe it when she sees it. She's seen too many failures along such lines, including aborted plans to electrify the buses going to and from cruise ships. Even if Harbour Air's plan is realized, and electric planes reduce both health and environmentally- damaging emissions, as well as some or most aircraft noise, "it doesn't address the safety issue at all," says Gardiner.

On that front, Transport Canada needs to step up, do the aeronautical studies, and finalize the standards and regulations for the airport that it has long promised.

No one is suggesting the airport be closed or moved out of the harbour. Most agree that it provides a valued service and brings economic benefits to Victoria. But it is publicly owned. The private airlines pay nothing in port fees. Taxpayers pay for it all—the Transport Canada managers, the Harbour Master, the on-the-water patrollers and their boats and brochures, along with the frustrations, possible health issues, and benefits that come with having an airport in the middle of Victoria's harbour. They understandably want to be assured of adequate safety measures and quality of life.

Editor Leslie Campbell misses her regular visits to her mom's old condo. The view of our busy, beautiful harbour is hard to beat.

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Focus presents: Triangle Healing

It's time to sleep again

The Balancer Das Original bed has been a best-seller in Europe for 45 years, and is designed to relieve and prevent lower back pain. Manufactured in New Brunswick, this bed system incorporates Swiss design and German craftsmanship with untreated Canadian wood, producing a quality product that will last for generations.

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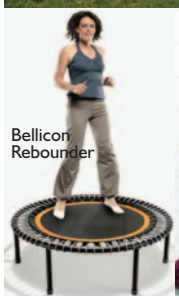
Balancer Das Original bed

Diane Regan, owner of Triangle Healing Products, constantly researches what is new in the world of health, and says Europeans tend to see how well they can build something rather than how cheaply they can make it. The Balancer Das Original is a very good example of that European quality.



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Behind the curtains at City Hall

A look at the City of Victoria's first quarterly 2019 "Operational Highlights, Accomplishments and Metrics," reveals the value of the City's construction permits has increased from $125.2 million in 2014 to $347.9 million in 2018. And, at the end of 2019's first quarter, the value of construction in Victoria reached $82.8 million—a 56 percent increase over the same time period in 2018.

So, have taxpayers benefited from this housing boom? Less than $15 million was collected by the City in development and community amenity charges, and fewer than 100 affordable housing units (out of 3,786 built) were added over the past four years.

The lucrative real estate sector and escalating land values are fuelling changes everywhere. Yet, the greatest negative impact has been felt by renters who face soaring rents and large-scale displacement. But this is of little concern to elected officials whose only role is to approve the ever-increasing taxpayer-financed projects to upgrade infrastructure and beautify the area surrounding these upscale housing developments. Such projects include the new Johnson Street Bridge, Ship Point redevelopment, David Foster pathway, not to mention protected bike lane corridors throughout the core area. Preserving property entitlements also includes providing more than $40-million-worth of ten-year tax exemptions to 450 owners of heritage condo properties Downtown. Their latest tax-holiday decisions now support the most expensive residential restoration project in the City: the Customs House condo and commercial complex, only steps away from the Humboldt "Innovation Tree."

It's not hard for City council to justify removing an "iconic" mature tree, especially if it obstructs the flow of people, vehicles and bikes around the Customs House waterfront property whose units range in price from $900,000 to more than $10 million. Council's role seems to be to facilitate more upscale real estate investment. Every decision they make must ensure maximization of profit for investors at the expense of maintaining a healthy environment and ensuring the well-being of the majority of the City's households, who are tenants.

If the City is concerned about mitigating the negative impact of climate change, why are they approving the construction of the largest consumers of energy and emitters of greenhouse gas emissions—high-density, amenity-rich condo towers, concentrated in Downtown?

Truth-telling requires everyone to observe what's going on around them, not to mention what's behind the curtains at City Hall. As a wise friend once told me, follow the money and find out who stands to gain and who stands to lose from the decisions made.

Victoria Adams

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Stop birching and complaining! Kudos to the FOI requester, however I think she was barking up the wrong tree. The root of the problem is the second-rate governance and management at the City of Victoria. The bike lanes are a gong show, and the design at Government and Humboldt is nothing short of hazardous. One must wonder about the decision-making processes at Centennial Square, which leave much to be desired, as you have so consistently reported, and would not be helped if the public were consulted *ad nauseam* about the removal of one tree.

I'm fully supportive of an urban forest, as opposed to a concrete jungle—developers, property owners, and don't forget renters too, guided and assisted by common sense policies and programs, should be encouraged or required to plant new and replacement trees on private and public property, and receive property tax credits in addition to the feel-good Earth-saving nature of the exercise.

Tony Beckett

This is the season

I just wanted to thank Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic for her homage to the late, great Patrick Lane. I will now run out and find a copy of Mr Lane's 2004 memoir, *There is a Season*.

Thanks, Trudy, for your lovely prose about the joys of finding wisdom and humility amongst the plants, trees, soil and rocks.

Robert Dunn

Goodbye Victoria, kale and all

I don't know whether to laugh or cry, so I'll write an email instead. I was born in Victoria 64 years ago. I've lived here all my life. Like so many others, I remember Victoria as it was. Affordable. Room for all. Sleepy, dusty, and quaint. Trips to Cook Street Village with my grandmother to buy pastries at Ethel's Cake Shop; fish and chips, greasy and fragrant at the local eatery; and to the drug store on the corner for cocoa butter. What she used it for, I don't remember. Sundays, with the roast in the oven, we went in the family car to Douglas and Hillside to travel all the way around the roundabout. Then home to ride our bicycles to Beacon Hill Park until supper. It was safe back then.

Now I'm almost ready for old age pension cheques and all the other subsidies that will make my life easier, or so I'm told. As I look around my third-floor walkup in which I can no longer navigate the stairs or climb down to the basement to do my laundry, the rent is $1200 and climbing; I know I have to leave.

I'm glad, in a way. Victoria has become a city of condos—unavailable to most of us, and only really affordable to a very few. I'm leaving for the northernmost tip of the island, in hopes of securing a fixer-upper mobile home. I'm in shock really, not quite believing how this came to be. I can scarcely walk more than a block or two, and yet somehow I have to find the strength to turn an old, musty shell of a mobile home into something liveable. Where did the years go? Where did my Victoria go?

As I turn the pages through *Focus* to the last page, there is an article about gardens, and how wisdom and humility are nurtured in them. The author writes if she were to be banished from here to an island she'd pack some seeds and gardening tools. I'm curious about where she would live. The gulf islands have become as unaffordable as most of the island. Her advice? Plant kale. Easy to grow and loaded with nutrition. My balcony, and all the other apartments in my past that had no balconies at all come to mind, as well as the lack of sun needed to grow kale. I guess I could have bought a grow-light. I'm sure that's what the author meant. The irony of it all. *Kathleen LeCorre*

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I loved the articles in your May/June *Focus* by Gene Miller ("In Praise of Modesty") and Trudy Mitic ("This is the season") because they delve deeply into the nature of Nature and human nature.

Gene's thoughts on greed and its relation to power coincide fully with my Judaeo-Christian beliefs. I go a little further, however. He says in a magnificent little paragraph: "Nature is, in this sense, the ultimate parent, and in a bizarre act of self-destructive, anti-ecological spite, we attempt to appropriate nature's secrets and powers, and try to kill the world. *Ego* set against *eco.*"

For his initial word "Nature" I would substitute the word "God," i.e. Creator. But not the "idealized projection of human beings" mentioned in the paragraph following. The Creator I trust and believe in "is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine"—a parent who is able even to replace (in another dimension?) the priceless heirloom we treated as a toy. Of course, this hope does not alleviate my responsibility to Mother Earth in the slightest.

I also loved Trudy's reflections on gardening and nature. What a delicious quote from Patrick Lane: "Every stone in my garden is a story, every tree a poem. I barely know myself in spite of the admonishments of wise men and women who tell me I must know my life in order to live it fully. What I know is that I live in this place where words are made. What we are is a garden. I believe that."

James Hill

A Message for the Minister of Forests

The headline above Briony Penn's article (May/June 2019) stated that Forest Minister Doug Donaldson "talked and ran." As the organizers of the Forest Dialogue that he attended, we must say that this is an unfair characterization. When the minister agreed to speak, his office was always clear that because the legislature was in session, his time was limited. So his speaking and then leaving was no surprise. Furthermore, the minister arranged for one of his senior staff to attend the entire proceedings and to make himself available to meet with the organizers to review feedback from the meeting.

It is our sincere hope that the Forest Dialogue has set the stage for new opportunities to exchange viewpoints, discuss values, and learn from experts and communities about the myriad issues facing our forest ecosystems. With more effective communication, we can move beyond the old tireless debate of *jobs vs. the environment* to a constructive dialogue around managing forests to both conserve the environment and keep the economy moving. Thoughtful, progressive people, including many who attended the conference, know this can be done, and that there are numerous examples of where it is being practiced. It is time to work together on a broad new forestry vision for BC, and for the BC government to step up with courage to embrace the leadership that is called for to make it a reality.

For more information on the April Forest Dialogue, to listen to the speakers, and learn more about the state of BC's forests, please go to: www.northwestinstitute.ca.

Bob Peart, Pat Moss, Ivan Thompson

Editor's note: Mea culpa. I (not Briony) composed the offending titling.

Government needs to assign a dollar value to every hectare of old growth or mature forests left standing in the province. The current rule of thumb is approximately $10K per hectare per year in environmental services they provide, including, of course, carbon sequestering. Until a forest is logged, government places $0 value on these forests that have been providing free services to society since the last ice age. Older forests and their services are worth much more to society today and to future generations than stumpage taxes. It's clear that the Ministry of Forests has not known how to grow back a living forest, let alone high-quality trees, due to their continued reliance on natural forests to meet the majority of their Annual Allowable Cut.

Ross Muirhead

Forests suffer from drive for growth

On Vancouver Island alone, I have witnessed the forested land being cut down to build subdivision after subdivision—from Swartz Bay to Victoria, and all the way up the Island.

Meanwhile, the large corporate logging companies who hold the lease to harvest the forests on the Island are cutting so much timber that there is negligible old growth remaining, and the newer trees are one-tenth the size. These newer forests are not like the older forests which were made up of cedar, hemlock, spruce, fir and balsam. No, they are made of quick-grow, single species trees that are being planted. Ken James of the Youbou Timberless Society once stated: "If we processed our lumber in BC instead of shipping out raw logs, we could cut half as many trees and employ twice as many local people."

These ancient forests once helped maintain oxygen levels on this planet; they stopped flooding in the winter/spring by absorbing water; and these large trees kept the forest floors cool in the hotter months. These same old-growth forests took the carbon from the atmosphere and converted it to oxygen.

Today we have flooding in the rainy season, and forest fires in the hotter months. We have water restrictions starting as early as May! And by June, it is fourth-stage water restrictions. Hot weather is showing up in April instead of June. A record number of forest fires are taking place each year. This is happening across BC, which was once one of the world's greatest rainforests. Our forest protection is vital to maintaining a balanced climate.

It is my understanding that we can no longer base our lifestyle on continuous consumption and never-ending growth. We cannot continue to cut our forests down for expansion of housing areas. We cannot assume that this environment we live in can be squandered and used up. Even the animals are showing up in our towns and cities because of human encroachment in their habitat. We must replace our assumption that happiness can be found by clearcutting our forested areas to build our large homes. We must learn to find contentment within our very being, instead of exploiting the world we live in. This continuous drive for growth and wealth is the very source of our environmental woes.

Bill Woollam

Logging hurts fish & tourism

Interesting to learn in *Focus* how tourism is such a major contributor to our economy here in BC. But still, it's very different than what it once was. Consider sports fishing some 50+ years ago. Throughout the early postwar years, it was a big-time recreational activity along the southern coasts of Vancouver Island. Indeed, sports fishing in the local waters throughout Saanich Inlet and Cowichan Bay, was incredibly popular with massive schools of spring and coho salmon returning to spawn in local rivers during the summer and fall.

Indeed, there were numerous marinas and boathouses lining various bays, coves and beaches, where very popular fishing derbies were being run back in these good old days. Also, it should be noted that these were major fund-raising undertakings like the Solarium Derby which contributed thousands of dollars

to the Queen Alexandra Solarium for Crippled Children in Saanich. Sadly, sports fishing to any extent has all been pretty well DOA since the mid-1970s.

Also, in the same edition, it is most distressing to learn of how the local orca population is in danger but no one will actually deal with or face up to the actual source of this catastrophe. Well, as it happens, there at the top of the whale's menu are spring salmon which are well on their way to extinction with the on-going wholesale destruction of second growth and now third growth forests all along the east side of the Island. (Check out the loaded trucks at the weigh station on the highway just north of Duncan.) So what happened here?

Well, our local rivers flood regularly during winter and then dry up in the summer, which has resulted in the destruction of healthy spawning habitat. The reason? I asked an old retired Comox Logging & Railway Co. hand how it was that the company back in the early years of the last century was dropping huge first growth trees right into the Tsolum River and then booming them up? Well, he told me that back then the valley was entirely untouched prime Douglas fir forest land where the under-story humic layer was very deep and intact. These soils and layers acted like an incredible sponge that soaked up the winter rainfalls to accumulate water and then gradually released it throughout the year. And today? As my contact stated, "There's little water in all our rivers during the summertime…and they can flood like the bejeez'us during the winter, now that all the old timber is gone!"

This colossal disaster is all thanks to the former Liberal government's rewriting of the *Private Managed Forest Land Act*, which threw the door open to rampant, out of control timber harvesting by Island Timberlands and TimberWest corporate entities thanks to the Liberal's model of "Professional Reliance." Basically the fox was left in charge of the chicken house and there's been absolutely no government oversight of private forest lands since the early 1990s.

Rick James, Royston, BC

A moratorium on wireless 5G urged

I am alarmed by the 5G rollout that is soon to commence in Victoria and much of the world. This is not the 5G wifi that has already been installed. This is the next generation of radio frequency (RF) transmission for cell phones that promises to increase speed and performance. Unfortunately, it will also blanket

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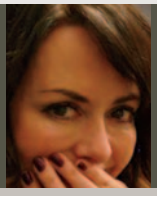

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In 2015, over 230 scientists from more than 40 countries expressed serious concerns about the ubiquitous and increasing exposure to Electromagnetic Radiation (EMR) generated by electric and wireless devices, well before talk of a 5G rollout. Numerous recent scientific publications have shown that EMR has adverse effects on living organisms, including increased cancer risk, cellular stress, increase in harmful free-radicals, genetic damage, structural and functional changes in the reproductive system, learning and memory deficits, neurological disorders and negative impacts on general well-being in humans. Damage goes well beyond the human race, as there is growing evidence of harmful effects to both plants and animals. (See Rainer Nyberg, EdD Professor Emeritus, Vasa Finland and Lennart Hardell, MD PhD Professor, Department of Oncology, University Hospital, Orebro Sweden).

A cancer epidemiology update, following the 2011 World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) evaluation of RF EMR, states that evidence is now conclusive that RF radiation is carcinogenic to humans. Previous studies that show such radiation is carcinogenic include those by Hardell 2017, Atzman 2016 and Peleg 2018 (from *Environmental Research*, volume 167, Nov 2018).

On September 13, 2017, this declaration was made: "We the undersigned, more than 180 scientists and doctors from 36 countries recommend a moratorium on the rollout of the fifth generation for telecommunications—5G, until the potential hazards for human health and the environment have been fully investigated by scientists independent from industry. 5G will substantially increase exposure to radio frequency electromagnetic fields (RF EMF) on top of the already existing 2G, 3G, 4G, Wi-Fi, etc, for telecommunications already in place. RF EMF has proven to be harmful for humans and the environment."

Some cities in the world—most notably, Brussels, the capital of the EU—stopped the testing of 5G when its Minister of the Environment and Energy, Housing and Quality of Life Celine Fremault reported, "I cannot welcome such technology if the radiation standards, which must protect the citizen, are not respected, 5G or not. The people of Brussels are not guinea pigs whose health I can sell at a profit. We cannot leave anything to doubt." Vaux in France, Neuchatel and Geneva in Switzerland, Florence in Italy and Portland, Oregon have all halted 5G implementation for public health reasons.

The telecom industry has not invested in independent research to prove that wireless 5G is safe. In fact, industry representatives have publicly admitted that there was no investment in independent research, nor any plans for such. They intend to roll it out, and once it's implemented, it will take decades to prove any damaging impact. Note: it took 40+ years for the damaging effects of tobacco to be taken seriously.

I am a member of a group of concerned citizens who are proposing a moratorium on the deployment of wireless 5G in the City of Victoria, based on the lack of evidence that 5G is biologically safe.

Glen Timms

Heritage church replacement a sad sign of the times

A number of commentators in the media have recently expressed disappointment with the anticipated demolition of the Fairfield United Church, a heritage building. As others noted, this flies in the face of Victoria's reputation as an innovator and leader in heritage conservation, particularly as there is now a long experience and widespread practice

in Canada and beyond in the repurposing of historic churches.

However, what is even more egregious is the scheme being proposed for the Fairfield church's replacement. Churches such as this are preserved for symbolic, as well as practical purposes. Even empty of their congregation they remain anchor monuments in their neighbourhoods, statements about community aspirations signalling thoughts a little higher up the values chain than say a casino or gas station—even to those who never, or rarely, set foot in them. Fairfield United marks the very core of a unique arts-and-crafts bungalow neighbourhood. It signalled "neighbourliness" in its construction. Red brick echoed the Edwardian James Douglas Elementary School which originally faced it across the street. Half-timbered gables, bracketed roof detailing, and an expansive pitched roof repeated the texture of the surrounding bungalows and cottages lining the adjacent streetscapes.

So where were the Fairfield Neighbourhood Association, the City's planning department, its heritage and design committees, and the council when this over-scaled abstract cubist design was proposed? Were the developers and design professionals blind to architect Shiv Garyali's brilliantly executed new James Douglas School, just across the road, which respectfully and literally grows out of the form, scale and craft character of its environs?

I am afraid this exercise, perhaps intended to challenge the status quo or reflect the "new spirit of our times," will instead stand as an object lesson in political disinterest, questionable professional practice, and community amnesia. Is this what awaits Victoria's historic residential neighbourhoods?

Martin Segger

Subsidizing climate change, via LNG

It no longer seems that our BC government is an agreement between NDP and Greens. It is now a government of NDP and Liberals, given licence by the Greens to subsidize global warming by giving away $6 billion of our tax dollars to an LNG industry that can only accelerate our free-fall into economic and social destruction, brought on by the irreparable destruction of our environment. What the heck is Horgan's bunch doing?

Ian MacKenzie

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Working with Odlum Brown since 1994 has been a good fit, Tom notes, as the firm allows him independence and flexibility. Odlum Brown's research department is guided solely by their clients' interests and there are no underwriting pressures. "This independence," he says, "allows me to find the best investment solutions for my clients."

Raised in Victoria, Tom takes an active role in his community. For a number of years he chaired the Gorge View Society, which oversaw the completion and maintenance of affordable housing units for seniors who are on minimum income at Chown Place. He is also the proud father of three adult sons, and coached youth soccer, volleyball, and basketball while volunteering at Doncaster Elementary, Reynolds High School and Lakehill Soccer Club.

An avid environmentalist, Tom serves on the Board of Directors of The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC). "I've had a life-long belief in working to support the community and the environment," says Tom. Working with the TLC fits that mission well, and with his financial background he has been able to assist the Conservancy to build a stronger financial footing.

On the personal front, his environmental ethics have led him to bike to work, driving his electric car only when needed. The house he and his wife recently built features solar panels.

Tom prefers to invest in growing companies where all of the stakeholders, from shareholders and employees to the larger community, are treated with respect and consideration. This preference has led him to recommend utilities

Tom Watson

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Did the mayors obstruct the Elsner investigation?

DAVID BROADLAND

Records obtained by FOI leave little doubt that Helps and Desjardins hid allegations of sexual harassment raised against Chief Elsner.

PHOTO: CANADIAN PRESS

Mayor Helps and Mayor Desjardins, Co-Chairs of the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board

After claiming for months that critical communications between Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps and Esquimalt Mayor Barb Desjardins in late 2015 had been deleted, the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board released a heavily redacted 442-page response to *Focus* in late May.

We had requested the communications between the two mayors as they navigated their way through their investigation of allegations against then-Police Chief Frank Elsner.

Our request covered the three months during which their investigation took place—September, October and November, 2015—and one month after that investigation ended. The records released to *Focus* show Helps and Desjardins were aware by mid-October 2015 that additional allegations made by female employees of VicPD against Elsner—of sexual harassment and bullying—had been found by the mayors' hired investigator, Vancouver lawyer Patricia Gallivan. Yet these allegations were so well-hidden by the mayors that even after Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe demanded all records related to the investigation, the women's complaints at first remained unnoticed.

The allegations of sexual harassment against Elsner weren't the most serious misconduct found during the mayors' investigation. Within 10 days of demanding the records Gallivan created during her investigation, Lowe's office had used those records to identify two of the three most serious cases of misconduct that would eventually lead Judge Carol Baird Ellan to decide Elsner warranted a lifetime dismissal from policing: misleading a person material to the investigation, and misleading the internal investigator. From the information in Gallivan's report, Lowe's office also determined that Elsner had contacted witnesses during the investigation. This later led to a third serious finding of misconduct, that Elsner had attempted to procure a false statement.

Baird Ellan likened Elsner's conduct during the mayors' internal investigation to "criminal obstruction of justice."

Yet by the time the mayors abruptly ended their investigation with a confidential letter of reprimand quietly placed in Elsner's file, they had apparently made little effort to understand what Gallivan's report actually contained.

2015 Timeline

August 21: Mayor Desjardins is informed of communications between Elsner and the wife of a subordinate VicPD officer.

August 27: OPCC agrees to allow mayors to conduct an internal investigation under conditions agreed to by the mayors.

October 15: First reference made in mayors' communications to new allegations of sexual harassment and bullying.

October 16: Desjardins meets with Elsner to discuss new allegations.

October 27: Police Board's Governance Committee requests that the mayors provide details about the investigation and OPCC concurs. The mayors do not inform the board or OPCC about the new allegations.

November 16: Gallivan sends her *Preliminary Investigation Report* to the mayors, who do not share it with OPCC or Police Board.

Around November 17: Mayors share Gallivan's report with Elsner.

December 3: Mayors make disciplinary decision to place a confidential letter of reprimand on Elsner's personal file.

December 4: Mayors mislead media about whether Elsner has been under investigation. OPCC uses *Police Act* to demand investigation records, including mayors' emails. Records subsequently turned over to OPCC contain no mention of harassment allegations.

December 8: Victoria Police Union informs OPCC of sexual harassment allegations.

December 18: Police Complaint Commissioner Lowe issues a report highly critical of the mayors for the way they conducted their investigation, and an order for an external investigation. Lowe's report does not mention the allegations of sexual harassment.

September 26, 2018: After a protracted and ultimately unsuccessful legal battle by Elsner to stop the external investigation, Lowe releases his *Summary Informational Report*, which reported on the external investigation's findings. Mayor Helps, fighting for re-election, claims Lowe defamed her.

October 25, 2018: *Focus* files FOI.

May 24, 2019: Police Board releases highly-redacted records to *Focus*.

> "[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."
>
> —*Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe*

Perhaps recognizing the serious procedural misconduct Gallivan had discovered was beyond the skills normally possessed by municipal politicians. But the allegations of sexual harassment, hidden from Lowe even after his office had demanded the investigation's records, were a different matter.

One might reasonably expect two female mayors to be especially sensitive to sexual harassment allegations. Why didn't Helps and Desjardins pursue what Gallivan had found? According to Lowe, by October 20, 2015, "numerous witnesses had made allegations of bullying and harassment" against Elsner. The external investigation, which replaced the mayors' investigation, considered allegations made by seven women. Yet the mayors have denied they interfered in the investigation or covered up the allegations of harassment against Elsner.

Release of Lowe's *Summary Informational Report* on the external investigation was delayed for over two years by Elsner's efforts in the courts to quash the second investigation. When the report finally appeared—during the 2018 civic election campaign—Helps claimed, without providing any evidence, that Lowe had defamed her. Her claim was amplified by the *Times-Colonist*, which did little other reporting on the external investigation's findings. *Focus* waited until after the election to file an FOI for the mayors' communications in the hope that the mayors' own records could confirm either Helps' or Lowe's account. So what did we find?

It is unclear from the records provided to *Focus* when, or from whom, the mayors first heard of the harassment allegations. They show that on October 15, 2015, Desjardins emailed Helps and suggested that new allegations of harassment and bullying would require a second investigation: "I have looked into process for HR complaints and or WCB harassment procedure and process for further understanding of options to bring to the board or for us to decide on. In reality it is again an independent investigator and provision of a report to us. I would like Pat to do this if able and or to engage someone to do this asap if she feels she is 'tainted' by her process. I have someone in mind."

PHOTO: OPCC

Former Police Complaint Commissioner Lowe

Half an hour later, Helps responded, "I am happy to have Pat do this. I regret that we have to do this at all."

The records released to *Focus* only *suggest* why the mayors changed their minds. Minutes after Desjardins had emailed Helps, she also wrote to the mayors' legal counsel, Vancouver lawyer Marcia McNeil. McNeil emailed back a few hours later. The contents of McNeil's communications with the mayors are protected by solicitor-client privilege, so we don't know exactly what her advice to them was. But we can deduce part of that advice from the mayors' subsequent response. Desjardins wrote back to McNeil and Helps: "I have an appt with him tomorrow and was going to check in anyway. Thanks for this." Helps then replied to Desjardins, "Thanks to you both. Barb, happy to check in with you after you meet with the Chief tomorrow..."

The rest of what Helps wrote is redacted, but no matter. McNeil appears to have advised the mayors to seek Elsner's response to the additional allegations, and Desjardins confirmed she was going to meet with the "Chief" the next day.

We can presume that she met with Elsner, but we don't know what transpired. In the email record released to *Focus*, there are no later references made by the mayors to the sexual harassment allegations. Did Desjardins' idea of a second investigation disappear because Elsner persuaded her that the allegations were untrue? Did Desjardins subsequently persuade Helps that Elsner didn't do what he was accused of doing? The answers to these questions seem self-evident given what followed.

This turned out to be a critical decision point in the course of the Elsner investigation. Had the mayors carried through on their initial, short-lived agreement to conduct a second investigation, and presuming that Gallivan had then discovered all the claims of sexual harassment that were later found by the external investigation, public acknowledgment of the women's claims wouldn't have taken nearly three years. As well, Elsner could have been fired for legal just cause and $1.1 million in eventual costs to Victoria and Esquimalt taxpayers could have been avoided.

This was a serious misjudgment by the two mayors. But the record of what followed shows that once the mayors had dug that hole for themselves, they kept digging.

The record of their communications shows that the mayors tried to maintain control of the course of the investigation—and its outcome—by providing little or no information to both Lowe's office and the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board. This is made evident by a letter sent by Police Board member Peter Ryan to Desjardins on October 27, over two weeks after Desjardins and Helps were given advice by McNeil on the additional allegations against Elsner.

In that letter, Ryan, a former police officer, writing on behalf of the board's governance committee, expressed concern that the Police Board had been "advised of a disciplinary matter involving the Chief Constable in only the vaguest of terms." (Desjardins testified in a sworn affidavit that the board was told early on that Elsner "could be having a relationship with a woman.") Ryan then wrote, "The Committee respectfully requests that you promptly provide the Board with copies of any completed 'Complaint Forms' giving rise to any internal discipline matters as defined in the *Police Act* that pertain to our Chief Constable."

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Former Victoria Police Chief Frank Elsner

Ryan's letter, copied to the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, led to an intervention by Deputy Commissioner Rollie Woods. In a letter to McNeil, Woods wrote, "One of [Lowe's] conditions to agree that the matter could be handled [by the mayors] was that the Police Board members be fully informed. If the [mayors] maintain there is no need to inform the full board, [Lowe] is going to revisit his decision."

As far as Woods and OPCC were aware at that moment, "fully informed" meant telling the Board about the initial allegations against Elsner: that he had engaged in an inappropriate relationship with the wife of a VicPD member and that Elsner had improperly used police social media accounts. But Helps, Desjardins and McNeil had also not informed OPCC (or the Police Board) about the new allegations of sexual harassment and bullying.

Pushed by Woods, Desjardins responded to Ryan's dense, two-page letter noting: "We do not have details regarding the facts as the investigation has not yet concluded nor has a report been provided to us."

In fact, the two mayors had more details than they apparently knew what to do with.

Ryan's letter and OPCC's intervention created another critical decision point at which the mayors could have reported the additional allegations to OPCC and the Police Board—but didn't. Their secrecy was at odds with conditions Lowe had insisted on before agreeing to let the mayors conduct an internal investigation. Lowe described the basis under which he had allowed an internal investigation in his 2018 *Summary Informational Report*: "At the outset of my office's dealings with the mayors and their legal counsel, 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..."

The first part of that "clear understanding," the *any* information aspect, has been disputed by Helps, who has told *Focus,* "We were authorized to deal only with the issues of whether Elsner had engaged in an inappropriate relationship with the wife of a VicPD member and whether Elsner had improperly used police social media accounts."

But in Lowe's *Summary Informational Report*, he quotes at length a letter from McNeil to Gallivan, written in the early days of the investigation, outlining McNeil's understanding of the mandate provided by OPCC for the mayors' internal investigation. The letter was copied to Helps and Desjardins. Lowe used the letter as evidence that the mayors were made aware by McNeil that "your mandate is confined to issues related to <u>any</u> misconduct by Chief Elsner…" (Lowe underlined "any" for emphasis).

The second aspect of Lowe's agreement to allow an internal investigation, that his office was *to be informed* about any new allegations of misconduct, has never been addressed by the mayors.

Ryan's letter, and Wood's subsequent intervention, should have been the moment the mayors informed the Police Board and the OPCC about the additional allegations. But that moment passed in stoney silence from Desjardins and Helps. It's difficult not to come to the conclusion that the mayors were intent on keeping personal control of the investigation and its outcome, and if that meant ignoring Lowe's stipulations, then they were willing to do that.

Just over two weeks later, on November 16, 2015, Gallivan sent her "Preliminary Investigation Report" to the mayors. Gallivan's full report has never been made public, but the covering letter for that report was released by Lowe's office in September 2018 and was included in the records released to *Focus.*

In that letter Gallivan told the mayors, in reference to the harassment and bullying allegations, "I understand that you are now considering how to address those allegations. As previously stated, should you wish to expand our mandate to include an investigation of those matters, in light of my schedule and given the need to deal with these matters expeditiously, I would need to engage the assistance of one of my partners to complete the investigation. I have discussed this matter with my partner Deborah Cushing and she advises that she would be able to set aside a week to conduct the witness interviews."

After that, aside from emails exchanged to set up a conference call between Helps, Desjardins, McNeil and Gallivan, there is no record in the documents released to *Focus* that indicates what the mayors did with Gallivan's offer to investigate the allegations. But we know what happened from Lowe's 2018 *Summary Informational Report.*

Before giving you Lowe's description of what the mayors did with Gallivan's offer, it's necessary to understand why and how he obtained records related to the mayors' investigation. They weren't proactively turned over to OPCC by the mayors. Following the mayors' sudden termination of their investigation on December 3, 2015—an action that was hastened by rumours coming back to Desjardins that reporters were on the verge of confirming Elsner was being investigated—Lowe's office confronted the mayors for having misled media by claiming no investigation was underway. When asked by a Global TV reporter the day after they ended the investigation if Elsner was being investigated, Helps had responded, "No. The Board has full confidence in our chief. He's the best thing to happen to this town and Esquimalt for a long time."

Within minutes of the mayors' misleading statements appearing in TV news reports, Deputy Commissioner Woods made a request to McNeil under the *Police Act* for "all records and any additional

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information in its entirety including all memos, notes, emails and any other relevant documents" related to the investigation. McNeil had no choice but to comply.

So Lowe was able to determine—using documents obtained from the mayors' records—what the mayors had done with Gallivan's offer to investigate. In his *Summary Informational Report* he observed, "Despite receiving [Gallivan's offer], 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.'"

But that instruction conflicted with McNeil's earlier description of Gallivan's mandate as given to the mayors by OPCC: "your mandate is confined to issues related to <u>any</u> misconduct by Chief Elsner…"

Lowe also noted that the copy of Gallivan's investigation report sent to his office in response to the *Police Act*-mandated demand for records didn't include the covering letter, which contained the only written reference to the allegations of sexual harassment and bullying. The implication was that the mayors were trying to hide from his office any evidence that these allegations had even been made. Helps has told *Focus* that an executive assistant had failed to include the covering letter following OPCC's demand for records.

One detail that Lowe's *Summary Informational Report* did not include was the fact that soon after receiving Gallivan's report, the mayors shared it with Elsner. They were required by the *Police Act* to do this. The *Police Act* also required them to share the report with any "complainant" mentioned in the investigation report. We know that employees of VicPD had made complaints to Gallivan, but the mayors did not provide the report to them. As well, the *Police Act* also required them to "review the report and the evidence and records referenced in it." If they had done that carefully, the evidence of the more serious misconduct—outlined above—should have propelled the mayors to OPCC for direction. The mayors were also required by the *Police Act* to inform OPCC of their "next steps" within 10 days of receiving Gallivan's report. They also failed to do this. This omission confirms that they were unwilling to involve OPCC, and its expertise at sniffing out police misconduct, before making their disciplinary decision.

After reading the report, Elsner appears to have written to McNeil, who, in response, reported to the mayors and provided them with unknown advice. To that advice Desjardins responded, "I agree thanks!" and Helps chimed in: "Thanks. Me too." That was on November 27.

Early on December 3, Desjardins emailed Helps: "I think this is going to pop in the next 2 days, [the Police Board] need to be informed. I will clear my calendar for it as necessary, do you have any flexibilty today. so you soon. [sic] I have written the questions we are to ask."

Prompted by the spectre of reporters asking questions about the investigation, the mayors hastily concluded it, apparently in order to be able to say that Elsner was not being investigated. They met later that day and made their disciplinary decision to put a confidential letter of reprimand on Elsner's personal file.

They informed Elsner in person on the morning of December 4. Later that day, in response to reporters questions, they denied Elsner was being investigated.

Lowe reported that he first heard of the harassment and bullying allegations when they were brought to OPCC's attention by the Victoria Police Union on December 8, 2015.

Let me summarize the main problems in all of this for the mayors. First, they completely missed, or ignored, the most serious misconduct that was evident in Gallivan's records—which Judge Baird Ellan later likened to criminal obstruction. Secondly, Desjardins and Helps knew the harassment allegations should be investigated. Instead, they hid them from both the Police Board and OPCC even though informing OPCC of any additional allegations had been a key element of the "clear understanding" for allowing the mayors to do an internal investigation in the first place. Lastly, they misrepresented what had taken place to reporters and the public. The mayors appear to have obstructed the proper course of justice, and their misjudgments cost Victoria taxpayers $1.1 million.

Lowe's summary was more concise. In his *Summary Informational Report*, he wrote 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."

In the record released to *Focus* are emails exchanged between the mayors as news of the Elsner investigation, Lowe's December 18, 2015 report on the investigation, and his order for an external investigation ripped through the community. The day Lowe's report was released, *Times-Colonist* reporter Cindy Harnett emailed Helps a question: "What is your reaction to the commissioner's report which heavily suggests you and Barb botched the investigation and insinuates that there was a coverup?"

Helps forwarded Harnett's email to Desjardins and Kathi Springer, a communications specialist who had been hired to help the two mayors weather the political storm they had brewed. Helps asked, "Are they actually serious there was a cover up? This is ludicrous."

Focus recently posed detailed questions to Mayor Helps. We described to her what the email record for October 15, 2015 showed, namely that she and Mayor Desjardins had initially agreed to a second investigation, and that Desjardins was to meet with Elsner the next day and raise the sexual harassment allegations with him. We asked Helps why she and Desjardins believed Elsner instead of allowing Gallivan to investigate these allegations further and checking the veracity of Elsner's denial. We also asked her why she had misrepresented, to *Focus* and to other media, the mandate of the mayors' investigation. Recall that McNeil had put in writing that the mayors' mandate included *any* allegations of misconduct against Elsner.

To those questions Mayor Helps replied, "As previously stated, we decided to finish our original investigation and hand all other allegations to the OPCC for them to investigate. We directed our solicitor to send all the information we had received, including Pat Gallivan's report, to the OPCC."

As noted above, it was only through Woods' *Police Act* demand for records that OPCC obtained "all the information" the mayors had received (except Gallivan's covering letter), and their email communications. We asked Helps if she was aware that OPCC had demanded her records. She did not respond to the question.

Recall that Helps had responded to a reporter's question about whether an investigation was underway with this statement: "No. The Board has full confidence in our chief. He's the best thing to happen to this town and Esquimalt for a long time." If the mayors had an expectation that OPCC would be investigating the sexual harassment and bullying allegations, why did the mayors and the Police Board express "full confidence" in Elsner? Wasn't that a bit premature? We put that question to the mayor. She did not respond.

Had the Police Board even been informed of the allegations of sexual harassment and bullying against Elsner before it had expressed that "full confidence"? Mayor Helps kept digging and did not respond.

David Broadland has asked the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to examine the Police Board's redactions of the released record.

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Delivering progressive museum and heritage education

One of Victoria's best-kept secrets may well be a unique program offered through the University of Victoria's Division of Continuing Studies. Called the Cultural Resource Management Program (CRMP), it has been offering courses for professionals in the museum and culture sector for over 30 years, attracting students from the world over.

Years ago, noticing that other cultural management programs focused on theory as opposed to practice, with few opportunities for those in the field to develop their knowledge and skills, the Cultural Resource Management Program was developed to provide such opportunities through the Division of Continuing Studies, in partnership with the department of Art History and Visual Studies. Soon after its inception, the program became a frontrunner in developing and delivering museum and heritage education in both distance and face-to-face educational formats.

Now well established, the Cultural Resource Management Program offers a Diploma in Cultural Resource Management and two certificate programs, as well as a wide range of individual courses such as Exhibition Design and Installation, Managing Archival Collections, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Indigeneity and the Museum. These programs attract professionals working in art galleries, cultural centres, heritage sites and museums from across Canada and around the world. Local participants, for instance, have come from such institutions such as Craigdarroch Castle, the Royal BC Museum, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and Point Ellice House.

Amy Cubberley, a curator and archivist in Ontario, took the Collection Management certificate program. She reports, "This program has provided me with much more confidence when approaching new challenges at my job. I find that I frequently refer back to what I learned when facing daily challenges, such as how to properly store a specific artifact or how to approach another organization about a proposed partnership project."

Tania Muir, the Cultural Resource Management Program Director, credits the program's success to "its ability to provide timely, relevant, and accessible education geared to the needs of emerging and mid-career professionals working in the museum, heritage, and cultural sectors across Canada and beyond."

As an example of its responsiveness, she notes that over 10 years ago, in answer to emerging expectations regarding the role of museums and cultural organizations in civil society, the Cultural Resource Management Program began offering courses dedicated to areas such as visitor experiences, public programming, and building community relationships.

That stream of courses has now been developed into a new certificate program that will launch this fall—a Professional Specialization Certificate in Visitor and Community Engagement. Tania explains that this program addresses "a new community-centered focus that is pushing the most innovative museums to become agents of social change, working in collaboration with other community organizations."

Hjalmer Wenstob, courtesy of John Threlfall, University Of Victoria.

Besides conservators, curators, and archivists, museums and other such institutions now employ directors of visitor experience, audience development specialists, and Indigenous engagement coordinators. This new direction, notes Tania, has dramatically increased the relevance of such institutions, and helped them develop new approaches towards long-term sustainability. "It is nothing short of a paradigm shift in the field," she says.

Students in this new program will learn to understand the role of museums, heritage and cultural organizations in society; analyze philosophical and social trends; understand why community engagement is a critical foundation for museums and cultural organizations; learn about the range of visitor engagement practices, including innovative and controversial approaches; and how community engagement has transformed a number of museums, beginning a journey towards relevance and sustainability.

Offered as a post-degree program, this credential will include three core courses and one elective. As with other Continuing Studies programs, the certificate can be completed fully online, or students have the option to complete their elective course on campus as a six-day intensive course with a community of other learners. These courses are all taught by cultural leaders with decades of experience in the field. They enable participants to learn from each other and build rich communities of practice.

The first of its kind, the program has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from cultural leaders and professional associations, says Tania. They appreciate, for instance, how it supports cultural sector workers who are focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as they reach out to underserved audiences. Spurred on by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, explains Tania, "colleagues at museums, archives, and heritage organizations are looking very critically at ways to decolonize our practice and determine how best to contribute to the process of reconciliation."

Tania and her CRMP colleagues know that traditions, stories, documents and objects all help us understand history, cultures and people. By providing courses on everything from the preservation of artifacts and interpreting the stories of diverse communities, to how to connect those stories with people, the Cultural Resource Management Program aims to contribute to the future of museums, the health of communities, and culture in Canada.

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More entertainment, less art

ROSS CROCKFORD

The society running the Royal Theatre aims to make it the region's hub for commercial live performance.

PHOTO: COURTESY PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA

Fewer nights for Pacific Opera Victoria productions like *Countess Maritza* may make the Royal more "accessible" to Cheech & Chong

It's a Sunday afternoon, and folks are streaming into the Royal Theatre to see the Broadway musical *Jersey Boys*. Many came from up-Island: Courtenay, Cowichan, Mill Bay. One woman tells me she attended her high-school grad ceremony at the Royal in 1965; now she lives in Nanaimo. "We were in Vegas and we just missed the Jersey Boys," she says. "Then we found out they're playing in little old Victoria! So we came down."

Such a remark is surely music to the ears of the Royal and McPherson Theatre Society, the entity that runs Downtown's two historic theatres. Last autumn, the RMTS announced it was jacking the rates for nonprofits to rent the Royal (the largest of the two theatres)—including the three main users, the Victoria Symphony, Pacific Opera Victoria, and Dance Victoria—from $1,800 a day to $2,500 on most weekdays and $4,000 on Fridays or Saturdays, closer to the higher rents it charges commercial users. The RMTS also imposed a new booking policy, requiring the nonprofits to leave one Thursday-Saturday weekend per month free for other presenters. "As the capital region's population grows and the demographics change, there's an obligation to make the theatre more accessible to a range of presenters and the audiences they serve," said Randy Joynt, the RMTS's manager of external affairs. In other words: less *Jenufa*, more *Jersey Boys*.

In December, the Symphony—based at the Royal for 78 years—said it was moving half of its concerts to UVic's Farquhar auditorium, and arguments about the rent hikes filled the opinion pages of the *Times Colonist*. In March, after meeting with the three main Royal users, the RMTS said it would phase in the increases over two years, but retain its new booking policy. The users called on the Capital Regional District, which oversees the RMTS, and the municipalities that own the Royal—Victoria, Saanich, and Oak Bay, which jointly contribute $580,000 per year for its upkeep and operations—to conduct a transparent, collaborative review of the future use of the theatre. Instead, this April and May, the RMTS pre-emptively stated its case to the three municipal councils—and the user groups, since not directly employed by the municipalities, and therefore not permitted to speak under council rules, could only send letters in rebuttal.

The dispute boils down to two concerns. The first is what the RMTS calls a problem of "dark days." The nonprofits are allowed to book the Royal several years in advance so they can plan their seasons, but currently only pay a full rate on days of performances, and just $500 on days the theatre sits dark. That encourages them to save performances for more-lucrative weekends, the RMTS says, and let the venue sit empty during the week. The RMTS now wants the same rent whether the users perform that day or not.

"The theatre sits dark, the majority of the time, through the prime season of our year," Lorne DeLarge, president of the RMTS board, told Victoria councillors. "That is what we are trying to improve." The symphony and opera booked the Royal for 120 days in 2018-19, but only held performances on 49 of them, he said; increasing the rent would nudge them to use the theatre more efficiently, freeing it up for others. "We believe we've found a way to accommodate the needs of the not-for-profits, and increase use of the theatre."

Pacific Opera Victoria CEO Ian Rye says the RMTS is "not being genuine" in its calculations. Every POV production needs four days for setup, four of rehearsal, and a vocal rest day between each performance, which is industry standard. On all those days, POV is paying rent—while most touring acts occupy a theatre for just one or two days, usually on a weekend. If POV now has to pay full rate on all the days it needs, it will spend $120,000 more annually on rent.

The second, broader issue concerns the purpose of the theatres, and the RMTS. Until 2017, the society's mission was "To enrich the cultural life of the region, by operating and maintaining the civic theatres of the CRD." Then it developed a new strategic plan—which did not involve Royal users, and wasn't shared with its owners—with a revised mission: "Enriching the quality of life in the region, through a sustainable and relevant performing arts centre." Tellingly, "cultural" was gone, along with "civic." Instead, the new keywords are "sustainable" and "relevant"—shorthand for turning the Royal into a profitable roadhouse for commercial entertainment.

"The board is unanimous that this is the right direction," DeLarge told Victoria councillors. (Councillor Marianne Alto was on the board at that time.) "Not to move [the nonprofits] out, not to price them out, not to make them go bankrupt, not to limit their ability, but to share the theatre equally with more users for the benefit of the region." True, the Symphony felt forced to move out half of its concerts, but DeLarge said freed-up nights had been booked for *RuPaul's Drag Race*, *Relive The Music* (a '50s and '60s nostalgia show), Cheech & Chong, and Supertramp frontman Roger Hodgson.

The RMTS is an odd society: according to its bylaws, its only members are its directors. Three are councillors from owner municipalities, with the rest appointed by the CRD or elected by the board itself—a formula preventing motions or elections from the floor, and guaranteed to reduce debate. It has also done well financially, posting surpluses of $190,505 in 2016 and $182,217 in 2017, while salting away some $300,000 annually into a fund for upgrading the old theatres (there's currently $2.274 million in its Royal Theatre Capital Fund, though only $300,000 in the McPherson fund). The RMTS posted a surplus of only $78,000 last year, though, and executive director Lloyd Fitzsimonds told me they're facing big capital expenses (the Royal's air conditioning needs replacing, at $2.5 million) and higher operating costs, including the employer health tax, rent on relocated offices, and hiring key staff. (Joynt is leaving this summer to head the Manitoba Arts Council, and Fitzsimonds retires at the end of this year.)

Wrapped in the language of "accessibility," the RMTS presentations went largely unchallenged by the three councils. (Victoria's otherwise-progressive Ben Isitt said he found it "persuasive," which was strange, as the hearing was like a tenancy dispute where only the landlord was allowed to speak.) The exception was in Oak Bay, where residents spoke before the RMTS did.

"The talented local professionals in these [arts] organizations teach music, dance and theatre, they teach at our schools and they volunteer in our community," said Carrie Smart, an architect. "What an amazing community asset we have. Can we keep it? Or will we lose it with these changes?" Councillor Hazel Braithwaite later noted that Oak Bay helped buy the Royal in 1973 specifically to serve as a civic theatre: "I have a little trouble with these three groups not being able to continue on," she said, "in something we originally paid money to keep within our communities."

In the end, the owner municipalities handed the problem off to the CRD. Recently the region reformed a committee to oversee the RMTS (it had not met for many years, for reasons unknown), which so far has only discussed funding formulas. But CRD chair Colin Plant wants a wider discussion, with a select committee to assess arts facilities across the region, and determine if we need a new theatre or concert hall. That may be an uphill battle: earlier this year, Sidney withdrew its financial support from the CRD's arts service, and when Plant proposed the task force to the CRD's governance and finance committee on June 5, CRD staff said they were too busy developing the CRD Arts website, and wanted the facilities discussion deferred to 2020.

UNTIL POLITICIANS COME UP WITH A DIRECTION for the Royal, its users are left hanging, uncertain what the coming seasons will bring. In March, the Victoria Symphony started selling its subscription series, and sales are slightly better than last year. "That suggests that our longtime subscribers are, to a large majority, prepared to move with us," says CEO Kathryn Laurin, but how many individual tickets sell for each UVic concert remains to be seen. So far, she can work with the move: the surround-style Farquhar has better acoustics and more comfortable seats than the 1913-built Royal, and its $2,700 daily rent includes $1,400 worth of labour, for which RMTS bills separately, and at far higher rates. "There are significant savings for us to be at the Farquhar."

Opera and dance need a proscenium stage, though, with wings for sets and performers to wait in, and they have no alternative to the Royal. POV's Rye says they could reduce "dark days" by moving five weekend performances to weekdays, but that will cut ticket sales by seven percent. "Needless to say, reducing attendance is not [our] mission," he says, "nor does the loss in ticket revenue help offset the hundreds of free and subsidized seats we extend to the community each production."

Besides, how many more shows will the Royal get? The RMTS says it had to turn away concerts by Buddy Guy and Morrissey, and talks by Rick Mercer and astronaut Chris Hadfield (who ended up at Sidney's Mary Winspear Centre) because nonprofits had tied up the theatre. But the biggest money is made from Broadway shows like *Jersey Boys*, which held eight performances in six days, and Henry Kolenko, the presenter who brings them here, says what he can do is limited by the theatre itself.

"The technical aspects of the Royal Theatre are way outdated," Kolenko says. "It's a [rope-rigged] 'hemp house,' so it can't fly the pieces we need to do bigger shows. More importantly, it doesn't have the wing space or the depth." Kolenko's based in Vancouver, but he grew up in Victoria, and finds it weird that a provincial capital still doesn't have a modern theatre. "I can bring *The Lion King* to Thunder Bay, but I can't bring it to the Royal Theatre because it just won't fit." (The RMTS has studied extending the Royal's backstage, but that would cost millions and shutter the venue for months.)

Kolenko's shows may soon find a new home, though—in Langford. "The next big project is a theatre," Mayor Stew Young tells me. Now that Langford's built its infrastructure and recreation facilities—with the expansion of Westhills Stadium nearly complete, 18 months after it was announced—he says, "it's time to start planning something."

Langford's economic development commission will start studying the needs, costs, and private partners for a new theatre in the coming year. "I need the private sector excited and involved," Young says. It could be part of a development, or a film studio, potentially on four acres next to Costco. He wants classrooms there too, so students can perform on the same stage they train upon. "I want it to be used by the public every day."

Young was at the Victoria opening of *Jersey Boys*, talking up the possibilities. In 2013, the City of Victoria refused to let Kolenko promote *Stomp!* with a banner on the side of the Royal, so he got in touch with Young, who shut down Goldstream Avenue for a free show by *Stomp!* performers. The Royal run sold out, and ever since then, Langford's Economic Development Committee has regularly sponsored Kolenko's productions. "We'd like some shows out our way," Young says.

He's likely to get them, and when he does, the RMTS may be begging its anchor tenants to return.

"We have to support our local artists. Otherwise, we will have no art." Ross Crockford didn't say that, but he wishes he did.

Old growth in the crosshairs

JUDITH LAVOIE

Why is BC Timber Sales, a government agency, at the centre of so many contentious Vancouver Island logging disputes?

PHOTO: MARK WORTHING

Clearcut logging of old-growth forest near Schmidt Creek authorized by BC Timber Sales

The naked rawness of a new clearcut in an old-growth forest is often jarring, but for Chief Rande Cook, the expanse of stumps around Schmidt Creek, above Robson Bight, was also personal. "It's our territory. It was an eye-opener. It was devastating to see first hand what has been done. I have never seen so many yellow cedar logs, and there were some culturally-modified trees that were cut down," said Cook, known as Makwala, who heads the Ma'amtagila First Nation.

Cook, who is talking to experts about lodging a complaint with the Province, said removing culturally-modified trees, which mark the historical presence of Indigenous people, is like erasing the DNA of the First Nations. He's likely to face an uphill battle, however. BC Timber Sales (BCTS), which auctioned the timber in the valley south of Port McNeill, said an archaeological assessment, conducted with assistance from another First Nation, found no culturally-modified trees or areas with archaeological potential.

Schmidt Creek is in Tlowitsis-Ma'amtagila territory. Cook is not surprised that BCTS is claiming Indigenous input; selective consultation, he says, is common. "These people only want to consult with the First Nations they know they can get a pro-business outcome with," he said.

In areas earmarked for cutting by BC Timber Sales, there are questions about the weight given to experts, lack of climate change consideration, and impacts on communities. Overarching questions are why a stand-alone government agency is at the centre of so many contentious logging disputes, and why remaining patches of old growth—especially on Vancouver Island—seem to be in the crosshairs.

PHOTO: LOUIS BOCKNER

In addition to the Schmidt Creek logging, other recent controversies involving BC Timber Sales include its plans to log 109 hectares of old growth adjacent to Juan de Fuca Provincial Park, a proposal that provoked a public outcry and is now on hold to allow consultations with the operator of a nearby eco-lodge; clearcut logging in the Skagit Doughnut Hole, beside Manning Park, a decision that brought protests from the US and accusations that BC was breaking an international treaty; and clearcut logging in the Nahmint Valley, west of Port Alberni, where one of the biggest Douglas firs in Canada was felled, despite objections from conservation groups.

Growing public discomfort is evident at demonstrations asking the BC government to halt old-growth logging. Jens Wieting, Sierra Club BC's forest and climate campaigner, believes that people now understand more about the climate emergency because of floods, droughts and fires—and realize that destroying the forests will make the situation worse.

A petition, signed by 20,000 people, asking for a halt to old-growth logging, has been delivered to Forests Minister Doug Donaldson; and a letter last year from 223 international scientists urged the Province to take immediate action to protect BC's temperate rain forests.

The BC Green Party wants a moratorium on old-growth logging on Vancouver Island, with development of sustainable forestry practices. Sonia Furstenau, Green Party House Leader, finds it disappointing that old-growth logging is continuing at the same rate as under the previous Liberal government. "While there seems to be an acknowledgement that the world and conditions have changed very quickly, the practices aren't [changing]," she said.

T.J. Watt, co-founder of the Ancient Forest Alliance, said there is virtually no difference in the logging taking place under the BC NDP than under the Liberals. "People are tired and fed up. We know things need to be done better and there are sustainable second-growth alternatives out there," Watt said.

Wieting noted two key issues behind the growing logging controversies: first, many

> "IT'S SHOCKING. Schmidt Creek is right next door to the rubbing beaches. I totally expected an NDP government to do things differently and, with respect to forestry and logging old growth, they are not doing things differently. It's business as usual."—*Paul Spong, OrcaLab*

remaining patches of old growth are close to communities or recreation areas, increasing the notice of what's going on, along with the likelihood of conflict; and second, there have been few changes in the Forests Ministry bureaucracy since the former government was in power. "They are running out of places to find timber where they can log without conflict, so they end up pursuing what I call 'extreme old-growth logging,'" he said.

Furstenau agrees that there has been little change within the ministry. "It's very hard to change course in a radical or transformative way when you are still getting advice from the same people," she said.

Some of that advice is simply incorrect, according to Watt. "I think the NDP is being given the same information around the incorrect idea that old growth forests aren't endangered and there's nothing to worry about…when, in fact, we know that is not the case," he said.

Logging companies are anxious to bid for increasingly scarce old-growth timber, and BCTS, which manages 20 percent of the Province's annual allowable cut—making it the biggest tenure holder in BC—is planning to auction off about 600 hectares more of old growth on Vancouver Island this year and another 8,800 hectares in future years.

"The BC government has put them in a straitjacket—auction 20 percent of BC volume, no matter what. So, instead of using BC Timber Sales to develop and implement best practices in the midst of climate and species emergencies, they behave like a machine designed with a single purpose—find the fibre," Wieting said.

Jobs and money are at the heart of many of the decisions. An emailed statement from BCTS claimed, "Approximately 8,000 people are directly and another 10,000 people are indirectly employed, as a result of BCTS' auction of timber, as well, the net revenue generated from these auctions are returned to the government so as to support many of the programs the government offers the citizens of BC. Curtailing BCTS operations would have significant impacts on all British Columbians."

(What is not noted is how forestry revenues and employment, through mechanization and over-logging, have declined over the decades. By 2016, forestry provided only 3.3 percent of BC's GDP. There are far more tourism jobs than forestry jobs in BC—133,100 versus 59,000 in 2016.)

There is also the question of the effect on communities. Schmidt Creek has been a textbook case of BCTS ignoring local input, according to conservation organizations.

The steep slopes of the Schmidt Creek valley are above the orca rubbing beaches at Robson Bight, leading to fears that the world-famous beaches will be degraded by sedimentation or landslides.

BCTS said in an email that the beaches were examined and experts concluded that carefully planned harvesting in Schmidt Creek was unlikely to affect the rubbing beaches, which are being eroded by sea-level rise and severe storms, but show no sign of sedimentation. "Harvesting activities are occurring inland in a side valley on slopes that are not directly above the beaches," BCTS said.

Prominent killer-whale researcher Paul Spong of OrcaLab, a whale research station on nearby Hanson Island, believes ongoing deterioration of the rubbing beaches is likely to be exacerbated by this logging. The rubbing beaches are used by northern resident killer whales as a massage parlour, explained Spong. He fears the cultural activity, passed down through generations of whales, could be disrupted. "It's shocking. Schmidt Creek is right next door to the rubbing beaches," said Spong, adding, "I totally expected an NDP government to do things differently and, with respect to forestry and logging old growth, they are not doing things differently. It's business as usual."

Mark Worthing, Sierra Club BC climate and conservation campaigner, visits Schmidt Creek regularly and dives in the water around the rubbing beaches. His June visit was devastating, he said. "It was like a punch in the gut. They are just hammering this poor little valley. This is the sound of the last of the ancient rainforest," he said.

Worthing believes the beaches will inevitably be affected by soil erosion, either from a major rainfall event, a quick strong landslide, or cumulative erosion. "When you take that much wood and soil off any hillside, the soil finds its way down, that's a physical certainty," he said.

The Province is looking for input on sustainable management of BC's forests "to inform changes to the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and regulations" (public input will be accepted until July 15). But critics say the government is a long way from its 2017 election promise to use the ecosystem-based management of the Great Bear Rainforest as a model.

Forests Ministry estimates of the amount of old growth protected on Vancouver Island differ wildly from figures given by conservation groups who say that, combined with other logging on Vancouver Island, more than 30 soccer fields of old growth is being clearcut every day.

Minister Donaldson has said that 50 percent of old growth on Vancouver Island—or more than 520,000 hectares—is protected. But Wieting countered that Donaldson is referring to half the *remaining* old growth—therefore, in a bizarre twist, the more old growth that is logged, the higher the percentage of protected forest.

"Almost 80 percent of the original productive old-growth forest and over 90 percent of the low-elevation, high-productivity stands, where the largest trees grow, has already been logged," said Watt. Provincial figures, he noted, include low-productivity forests that grow at high elevation or in bogs; in reality only about eight percent of Vancouver Island's original productive old-growth forests are protected in parks and old-growth management areas.

Furstenau wants to see decisions made on more than just financial outcomes. Community forests should form the basis of future forest policy, allowing decisions to be made with input from residents and First Nations, so the community is not undermined by decisions made in Victoria, she said.

She also argued that as Vancouver Island faces drought conditions, climate change has to be factored into all decision-making. "We can't just continue with business as usual and then see what happens. We know what's going to happen."

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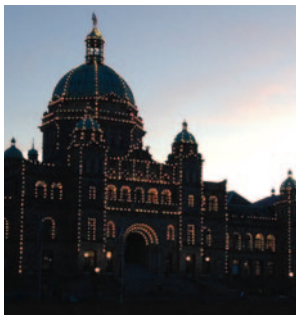
Fun and loafing in the BC public service

RUSS FRANCIS

Taxpayer dollars are wasted doing things that are unnecessary or wrong—while important records management tasks are routinely ignored.



Upon joining the BC public service, new employees gather in a Downtown auditorium, listen to a few hackneyed words of wisdom from the deputy attorney general, sign the public service oath—and never think of it again. A high-level document, the oath is seen less as something to consult for guidance on how to behave and more as a chance to get a couple of hours' paid time away from the office—or as yet another annoying little bit of bureaucracy needed to keep the higher-ups content. I don't recall ever seeing a copy posted in a government elevator, on an employee bulletin board, or stuck onto a lunchroom fridge beside posters advertising yet another dreaded, compulsory, day-long "team building" clambake.

For the most part, public servants go about their business serving their respective ministers appropriately, without needing a reminder of what they can and cannot do. But there are also others among the 31,350 full-time equivalent workers in the BC public service (this estimate doesn't include those in Crown corporations and other arms-length organizations); there are miscreants whose memories could do with more than an occasional jog as to how to keep disrepute out of the public service.

One of the more concerning situations I encountered in my 10 years in government involved a fellow employee. Or perhaps "seat warmer" would be more accurate, for he spent most of his days openly running his own business from his government desk. One day, his manager came over to the employee's cubicle and began describing a new assignment for him. Less than a minute into the manager's request, however, the employee's taxpayer-paid desk phone rang. To my astonishment, ignoring his manager, the employee answered the phone, and launched into a conversation with what sounded an awful lot like negotiating with a client of his personal business. Meanwhile, interrupted in mid-sentence, his manager stood there, waiting till the phone conversation ended, some minutes later. And I suspect this wasn't the first time.

There is little more depressing in a workplace than to see a co-worker blatantly act in his own interest rather than for the good of the government (covered by another clause in the oath); even more so to do it in full knowledge of management and get away with it. In my view, he should have been fired, along with his manager—for acquiescing in the employee's behaviour. The manager's supervisor, and likely several further up the chain, also knew about the employee, but did nothing. All of them should have been fired too. Yet none were.

Another category of public service behaviour, while not as flagrant, is no less worrisome and far more widespread. And it costs taxpayers a small fortune: the abuse of meetings.

In one ministry, our assistant deputy minister (ADM) became concerned that a team of about 10 people had been meeting weekly to complete just one task: produce a single, short, relatively simple document. But after more than a year of one-hour meetings, the team—which included several directors and managers—had yet to finish the task. Knowing that I had experience working on tight daily newspaper deadlines, the ADM asked me to step in and wrap up the project. Easier said than done.

The team members rebelled, initially even refusing to allow me into the room for the next meeting. Following a direct order from the ADM, they relented, if somewhat reluctantly. The reason for their reticence soon became plain. The endlessly repeating meetings were primarily social gatherings. The well-paid, senior drones began the meeting by discussing not the supposed task at hand, but the "pretty colours" appearing in the latest draft of the document—a result of Microsoft Word's "track changes" feature, in which each edit appears in a different colour. That afternoon, I completed my own edits of the document, and shipped what I assumed would be the final version of the document back to the team leader. There it sat. Not to be upset by the ADM's "interference," the team resumed its regular social gatherings. Attendees at such meetings can spend much of their time trying to look busy to others in the meeting—who are also trying to look busy. Your tax dollars at play. That ADM resigned shortly afterwards, to "pursue other interests." She obviously did not fit the ministry's meeting-centric culture.

I expect that every single one of those socializing team members knew deep down that what they were doing was of no value to either the ministry or society. That view may be widespread. As London School of Economics anthropologist David Graeber vividly explains in his 2018 book *Bullshit Jobs*, "Huge swaths of people…spend their entire working lives performing tasks they believe to be unnecessary." He estimates that up to 50 percent of workers privately believe their jobs accomplish nothing of value. Though his interview-based research primarily deals with the worlds of corporations and academe, his conclusions may apply even more strongly to government.

Of course, not all meetings waste time and money. There are some circumstances that call for numerous lengthy meetings. For instance, last year it must have taken an inordinate number of BC government person-hours to spin a new greenhouse-gas-spewing liquefied natural gas project into a planet-saving plan to *improve* the environment.

If the number and length of meetings were to be substantially reduced, what would public servants do with their newfound time? In fact, there is no shortage of important work now left undone. For example, it is current government policy that public servants document significant phone calls, instant messages and the like—the so-called "duty to document." This rarely happens. The result: There is no complete record concerning the development of many policies. So a freedom of information (FOI) request would draw a blank: "No records exist." Arguably, *not* documenting such important interactions brings the public service into disrepute.

A few senior government officials are well-informed about the requirements of FOI, and do their best to ensure that appropriate documents are retained—subject, of course, to the political requirements of the government. The same cannot be said of all lower-level staff, including managers. All public servants are required to take an online FOI course. Yet much of its generally welcome content is forgotten or

IT IS UNIVERSALLY UNDERSTOOD that for sensitive issues, personal meetings or phone calls are desirable, precisely as a way—legal or not—to dodge FOI.

conveniently ignored. For instance, an FOI manager told a ministry meeting that drafts of documents did not need to be retained, so she routinely deleted them. That's not correct, I said. I was immediately overruled by the meeting chair. After all, I was not the FOI manager.

It's difficult to hold ordinary public servants to account for paying minimal attention to the duty-to-document requirement, since two successive governments have essentially told them not to bother. A March 8, 2017 finance ministry press release—following the BC Liberals' 2015 "triple delete" scandal—claimed that the government was legislating a duty to document by introducing Bill 6, the *Information Management (Documenting Government Decisions) Amendment Act*. And as recently as March 31, 2019, NDP Citizens' Services Minister Jenny Sims said in a statement that new amendments "respond" to recommendations from two former information and privacy commissioners, David Loukidelis and Elizabeth Denham, to legislate the duty to document.

But in each case, information activists were quick to denounce both claims. The problem with both the Liberal and NDP announcements is that compliance is left to a public servant, the Chief Records Officer. How is that working out? Darrell Evans, executive director of the Canadian Institute for Information and Privacy Studies, told *Focus* in June: "As far as I know, there's never been any enforcement." The lack of penalties is akin to a bank ditching its locks, cameras and other security measures, and replacing them with a sign imploring customers: "Please do not steal the money. Thank you for your cooperation."

The BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association's executive director, Sara Neuert, said in an interview that not only should there be penalties for failing to document, but that those penalties should be enforced by the independent Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. "We'd really like to see external oversight," Neuert said.

So it's little wonder that public servants while away their idle hours looking busy in useless meetings, instead of dutifully documenting. One government lawyer once told me that the government's internal instant message system—which does not keep records of exchanges—was desirable, because "it's not subject to FOI." Of course, he is wrong: under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, instant messages are records just as much as a hard-copy briefing note or a video recording. I rarely heard someone explicitly state: "In order to avoid FOI, do not send an email. Instead, phone, or meet in person." But it is universally understood that for sensitive issues, personal meetings or phone calls are desirable, precisely as a mechanism—legal or not—to dodge FOI.

This is not a great way to improve the public's view of the government. At least, that's if anyone knows about the practice. Please don't tell anyone: it might bring the public service into disrepute.

During his time with the government, Russ Francis did his best to follow advice, in the spirit of the Westminster system, from a deputy minister: "What interests the minister, *absolutely fascinates* me."

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Is our imminent peril virtually certain or not?

BRIONY PENN

An appeal before the courts should spark debate about whether Trans Mountain is compatible with a stable climate.

As the fires burn, storms rage, ice melts, and drought warnings go into effect, a rising tide of climate policy supporters from professional ranks are demanding change. Insurance company CEOs, health professionals, and journalists (like Bill Moyers) are joining scientists and academics to name the threat posed by climate change and continued burning of fossil fuels.

Retired Vancouver civil litigation lawyer David Gooderham is one of the latest to put his reputation and his freedom on the line. He is one of the 229 arrestees who defied court injunctions to block the gates of the Trans Mountain Pipeline in 2018 and could face jail time. He is hoping to bring a novel concept to the attention of the courts—evidence of the magnitude of the threat of climate change. Gooderham, at 74, spent his career constructing cases from evidence of catastrophic losses involving flooding, fire, structural failures, and such. He discovered that no Canadian court or parliament has ever considered the evidence about whether the emissions from the expansion of oil sands production in Canada are consistent with keeping the warming of the Earth below the internationally-accepted increase of 2°C.

In other words, every large infrastructure project like the Trans Mountain pipeline has been approved without a single inquiry or environmental review considering their implications on the global emission target of the Paris Agreement—or our own national goal of reducing domestic emissions 30 percent by 2030.

The Ministerial Panel on the Trans Mountain Pipeline of 2016, appointed by the Minister of Natural Resources, found that the question, Can construction of a new Trans Mountain Pipeline be reconciled with Canada's climate change commitments? had not been answered. The National Energy Board never asked this question. Environment and Climate Change Canada, when tasked with reviewing emissions estimated for the Trans Mountain Expansion Project, admitted that the answer was "not clear." Yet the cabinet still passed an Order in Council in 2016 authorizing the building of the expanded Trans Mountain Pipeline declaring, with no evidence, that it was consistent with our commitments.

This failure to answer the question has left Canada pursuing a very dangerous course. Even for those whose concern is only around fiscal matters, it leaves us vulnerable to legal challenges or ending up with stranded assets, including the Trans Mountain Pipeline. With the June 18 federal government decision to green-light the pipeline, more of these types of appeals are inevitable. As Jessica Clogg of West Coast Environmental Law stated on the CBC about her reaction to Trudeau's decision: "We'll see you in court."

Gooderham didn't arrive lightly at the decision to get himself arrested. He had spent the last six years engaged in lawful political activity to "encourage, persuade and induce the Government of Canada to reconsider its plans." It was the failure of the political process to examine evidence that pushed him into getting himself arrested. At least in a court of law, where there are rules, expert witnesses, cross examination, and consequences of perjury, Canadians might at last have an opportunity to learn whether the government's plans to continue expanding oil sands production can possibly be compatible with a world that is in dire need of cooling down.

Jennifer Nathan and David Gooderham

But there is a long row to hoe before he gets that particular day in court.

On December 3, 2018, Gooderham made his first court appearance with co-accused, science teacher Jennifer Nathan. They informed the court, under Judge Affleck, that they wished to use the defence of necessity. This common law defence recognizes that in rare circumstances, we can be excused from criminal liability if we are faced with an "imminent peril" and where the wrong of disobeying the law can be "justified by the pursuit of some greater good."

Necessity is one of the few legal remedies available for climate supporters around the world, since it enables a legal exploration of what constitutes "imminent peril" and "greater good." Encouragingly, across the border, in April of this year, the first favourable decision from a state court in Washington permitted the necessity defense to be raised in a climate protest case called the "valve turner's case." The conviction of US citizen Ken Ward, who shut off the oil by turning a valve in a pipeline, was reversed, and he will return to court for a new trial where he is able to bring his evidence and expert witnesses forward.

Gooderham, like Ward, is arguing for simply that—a fair trial with the right to call evidence on matters of climate science.

> "THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME will be that Justice Affleck's decision will be overturned and we can have a retrial where we call our expert witnesses."—*David Gooderman*

This is where Gooderham's civil expertise teamed up with Nathan's training as a science educator to brief an uneducated judiciary on climate science. For the December court hearing, they prepared an Outline of Proposed Evidence that includes projections over the next 12 years based on current policies, where the concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will exceed 450 parts per million CO_2 equivalent, bequeathing us all to "a dire future"—or in legal terms, "imminent peril."

The 119-page report, filed with the Court of Appeal, is persuasive and sets this global expansion within the context of Canada's failing domestic efforts to meet the Paris Agreement of cutting 200 million tonnes by 2030.

Their central argument is that the Trans Mountain Pipeline has a pivotal role globally in increasing emissions. Canada's plan is to continue expanding oil sands production to 2040, but the evidence from the International Energy Association (IEA) and other reports show unequivocally that global oil consumption must start to decline in 2020, or else by 2030 the world will be irreversibly committed to warming above the 2° Celsius limit. Canada is one of the world's six largest suppliers to the world oil market. Our country's largest growth in emissions is coming from the oil and gas sector—offsetting most of the reductions in all other parts of the economy.

The proposed evidence lays out oil sands production and emissions; the technology available to reduce emissions during extraction, and per barrel; proposed carbon capture and storage; political caps on emissions, gas sector emissions, methane emissions, and other additional measures proposed in climate plans. Findings are brought forward from the National Energy Board inquiry, Trans Mountain upstream emission report, IPCC reports, global oil consumption projections, mitigation scenarios, the global emissions gap with Canada's commitment, and consequences of climate change. It isn't easy bedtime reading but will likely illuminate "the magnitude of the threat."

On January 17, 2019, Judge Affleck predictably rejected their request to call climate evidence at their trial—which was held March 11, and at which they were convicted. The judge has rejected three other applications to put forward a defence of necessity, but Gooderham is the first to appeal.

In Affleck's 39-page *Reasons for Judgement*, he stated: "Despite a historical lack of initiative to curb emissions over these same decades, adaptive social measures may be taken to prevent such a dire outcome. Whether government, private industry, and citizens take these measures is *a contingency* that takes these consequences outside of 'virtual certainty' and into the realm of 'foreseeable or likely.'"

For Gooderham, this ruling was gold. It meant that an appeal to the BC Court of Appeal could focus directly on the crucial question. The judge appears to agree that we are on a path of a 2° Celsius rise in temperature, but asserts, with no evidence, that there is "a contingency" and that our imminent peril is not "virtually certain."

The contingency, however, according to Gooderham's evidence, would require unprecedented cuts of emissions on a global scale starting in six months, including an immediate halt to the growth of global oil consumption. The question for the Court of Appeal then would be whether a contingency of that kind has, what is called in legal terms, "an air of reality." That was enough to act on, and following their conviction, Gooderham and Nathan filed their Notice of Appeal to overturn Affleck's decision.

The appeal is due to be heard sometime in the fall by three judges.

I asked Gooderham what he anticipates as success. "The best possible outcome will be that Justice Affleck's decision will be overturned, and we can have a retrial where we call our expert witnesses." The Crown would have the right to call their own expert evidence to try and show there is no imminent climate threat.

If he is not granted a retrial at the provincial level, then he plans to take it to the Supreme Court of Canada. If he succeeds with a retrial with a suitable set of facts, a defence of necessity would apply. Whatever the final outcome, it will still have been a success for Gooderham "to open the public discourse on a subject that has largely been treated with silence." If in the best case scenario, a defence of necessity is accepted, Gooderham indicates that it would not trigger "some kind of anarchy." The most dramatic thing that could happen would be parliament abolishing the ancient common law and thus pushing climate change and the evidence for immediate action back into some messy, but better-informed, public debates—something that should have happened long ago.

Ironically, just at the same time Gooderham and Nathan brought their case to court in Vancouver, the Federal government found itself obliged to file evidence about climate science in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, where the Government of Saskatchewan has challenged the constitutionality of the Trudeau government carbon-price scheme. The Federal government, in order to defend its carbon tax, has had to provide the court with evidence about the risks of rising carbon emissions, and to persuade the court that it is urgent to reduce Canada's emissions. The evidence did not, predictably, extend to the prospect of failing to meet the Paris Agreement; that would have been risky to their own climate policy on pipelines. The Saskatchewan court ruled 3-2 that the federal carbon price is constitutional. The case will be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

It appears that suddenly, the issue of climate change has found its way into the courtroom, and that it might be "our last chance to help people grasp the magnitude of the threat"…if it can all happen in the next six months.

A funding site for the appeal has been launched at www.gofundme.com/help-fund-addressing-climate-change-in-the-courts

Briony Penn is an award-winning writer of creative non-fiction books including the prize-winning *The Real Thing: the Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan*, and most recently, *Stories from the Magic Canoe with Wa'xaid (Cecil Paul)*.

Not your grandpa's wildfires

STEPHEN HUME

Climate change is exacerbating forest fires, including—perhaps especially—where the wild meets suburbia.

PHOTO: COURTESY MINISTRY OF LANDS, FOREST AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Forest fires menacing Williams Lake residential district in July 2017

For terrifying spectacle, few events match the full-throated fury of a crowning forest fire. Such a fire moves fast. Sheets of flame flash through the canopy under a seething orange wall as high as a 30-storey skyscraper, with pillars of smoke that can tower 50 times that height.

I live in Greater Victoria's forested fringe—the "wildland-urban interface" in Fire Boss lingo. Like many, I'm watching trees around me die from climate warming. I confess, there is now seldom a day during the still, tinder-dry afternoons of high summer when the leaves suddenly rustle in an abrupt breeze, that I don't step outside to nervously sniff the air for that smudgy whiff of woodsmoke.

Big fires make their own weather. They suck moisture out of the atmosphere, drying and heating to a flashpoint what's already dry and hot. They create windstorms to feed their appetite for oxygen. Tornadoes of superheated flame spin away. Trees shriek as they vaporize at 1,200°C—although physics says the noise is sap transforming instantly to steam.

Should this holocaust scenario concern most of us in our comfortable, tree-shaded city homes? Increasingly, warn scientists and emergency measures specialists, the uncomfortable conclusion is "Yes."

Chris Bone, an expert on the role of climate change and forest policies in driving wildfires and other events, contemplates wildfire from above a native plant garden at the University of Victoria. He thinks that like the great earthquake which may happen tomorrow—or a hundred years from now—the visitation of urban wildfire is not a question of "if," but "when."

We generally live as though catastrophe weren't imminent. In truth, conditions already exist here that make fires like those in California or Alberta possible. "A lot of people think we live in the rainforest and that's exacerbating the problem," says Bone, an assistant professor in geography. "We don't live in the rainforest. We have more of a 'coastal California' climate. The south island does not get a lot of rain in the summers." If climate models are right—so far, they've been accurate—climate warming will make this region even more susceptible to wildfire.

He's careful to point out that while people crave certainty in the face of uncertainty, and simplicity rather than complexity, the impact of our looming climate emergency won't be linear in progression. There'll be variability in seasonal weather. Trends are the concern—frequency, length, and intensity of extreme weather episodes, whether wet or dry, cold or hot.

“I THINK ABOUT PARADISE and how trapped those people were. Those people had no way to escape. I look at an area like [Langford, for example] and I have real concern. How strategic are we being?”—*Chris Bone, UVic*

PHOTO: COURTESY MINISTRY OF LANDS, FOREST AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Aerial drop of fire retardant near an Ashcroft home

One consistency in those urban wildfires devastating communities in the United States for the past few decades is this: they occur during dry spells after three to four days of very hot temperatures and then, as winds tick up, they overwhelm firefighters. Since 2014, almost 50 firefighters have been killed trying to contain wildfires in the US, 19 of them one entire crew of “hotshot” specialists. They perished together in a conflagration threatening the town of Yarnell, Arizona in 2013.

Crowning fires first flash through the dry canopy and then incinerate what’s beneath, fed by ground cover and debris. The speed with which they can accelerate is mind-boggling.

Artist Frank Ebermann built his house and studio in a pristine, tranquil forest landscape about a 20-minute drive south of Houston on the Yellowhead Highway, midway between Prince George and Prince Rupert. At the end of May, 1983, he heard heavy equipment thundering past his studio. The trucks carried fire suppression specialists. But they weren’t going to a fire; they were running from one. Ebermann scooped up his little daughter Amai, his wife Sophia, and fled, too.

That blaze, dubbed “Swiss Burn,” was a monster, set loose by an angler’s campfire. Eight minutes later the fire covered a square

kilometre. Two hours later it was 10 square kilometres. It expanded by one square kilometre per hour. Smoke eclipsed the sun. Flaming embers showered out of the darkness. After seven hours, smouldering ash and charred snags covered an area the size of Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt, View Royal and Colwood combined.

"It was like Dante's Inferno," Ebermann told me. "Valleys boiling with flames. The burn made its own firestorm, uprooting the trees as it went." In minutes, he and seven other families were homeless. The experience had one other big effect. "This fire tore me away from any materialism," he said. "We want to own the beautiful scenery. But we never really own anything."

In 2018, similar fires swept through Paradise, California. They burned so hot, car tires melted. So did the sneakers of those trying to flee on foot through the streets. Images from that fire, in which people burned to death in their escape vehicles, haunt Bone—especially when he considers them in the context of new residential developments in Greater Victoria's wildland-urban interface.

"I think about Paradise and how trapped those people were. Those people had no way to escape. I look at an area like that [wildland-urban interface development in Langford, for example] and I have real concern. How strategic are we being?" Not very, according to a 2018 study for the B.C. government. *Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia* by George Abbott and Chief Maureen Chapman is a disturbing restatement of warnings provided by successive provincial auditors-general over almost 20 years. "Despite earnest efforts," it said, "BC has made disappointingly little progress on the goal of enhanced community safety since 2003." It said at least 80 communities have completed wildfire protection plans but half of them still haven't done anything to actually mitigate risk by reducing on-the-ground-fuel, clearing underbrush, or thinning forest stands adjacent to residential districts.

A 2015 study by the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction, a think tank for Canada's insurance industry, concluded that in Kelowna, where 239 homes were burned during a wildland-urban interface fire in 2003, present conditions could result in a repeat disaster. Reasons for inaction given by municipal politicians, the BC government report said, are that tax dollars are committed to building and maintaining water, sewer, roads, street lights, parks, recreation, and solid waste disposal. The infrastructure supports residential growth and thus an expanded tax base. Forests adjacent to residential development are deemed somebody else's problem and responsibility. But whose problem does it become if a crowning wildfire rips through a city's residential fringe?

THAT'S A QUESTION WE SHOULD ALL ASK our municipal governments. In Slave Lake, Alberta in 2011, planners said that the city's evacuation seemed unthinkable. The next day thousands bolted through flames and smoke so thick they couldn't see where they were driving. In Fort McMurray, in 2016, thousands were again forced to run a gauntlet of fire, escaping while fire destroyed 2,400 buildings and insured losses approached $4 billion. In Portugal, in 2017, 30 people burned in their vehicles while trying to escape a blaze; 17 more died trying to flee abandoned vehicles on foot. Scores of tourists in Greece died when they were trapped by wildfire.

And the risk here grows, it does not diminish. Research published last year in the *International Journal of Wildland Fire* estimates more than 55,000 square kilometres in B.C. now lie in the wildfire-urban interface. The authors of *Mapping Canadian Wildland Fire Interface Areas*, Lynn Johnston of Natural Resources Canada and Mike Flannigan of the University of Alberta, conclude that this danger zone both expands and becomes more hazardous with climate warming.

PHOTO: COURTESY MINISTRY OF LANDS, FOREST AND NATURAL RESOURCES

A forest fire outside Clinton in July 2017

In Greater Victoria, for example, expect the frequency of very hot days to reach an average of 36 per summer. Hottest day temperatures are projected to rise to 36°C. And while we'll get more precipitation overall, summer rainfall will dwindle by at least 20 percent while days of drought will lengthen by 20 percent.

Vancouver Island was already rated at a Level Three drought—one notch below the driest tier—before the end of May this year. In the Comox Valley, only 34 per cent of normal rainfall arrived. In Kelowna, the rainfall was 50 percent less. And it's been hot. More than 30 daytime high temperature records were broken across the province on a single day in March.

Furthermore, as it gets hotter and dryer, lightning storms will become more frequent. Right now, Canada gets about 2.25 million lightning strikes per year. They are responsible for almost half our wildfires—humans start slightly more than 50 percent. There will be 12 percent more strikes for every degree of global temperature rise. For every two lightning strikes today, there will soon be three.

In BC, *Addressing the New Normal* found that more than 16,000 square kilometres of forest pose high to moderate risk of wildfires expanding rapidly into major residential areas. Worse, it warns that such wildfires—which are now bigger, burn hotter and move faster because of global warming—are becoming the norm.

"The wildfire zone is not only getting closer to people, but people are getting closer to the wildfire zone," the study points out, citing BC Auditor General Wayne Strelioff's 2001 report *Managing Interface Fire Risks*; former Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon's report *Firestorm*, triggered by events in 2003; and present Auditor General

Carol Bellringer's 2018 assessment of subsequent foot-dragging and inaction. This too is a concern, considering that people caused more than half the wildfires that cost BC taxpayers $3 billion between 2003 and 2017.

"British Columbia has the highest risk of interface fires in Canada because of its climate and topography," the report by Abbott and Chapman reiterates. The risks are increasing as a result of two key factors—the continuing growth in the number of people choosing to live in or near the forests and grassland areas and the significant buildup of forest fuels resulting from years of successful fire suppression activities. "Fire experts fear that, if actions are not taken soon to reduce the risks associated with interface fires, it is only a matter of time before these fires will exceed firefighters' ability to contain them and that this might lead to significant loss of life and property," the report warns.

Clearly, it's time we had a vigorous, engaged, adult conversation at the community level about the danger zone at the fringes of Greater Victoria, where residential districts bleed into forest land and forest intrudes into the built landscape. Often, these fringes are among the most desirable neighbourhoods. They offer shady, countrified respite from the noise, heat, traffic and pavement of downtown. Developers like them because they sell quickly. And, in the short term, revenue-hungry municipal politicians appear to discount long-term hazards against short-term revenue gains.

Wildfire science calls it "the expanding bull's-eye effect." As a city expands from its centre, the fire-exposed perimeter lengthens, placing larger areas within the danger zone. Visit Greater Victoria's tony, up-market neighbourhoods at Broadmead, Dean Park or some of the newer subdivisions in Langford, for example, and houses and gardens are deeply integrated into heavily forested slopes. Yet housing developments zoned on forested hillsides are also at highest risk. Fire moves fastest (in California they moved with explosive speed) while burning up-slope, where canopy and underbrush are close to structures.

This forest-city interface is where risk is greatest for conflagrations like those which forced evacuations of 200,000 people in BC and Alberta alone over the last 15 years. More than 36,000 wild-land-urban interface homes and businesses have now been razed across California, BC and Alberta.

As environmental writer Glen Martin recently observed in *California Magazine*: "From a firefighter's perspective, wildland-urban interface combines the worst of both realms (suburb and forest): interface areas are not only cheek-to-jowl with fuel-rich forests, they're also often characterized by dense housing tracts landscaped with lush, highly flammable vegetation. Today's wildfires, in short, are not your grandpa's wildfires; they're usually hybrid-human started fires, involving both structures and forests, which greatly complicates the task for wildfire fighters and escalates the cost in life and property."

GREATER VICTORIA might serve as a textbook model of wildland-urban interface fire hazard. The city expanded from a 75-kilometre bull's eye to one with a 1,650-kilometre circumference of wildland-urban interface. In addition, an urban forest covers much of its footprint. A Habitat Acquisition Trust study published in 2008 calculated that about 40 percent of Greater Victoria's 696.2 square kilometre land area was then under tree canopy. Considering that the urban core of Victoria has 150,000 trees in a scant 19.5 square kilometres, similar density would mean perhaps five million trees over the rest of the capital region, even with declines in forested area.

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PHOTO: STEPHEN HUME

The wildland-urban interface on the Saanich Peninsula north of Victoria, as seen from the top of PKOLS (Mount Douglas)

This forest is highly valued by residents—for good reason. It's a central element in regional identity. It provides shade and greenery to offset pavement. It lessens runoff. It adds to biodiversity by offering habitat to urban wildlife. It produces oxygen, stores carbon and absorbs both air and water pollutants. Yet there's a tradeoff. Many trees are non-native and drought-intolerant. They contribute to the deepening fire hazard. This alone warrants frank public discussion about what faces the City as summer rains diminish, temperatures rise, and very hot days and very dry spells become more frequent and last much longer.

"We need to rethink our approach to urban landscape and start planning it in a much more holistic way," says Johan Feddema, who studies the consequences of human actions on the environment and the effects of climate change upon society. The UVic scientist has examined the impacts of climate conditions upon severe crown fires.

Everybody loves the urban forest, he notes, but it has a downside. During transpiration, trees extract water from the ground and transfer it to dry air. US Geological Survey scientists calculate that one large deciduous tree can extract 150,000 litres a year from surface soil—most during summer months when foliage is heaviest. And the hotter it gets, the greater the rate. Our beloved shade trees may actually be helping to dry out their surroundings faster during extended droughts.

Does that mean we should mow down the urban forest? Of course not. Trees are important for sequestering carbon, and deciduous hardwoods like native oak and maple are among the top carbon-storers.

Feddema says we should be aware of these natural processes and think about different kinds and mixes of vegetation—drought and fire-resistant native plants—and how to design urban infrastructure for cooling rather than for convenience or architectural aesthetic. Plan for more open green space, but with warming-appropriate vegetation. Even the shape and placement of green space and tall buildings in the urban core can enhance or inhibit circulation patterns that might be cooling other parts of the city.

"Yes," muses Feddema, "we need to think creatively about advocating for a holistic way of planning, designing and building our city." Bone echoes that idea. If municipalities continue with zoning that permits residential dwellings in the wildland-urban interface hazard zone, he says, they have an obligation to engage in vigorous proactive education of residents about the dangers.

An example of the education needed is warning people that one of the biggest risks that their house will burn down during a wildfire is as simple as needles collecting in rain gutters. And how many of us actually know our urban evacuation routes, have mapped alternative routes, or have even thought about what we will do if those carefully planned evacuation routes are blocked?

The Capital Regional District voted unanimously last February to declare a climate emergency. It's a worthy initiative. But, like many such programs, it seems heavy on mission statements and global plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and less emphatic about practical but painful local decisions like reforming building codes or enacting stringent zoning bylaws which address the threat of urban wildfire.

Emergency measures planners provide clear directions about what needs to be done: reduce ground fuel; increase the allowable margin between houses and forest cover; mandate flame-resistant building materials; regulate garden shrubbery and landscaping.

One 2010 study found that by treating 10 percent of the adjacent forest landscape as a buffer zone in which ground fuel is removed, trees thinned and limbed, and underbrush cleared, risk of wildfire loss is reduced 70 percent. Considering that between 2014 and 2017, wildfires in western Canada and the US cost insurers almost $60 billion (CAD) in structural losses, this is something to think seriously about.

IN CANADA AND BC, the danger trend is relentlessly upward. Wildfire scientists don't doubt this is a direct consequence of our developing climate emergency. Right now, on average, 70,000 people and 20 communities a year in Canada are directly affected by wildfire events. That's a 40 percent increase since 1980. BC tops the national list. And the trend will accelerate, not slow, as climate warms and summers get hotter and dryer. Ottawa expects the annual cost of fire protection to double by 2040.

Some experts now argue that the former worst-case looks more like a future best-case as human beings pour planet-warming carbon dioxide into the atmosphere faster than at any time in human history. Fires of once-unimaginable intensity that happened every 20 years now occur every year. And the risks today are greater because wildfire-urban interface areas are vastly larger.

By mid-May, half a month early, the 2019 fire season was already in full swing. Almost 14,000 fire refugees had already been evacuated from a vast arc through northern BC and Alberta and culminating in northern Ontario.

Last year, 2018, was the worst on record for wildfires, dislocated populations, secondary health effects—emergency admissions for respiratory ailments doubled in BC as smoke became pervasive—and soaring fire suppression costs. In California, 81 people were dead, 870 were missing and almost 19,000 buildings had been destroyed in four hours. The year before that, 2017, had been the worst until 2018. In 2016, more than 88,000 people were evacuated as wildfire ripped through Fort McMurray in Alberta and destroyed 2,400 buildings. The year before that, 2015, was the worst-ever fire season for the US, representing a 133 percent increase over the long-term 50-year average in wildfire burn.

No one welcomes a bearer of bad news, but it's obvious that some version of the fire demon is waiting to visit itself upon Greater Victoria. We can't prevent wildfire, it's part of our environment, but we can adapt intelligently. Time to start thinking and talking seriously about that.

Stephen Hume has spent half a century as a journalist writing about Western Canada, the North, BC and the Island. His byline has appeared in most major Canadian newspapers.

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Rare but serious side effects of "Cipro"

ALAN CASSELS

"Floxxed" patients are calling for better consumer drug information.

April Goodman had an appendix attack in 2015 and ended up in the hospital. Her appendix surgery wasn't without its drama, but it was the drug that was prescribed afterwards that still haunts her to this day.

Speaking to me from her home in New Westminster, she tells me she was prescribed an antibiotic called ciprofloxacin (Cipro), one of a number of fluoroquinolone antibiotics (these are drugs that end in *floxacin*).

"No one—neither the doctor who prescribed it, nor the pharmacist who dispensed it mentioned a thing about the drug," she said. She didn't think anything about the drug's safety either, until about a year and a half later when one of her back teeth broke.

"When I read that Cipro has caused dental problems, such as teeth breaking off at the gumline, and further dental problems, which can continue indefinitely, I was quite alarmed."

What she uncovered in the course of several years of research is a truly astounding story of the floxacins, a widely popular class of drugs, wreaking devastation on an alarming number of people. She pointed me in the direction of a website, www.ciproispoison.com, where I learned a new word: "floxxed," referring to a state of suffering from one or more of a long list of adverse effects related to this class of drugs.

It seems mind-numbing that a drug you might take for less than two weeks to deal with an infection could cause long-term, and for some, irreversible adverse effects. This has taken a long time to acknowledge.

April certainly wasn't the first person to contact me about damages suffered due to fluoroquinolones. Over the last decade, I've had at least four different people write to tell me a tale of something truly horrendous, such as tendon rupture or retinal detachment, after taking a fluoroquinolone. Her concerns are echoed by official documents put out by various drug agencies in Canada.

A 2017 report issued by CADTH (the Canadian Agency for Drugs Technology in Health) said this: "The use of systemic [taken by mouth or by injection] fluoroquinolones is associated with serious adverse events, [including] effects on the central and peripheral nervous system, hypersensitivity, myasthenia gravis exacerbation [a chronic autoimmune disease], phototoxicity, QT prolongation [a heart rhythm disorder], and tendon rupture. Rarely, some of these adverse events have the potential to lead to persistent disabilities."

Probably one of the more known risks of fluoroquinolones is its effect on tendons, which can sometimes become inflamed or even rupture. Health Canada warns that "rare cases of disabling and persistent serious adverse reactions including tendinopathy, peripheral neuropathy, and central nervous system disorders have been reported to Health Canada for fluoroquinolones."

In the glib, somewhat bureaucratic way they issue drug safety warnings, Health Canada helpfully reminds health professionals of the patently obvious: "Consider the potential for disabling and persistent serious adverse events when choosing to prescribe a fluoroquinolone. Avoid fluoroquinolones in patients who have previously experienced serious adverse reactions associated with them. Stop fluoroquinolone treatment if a patient reports any serious adverse reaction."

While there is growing public alarm at the overprescribing of antibiotics, fluoroquinolones can be effective if used properly. But they can also be terribly misused. WorstPills, an independent drug bulletin produced in the US, is direct and forceful in discussing the overprescribing of antibiotics in the US. It reports that "despite congressional hearings and numerous academic studies on this issue, it has become the general consensus that 40 to 60 percent of all antibiotics in this country are misprescribed. New studies continue to confirm the fact that a large proportion of antibiotic prescribing for both children and adults continues to be inappropriate."

WorstPills singles out the fluoroquinolones as "one of the biggest-selling and most overprescribed classes of drugs in the United States," noting that these drugs should only be used for those allergic to alternatives or those with an infection resistant to other antibiotics.

The problem here is typical of drug therapy—using the wrong drugs in the wrong patients and using fluoroquinolones for colds, sore throats, and bladder infections.

How poorly they are used was captured in a 2003 study carried out in two American academic medical centres. The researchers looked at 100 patients who were prescribed a fluoroquinolone in an emergency room. Of those patients, 81 received a fluoroquinolone for an inappropriate indication (a use not officially approved by the regulator). Of those 81, half of the prescriptions were "judged inappropriate because another agent was considered first line." Worse yet, for a third of those 100, there was no documented evidence that an infection was even present.

In British Columbia, since the year 2000, when more than 150,000 patients were prescribed a fluoroquinolone, that number steadily increased until about 2010 when Health Canada started issuing the first of its warnings. Numerous programs have been launched to try to stem the inappropriate prescribing of antibiotics, including the public education campaign Do Bugs Need Drugs (www.dobugsneeddrugs.org). We are seeing that the number of patients who are prescribed fluoroquinolone antibiotics in BC has been steadily dropping since 2010. Yet even last year, almost 200,000 BC patients were dispensed a fluoroquinolone.

THE WARNINGS AROUND FLUOROQUINOLONES continue to mount ever since the USFDA, in 2011, required that fluoroquinolone antibiotics must be dispensed with a Medication Guide, which is essentially a consumer-oriented operator's guide to your drug. While the FDA has the authority to order that Medication Guides be distributed in pharmacies (and given out to patients who are getting new scripts or refills), no such authority exists in Canada. The safety information Canadians receive on most prescribed drugs is almost certainly inadequate, as April Goodman learned the hard way. For anyone prescribed a new drug, an important question might be: "is there a Health Canada warning on this drug?"

Before new medicines hit the market, each country's regulatory agency must first approve them for use, often based on limited safety evidence. After a drug enters general use, other safety issues can become apparent, including rarer or longer-term effects, prompting regulators to issue safety advisories on how to avoid or manage these risks.

Barbara Mintzes, a researcher originally from Vancouver but now working in the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Sydney, is studying drug safety advisories issued by regulators around the world.

> "WHEN I READ THAT CIPRO has caused dental problems, such as teeth breaking off at the gumline, and further dental problems, which can continue indefinitely, I was quite alarmed."—*April Goodman*

She is running an international study looking at drug advisories, and discussed her study with me in Victoria last month. In a research letter she published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, she looked at, in total, 1441 drug safety advisories issued in four countries—Canada, Australia, the US and UK—over a 10-year period, covering 680 drug safety concerns. Sadly, Canada didn't fare too well.

"Between 2007 and 2016, Canada's drug regulator, Health Canada, issued safety warnings only about half the time related to issues identified by regulators in Australia, the US and UK," said Barbara. "It's concerning that all countries, including Canada, were seriously deficient in how they communicated emerging health risks of medicines."

She added that there were nine fluoroquinolone warnings for the study period (from 2007 to 2016 inclusive), in all four countries: four from Canada, four from the US, one in Australia, and zero in the UK.

"Clearly if a drug has a safety advisory issued in one country, the same drug sold in another country should also come with similar warnings," said Associate Professor Mintzes. "Overall, we found that regulators in these four nations were only consistent in the decision to warn 10 percent of the time."

According to research from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, from 2006 to 2011, emergency department visits and hospital admissions due to Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) among seniors in Canada cost an estimated $35.7 million. Much of this is preventable. For Barbara Mintzes, the prescription is clear: "We would like to see much more attention paid to ensuring that doctors and patients are informed of new evidence of harmful side effects of medicines, and what to do to prevent them."

April Goodman heartily agrees with that sentiment.

If there's one thing I've discovered after looking closely at drug safety for over two decades, it's that people who have been through a drug disaster often become the most knowledgeable educators about the issue. These citizen experts can and do help educate the people around them to the dangers that could come via a simple pill.

April Goodman, who has become extremely knowledgeable about fluoroquinolones, is a good example. She told me, "You have to be the CEO of your own health."

As for possible damages to teeth, she's disappointed that neither Health Canada nor the US FDA has added that specific warning to the labels for these drugs. She has collected numerous articles warning of the potential for dental harm. "Many people, even young ones, are losing their teeth and get dentures after this Cipro harm." With all the dangers she's become aware of, she thinks that it might be time to pull the plug on this entire class of drugs. "I don't think this is something that should be still on the market now."

Alan Cassels studies and writes about pharmaceuticals. He currently works at UBC.

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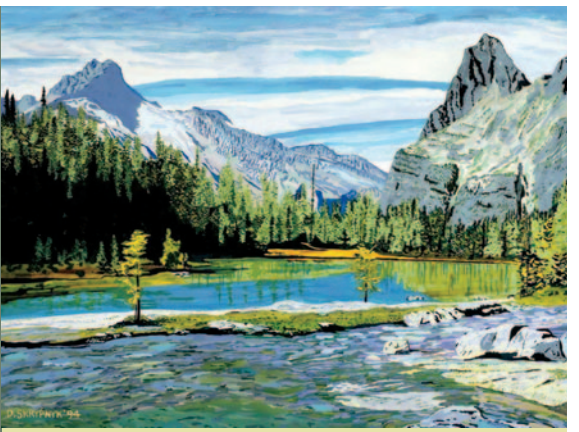

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Dylan Thomas and his sacred geometry go surfing

KATE CINO

This Coast Salish artist combines traditional training with self-directed studies in mathematics, Buddhism and Islamic art.

Indigenous artist Dylan Thomas is flying high this summer. Fluttering in the breeze above Victoria's busy streets are his prize-winning banner series. These four unique images tell traditional stories about the Lekwungen People, including about the salmon cycle and Thomas' great grandmother, who was one of the last Lekwungen People born in the Old Songhees Village. At Victoria City Hall, his spectacular black-and-white geometric abstraction, "Net Work," wraps around the circular staircase. And, later this summer, at Alcheringa Gallery and Brentwood Bay Resort, his work will be shown in a group exhibition of 20 Northwest Coast artists. "Surfers Paradise: Northwest Coast Surfboards" will run from August 10 to September 21.

Anyone watching the kitesurfers twirl and dance in the air at Dallas Road can attest to the thrill of riding the waves. "Surfers Paradise" is a dramatic extension of boarding's daring and competitive culture. Each artist has the same canvas to work on: a surfboard made from Vancouver Island western red cedar. On this canvas, each artist defines their relationship to surfing—or more generally, moving across the water. First Nation territories on Canada's west coast have intimate connections with the ocean.

Alcheringa's new owner and director Mark Loria says: "I believe the artists in this exhibition will bring their own understandings of important cultural, historical, and personal connections with our coastline." The exhibit will also, he says, likely shed "a light on the colonization of contemporary surfing culture—full of competition, bravado, and corporate branding…[it will] remind us of the cultural, meditative, and practical significance of the indigenous invention of 'riding and travelling the waves.'"

Dylan Thomas looks forward to the group show at Alcheringa. "It's a chance to enjoy the camaraderie," he says, "and interact with my peers." The concept of the show is interesting, explains Thomas, because it uses a traditional medium in new ways. While respecting his heritage, he can explore a contemporary sport. Red cedar is sacred to Indigenous peoples. Made into vessels, cedar forges a conduit between water and traveller. For example, when making a functional paddle, areas touched by the paddler's hands are left unpainted. Gripping the raw wood gives a stronger connection. Thomas received this teaching from one of his mentors, Delmore Johnny.

Qwul'thilum (Dylan Thomas) is a Coast Salish artist from the Lyackson First Nation of Valdes Island. Born in Victoria in 1986, he learned his traditional culture from many sources. Thomas also studied creative writing at the University of Victoria. An avid researcher, he views historic Salish treasures in museum databases all around the world. His detailed examination of Coast Salish iconography includes the study of pre-history and other cultures. Thomas reveres Coast Salish artists like Stan Greene (b. 1952) and Susan Point (b. 1953) who revived the tradition in many mediums. Peer mentors like lessLIE and Rande Cook have been invaluable to the artist as well.

As an even younger, emerging artist, Thomas believed that each new artwork required a grand creative vision. Rande Cook brought him back to Earth, saying, "Don't think too big, it's all in the details." Cook advised his apprentice to learn and apply the nuances of the Northwest Coast aesthetics. Simple rules, like, when creating a composition, it's important to keep the weight balanced. If a line turns one way, then add another for counterbalance. "Good designs develop in a natural and organic way," says the artist.

"Sun and Stone" by Dylan Thomas, 24 x 24 inches, yellow cedar, acrylic paint

Thomas is grateful to Elaine Monds, the original owner of Alcheringa, who purchased his prints and jewellery in the early days. "You get so much rejection as a young artist," he says. "Small successes help keep you going."

The artist's first big break came in 2013. He was included in "Urban Thunderbirds: Ravens in a Material World" which opened at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria that November. Thomas shared exhibition space with Fran Dick, Rande Cook, and LessLIE.

In 2016, Thomas had a solo exhibition at Alcheringa titled "Sacred Geometry." These artworks moved beyond the well-known motifs of Coast Salish art: trigons, crescents, ovals and circles. To build the images, Thomas used mathematical principles instead of traditional symbols. He used only straight lines and circles.

"I decided to let my intuitions about geometric beauty guide every creative decision," he says. Instead of arranging animals in a puzzle-like formation, his new patterns built themselves. He was surprised and delighted to see the remarkable formations taking shape. Within a month of starting his experiments, a range of unique designs emerged. He called his new creative venture "Sacred Geometry."

> "I DECIDED TO LET MY INTUITIONS about geometric beauty guide every creative decision."—*Dylan Thomas*

Thomas works on a piece for "Surfers Paradise: Northwest Coast Surfboards"

Sacred geometry emerged from the artist's study of Coast Salish practices. However, while researching those, he became interested in other art forms, including the Tibetan mandala and Islamic tessellations. Mandalas represent the cosmos in Buddhist and Hindu cultures, and are tools for meditation. The symmetrical mandala design often includes a circle enclosed by a square, with four "gates." Tessellations are repeatable patterns consisting of a series of identical shapes. Muslim artists excel at decorating rugs, ceramics and architecture with these intricate arrangements.

That Thomas thinks deeply about art is evident in his artist's statement for the Sacred Geometry exhibit. "As I continue my studies of visual art, it seems as though the more I learn about aesthetics (i.e. the nuanced details create and emphasize beauty), the less I intellectually understand the concept; this is likely because beauty doesn't operate on the intellect and is, by nature, not rational. But it wouldn't be appropriate to call beauty *irrational* either. A far more accurate term, one used by the philosopher Ken Wilber, is trans-rational, because it seems to operate on something much deeper than the intellect, what some might call the heart or soul or spirit."

A visit to Alcheringa Gallery reveals a number of works by Thomas (besides the surfboard to be on exhibit in August), each demonstrating his unique philosophical approach. "Sun and Stone," for instance, is sand-blasted yellow cedar painted with acrylic using shapes and patterns from both Tibetan and Coast Salish styles. The palette is warm, using pigments found in nature, traditional red and black,

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along with pastel blue augmenting the woodgrain background. The basic shape is similar to a mandala, being a circle surrounded by a square, with four "gates" touching the edges. The interconnected spirals suggest a five-petal flower shape, or five-pointed star like a pentagram. The number five is believed to have regenerative and transformative power. Spirals carved in stone are found on some historic spindle whorls. The artist says he liked the juxtaposition of warm sunlight illuminating cold stone.

"Colours of Spring" introduces a new palette, using pastel tones of blue, purple and pink. Thomas appreciates how the softer shades augment the shapes in his new geometric paintings. The artist wanted a change from using saturated tones of red and black. He experimented with gouache, an opaque medium which is thicker than watercolour. But is was acrylics that delivered the warm complementary tones in "Colours of Spring." The patterns in this work come from intertwining circles of various sizes and form a tessellation. This came as a revelation to the artist, referencing his favourite Islamic art form. It's also interesting to see how the trigon shape has reappeared in the new paintings.

A dramatic acrylic painting called "Serpent Circle" on a 36-inch circular canvas echoes a drum shape. Imagery for "Serpent Circle"

"Whale Spirits" by Dylan Thomas, 24 x 24 inches, acrylic on canvas

comes from rattles and spindle whorls found in museum databases. Thomas made subtle alterations to the iconography, changing, for instance, the central humanoid face to a moon motif. A double-headed serpent connects at the top of the drum. The serpent legend comes from the Cowichan area, and the teaching encourages bravery in the face of great danger.

Finally, the acrylic painting "Whale Spirits" has a carved silver pendant in the centre. Two whales are breaching, but pinned between a boundary, perhaps feeling the stress of life in our changing oceans. The carved silver pendant reminds the artist of his early days designing jewellery with mentor Delmore Johnny. It adds a sense of circular completion to his artistic journey so far. His path continues in new directions as he pursues the wonders of sacred geometry. "I have

Serpent Circle (Wolf and Moon), by Dylan Thomas
36-inch diameter x 2.5-inch depth, acrylic on canvas

discovered a new creative world space," he says, "that I can return to over the years." And that will, no doubt, be a rich and rewarding road to travel for this talented and inquisitive artist.

Surfers Paradise: Northwest Coast Surfboards runs from August 10 to September 21, Alcheringa Gallery, 621 Fort Street, 250-383-8224, www.alcheringa-gallery.com. Other artists exhibiting include Coast Salish artists Maynard Johnny, Margaret August, Chris Paul, Chazz Elliott, Andrew Dexel, Bear Horne; Kwakwaka'wakw artists Chris Lines, Francis Dick, Jason Hunt, Trevor Hunt; Haida artists Ernest Swanson, Corey Bulpitt, Roger Smith; Heiltsuk artist KC Hall; Wulkinuxv artist Wuuhlu (Bracken Corlett); Nuxalk artist Nusmata (Jarrod Saunders); Gitxsan/Cree artist Trevor Husband; and Tlingit artist Dean Heron.

Kate Cino holds a History of Art degree from the University of Victoria. Her writing about the arts can also be found at www.artopenings.ca.

VICTORIA SUMMER Music Festival

SUBLIME SUMMER EVENINGS OF MUSIC
at Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, UVic
Concerts at 7:30 pm. Pre-concert talk: 6:40 pm

Tuesday, July 23
Pacifica Quartet, with **Jose Franch-Ballester,** clarinet

Thursday, July 25
Jose Franch-Ballester, clarinet; **Terence Tam,** violin; **Brian Yoon,** cello; **Arthur Rowe,** piano

Tuesday, July 30
Rolston String Quartet

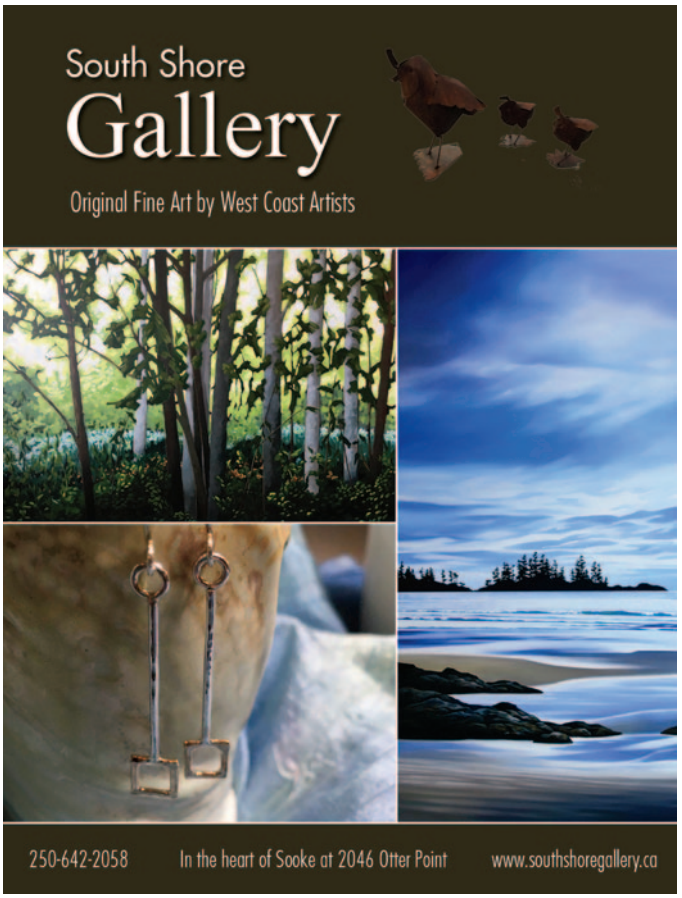
Thursday, August 1
Rolston String Quartet and **Arthur Rowe,** piano

Tuesday, Aug. 6
Ensemble Made In Canada, piano quartet

TICKETS: vsmf.org, Ivy's Bookshop (Oak Bay) & Tanner's Books (Sidney) INFO: 250-294-7778

STUDENT TICKETS
For info about a limited number of free and discounted tickets for full-time students of any age, call **250-294-7778** or visit **vsmf.org**

The Victoria Summer Music Festival gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of British Columbia, the BC Arts Council, the CRD Arts & Culture Support Service, Acoustic Pianocraft, Chateau Victoria, Digital Direct Printing, Island Blue Print, Jones Emery Hargreaves Swan LLP, Oak Bay Hearing Clinic, Tom Lee Music, Charelli's, Wild Goose Vineyards, and Winchester Galleries.



Victoria Bicycle Music Festival • July 21

I am moved as I watch an online video of last year's Victoria Bicycle Music Festival (VBMF). The combination of elements—a lovely summer's day; an ebullient pack of all-ages cyclists creating a colourful parade through neighbourhood streets; the sweet, intimate, relaxed performances of live music; audience-pedalled bike generators powering the musicians' sound equipment—well, it turns my crank.

James Davis is a co-founder and director of this third-annual, mini-music-fest-on-wheels. He's hopped off his bike, commuting home from work, to speak to me on the phone. He tells me he was so inspired by a similar event in San Francisco that he founded a Toronto version of the fest in 2007. When he relocated to Victoria, "a group of friends— people I just met—the five of us organized the first Victoria Bicycle Music Festival in July of 2017."

VBMF headliner Rae Spoon

The inaugural year of the mobile musical event went really well. "We started in Central Park, beside Crystal Pool, with a great couple of sets…rode over to Banfield Park in Vic West, had a couple of sets of music there, a dance party on that side of town—that was really great." These outdoor concerts are free, accessible to anyone; you don't have to be on a bike. Riders this year will start at Pioneer Square Downtown and tour through the city to Porter Park in Fairfield.

It's a compact festival. "We've got a very small footprint; we don't have staging, we don't set up tents, we set up everything we can fit on our cargo bikes," Davis explains.

For Davis, "Bicycling has always been my mode of transportation; I've never owned a car…I just love bikes—such an elegant, efficient, and intelligent machine."

VBMF's headliner this year will be Rae Spoon, an award-winning non-binary musician and author who has released nine solo albums spanning folk, indie rock and electronic genres. Local singer/songwriter Elder Sister Plum and the Resistance Rising Choir will also appear.

Pioneer Square (1-3pm) and Porter Park (4-6:30pm). Free to all, but helmet will be passed for the musicians during each set. vicbikemusicfest.ca for more info. *—Mollie Kaye*

"INNER STRENGTH" LUCIE MARLO, 48 X36 INCHES, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

Throughout July/August

WELCOMING LUCIE MARLO

West End Gallery

Art collectors are drawn to Lucie Marlo's work for its dynamic compositions, interplay of colours and distinctive style. Describing her painting process as a reflection on life, Lucie's recurring theme is about maintaining optimism through life's trials and tribulations. Her work is in corporate and private collections across Canada, the USA, Europe and South Africa. She now splits her time between studios in Victoria and Scottsdale, AZ. 1203 Broad Street, 250-388-0009, www.westendgallery.com.

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PURPLE LANDSCAPE GLASS VASES BY LISA SAMPHIRE

Throughout July/August

LISA SAMPHIRE

The Avenue Gallery

Lisa Samphire began her glass blowing career in 1985. Since then she has produced a diverse body of sculptural and functional pieces. Over the years she has been recognized for her work, receiving numerous awards, scholarships, teaching appointments, and commissions. In 2008, Lisa had four pieces acquisitioned by the Government of Canada for its Visual Arts Collection. In 2009, her work was selected to represent Canada at the Cheongju International Craft Biennale in South Korea. 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

"RED ROOF REFLECTED" DEBORAH TILBY, 21 X 25 INCHES, OIL ON PANEL

Throughout July/August

DEBORAH TILBY

Peninsula Gallery

Deborah Tilby is recognized as one of the top oil and watercolour painters in the country and is a senior signature member of the Federation of Canadian Artists and also of Oil Painters of America. Tilby says, "Most often I am attracted first by the light and shadows which I want to capture in a simple and painterly manner, and then by textures and detail; my struggle is to find a balance between the two…Painting is a challenge, but always fascinating and deeply fulfilling." 2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1722, www.pengal.com.

"JUST THINKING" FRANCES BECKOW, 20 X 21 INCHES, INK, GRAPHITE, TOOLS

July 16-August 3

FRANCES BECKOW: DRAW A BREATH

Gage Gallery

"Draw A Breath" connects the focus of drawing with the breath work used for calming the mind and body in meditation. The drawings in this show represent the artist's exploration of the theme that drawing is a calming and harmonious practice. Quiet, peaceful and solitary, the act of implement on surface has the effect of taking down stress and powering up creativity. Reception Sunday, August 21, 1-4pm. Tues-Sat 11am-5pm. 2031 Oak Bay Ave, 250-592-2760, wwwgagegallery.ca.

CHARLES CAMPBELL AND FARHEEN HAQ, 2019. COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS.

July 26–September 14

THE GROUND ABOVE US: CHARLES CAMPBELL AND FARHEEN HAQ

Legacy Downtown, Lekwungen territory

This collaborative project intersects the practices of Farheen HaQ and Charles Campbell as visual artists, racialized bodies and guests on Lekwungen territories. They ask the question: How does our creative work of making space for our voices and experience meet the ground and history here?

Opening reception Friday, July 26, 7-9pm. Wed to Sat 10am-4pm; Thurs 10am-8pm until August 29. 630 Yates St, 250-721-6562, www.legacy.uvic.ca.

MADRONA GALLERY

Dawn, Thunder Mountain, Nicholas Bott, 48 x 60, Oil on Canvas

COLOURS OF SUMMER X

JULY 6 - AUGUST 17, 2019

OPENING RECEPTION: SATURDAY, JULY 6TH 2019, 1 - 4 PM

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Surfer's Paradise: Northwest Coast Surfboards

One-of-a-kind red cedar surfboards reimagined by 20 artists, including Coast Salish artist Dylan Thomas (inset).

AUGUST 10 - SEPTEMBER 21, 2019

OPENING EVENT: AUGUST 10, 4 PM

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SITE 2: BRENTWOOD BAY RESORT

621 Fort St, Victoria, BC | 250-383-8224

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Victoria Summer Music Festival • July 23–August 6

The Ensemble Made In Canada: (l-r) Elissa Lee, Angela Park, Sharon Wei, Rachel Mercer

Every midsummer since 1996, the Victoria Summer Music Festival has treated its audiences to distinctive, high-calibre, evening chamber music concerts—that's 129 in 24 years—often to sold-out houses. Performers are chosen not only for their purely musical strengths but also for their ability to communicate with each other and the audience.

This season of the Victoria Summer Music Festival, artistic director Arthur Rowe is bringing several performers and groups to the festival for the first time, presenting five concerts in all.

Spanish clarinetist Jose Franch-Ballester, a recipient of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and the new clarinet professor at the University of British Columbia, will open the festival on July 23 and 25 with two concerts.

He joins the multi-award-winning Pacifica Quartet in the first performance, and for the second will be in recital with Victoria Symphony musicians Terence Tam, violin, and Brian Yoon, cello, and VSMF artistic director Arthur Rowe.

Next up, are two concerts by the Rolston String Quartet, winners of the 2016 Banff International String Quartet Competition on July 30 and August 1 (the latter with Arthur Rowe).

The final concert of the festival is Ensemble Made In Canada, which is regarded as one of Canada's premier piano quartets. Awarded the 2006 CBC Galaxie Stars Award from the Banff Centre for the Arts, EMIC was featured in 2008 *Chatelaine Magazine's* 80th anniversary issue as "Women to Watch" and an ensemble that is leading the next generation of classical musicians. Featuring Elissa Lee, violin; Sharon Wei, viola; Rachel Mercer, cello; and Angela Park, piano, these highly acclaimed musicians will perform Mosaïque Project—a suite of newly commissioned piano quartets by Canadian composers, each inspired by a particular region of Canada.

Get to concerts by 6:40pm to hear the informative pre-concert talks by the performers.

All concerts are at the Phillip T. Young Recital Hall at the University of Victoria at 7:30pm, preceded at 6:40pm talk. Tickets ($35 each with 10% off for 4 or more concerts) available online. www.vsmf.org, 250-294-7778.

—Mollie Kaye

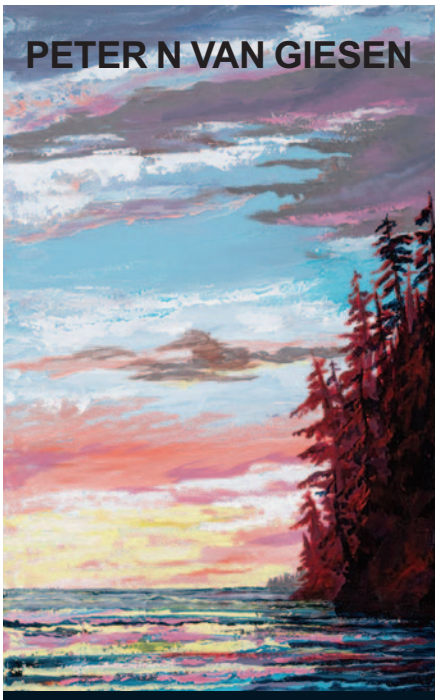
UNTITLED, SHUVINAI ASHOONA, 30 X 23 INCHES, COLOURED PENCIL AND INK, 2018

July 6–August 17

COLOURS OF SUMMER X

Madrona Gallery

In this annual exhibition, Madrona Gallery features new work from their contemporary artists and a specially curated collection of important historic Canadian art, including from the gallery's world-class collection of Inuit drawings, prints and carvings by artists such as Shuvinai Ashoona (shown here), Pudlo Pudlat and Oviloo Tunnillie. Every two weeks the exhibition is rotated to showcase new work from leading Canadian artists such as Rick Bond, Nicholas Bott, Karel Doruyter, Meghan Hildebrand and April Mackey. Opening July 6, 1-4 pm, 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.



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"FLOCK OF FINCHES" MARIA MEDINA, 48X48 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

Throughout July/August

SUMMER SELECTION

West End Gallery

A curated collection featuring Canadian artists, this vibrant group exhibition continues throughout the summer. Participating artists include: Steven Armstrong, Naomi Cairns, Rod Charlesworth, Ken Faulks, Greta Guzek, Dana Irving, Ken Kirkby, Grant Leier, Lucie Marlo, Gerda Marschall, Annabelle Marquis, Maria Medina, Elka Nowicka, Paul Paquette, Peter Shostak, Jeannette Sirois, Blu Smith, Peter Wyse and more. Plus glass and sculpture by Kathleen Black, Maryse Chartrand, Elaine Brewer-White, France Grice, Dulce Alba Lindeza, Robert Held, Tammy Hudgeon, Darren Petersen, Paul Reimer and David Thai. 1203 Broad Street, 250-388-0009, www.west-

A SCENE FROM LAST YEAR'S SOOKE FINE ARTS SHOW

July 26–August 5

SOOKE FINE ARTS SHOW

SEAParc Leisure Complex

Celebrating its 33rd anniversary in 2019, the Sooke Fine Arts Show is Vancouver Island's longest-running juried fine art show, and one of the region's premier summer arts events. The show provides the opportunity for the finest artists from Vancouver Island and BC's coastal islands to showcase and sell their work. More than 380 works of original island art will be on display in the 17,000-square-foot gallery. Daily artist demonstrations, talks, guided tours, live music, and gift shop. www.sookefinearts.com.

"PASSAGE" KAREL DORUYTER, 36 X 60 INCHES, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

July 6–August 17

COLOURS OF SUMMER X

Madrona Gallery

Every two weeks new work is rotated in from Madrona's large stable of leading artists from across Canada. Included are new works by Rick Bond, Nicholas Bott, Karel Doruyter, Meghan Hildebrand, April Mackey, John Lennard, and more. These works are complemented by historic works by the Group of Seven, Emily Carr, E.J. Hughes, Takao Tanabe, Ted Harrison, Robert Genn, and David Blackwood, as well as Inuit drawings, prints and carvings. Opening reception: Saturday, July 6, 1-4 pm, 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

"REJUVENATION" MARGARET AUGUST, SILKSCREEN ON PAPER, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Continuing to October 6

MATRIARCHS: PRINTS BY FIRST NATIONS WOMEN

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Research for an earlier exhibit made clear there was a lack of women artists represented in the AGGV collection of First Nations prints. This project, curated by Coast Salish artist Margaret August, offers a way to build the collection and also stronger relationships with the artists. August visited with the artists and shares how her own evolution as an artist is guided by these iconic Matriarchs—including Kelly Cannell, Francis Dick, Lou-ann Neel, Sage Paul, Susan Point, Marika Echachis Swan, and Carrielynn Victor. 1040 Moss St, www.aggv.ca.

PENINSULA Gallery

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THE AVENUE GALLERY

West Coast Trail III 18 x 18 acrylic on canvas

Feature Artist: Eunmi Conacher

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August 6-24
Reception Sunday
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Myfanwy Pavelic

Mirrored Selves
Within and Without

Exhibitions

Legacy Downtown
630 Yates St.
May 25-Sept 21
Wed-Sat 10-4PM
Thurs 10-8PM June-Aug

Legacy Maltwood
McPherson Library
UVic campus
May 18-Sept 15
Open library hours

University of Victoria

Legacy Art Galleries
630 Yates Street
Lkwungen Territories
250.721.6562
legacy.uvic.ca

Myfanwy Pavelic, Raincoat (Self-Portrait) (detail), 1987

"BURDENS OF WAR II" JENNY WAELTI WALTERS, 71 X 56.5 CM, LOW RELIEF PAPER CUT PRINT ON PAPER, 2003

Continuing to July 20

WOMEN ARTISTS CHANGING COLLECTIONS: RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Legacy Gallery

Art by women is egregiously under-represented in most public collections. Get acquainted with emerging and well-known women artists who are changing the Legacy collection; come to question what more can be done. Upcoming events: July 11, 7pm, "From Self Portraits to Selfies: the Psychology of Representing the Self" with Jim Tanaka (Psychology, UVic). July 25, 7pm, Patricia Bovey on "Myfanwy Pavelic in the Context of Canadian Art." Both free; seating is limited. 630 Yates St, 250-721-6562, www.legacy.uvic.ca.

Ballroom Dancing in Centennial Square, every Monday night, 7-9:30

With its reliably temperate, sunny days and an abundance of talented local performers and creative organizers, Victoria doesn't have to struggle to earn its place at the top of the list of cities where high-quality, free summer entertainment can be found. The epicentre of the city's huge array of curated offerings seems to be Centennial Square.

There are free lunchtime concerts Tuesday through Thursday from noon to 1:00pm, every week throughout the summer. There are too many bands and musicians to name, but some highlights include: July 18 with The Aerialists, a contemporary Celtic band; July 30 with "Symphony in the Summer" featuring Victoria Symphony players; and August 20 with Mildly Wild, a Jazz/Pop/R&B band.

If you're keen to do more than just listen to music, there's "Ballroom Dancing in the Square" with instructors from the Victoria Ballroom Dance Society every Monday night from 7-9:30pm, July 8-August 19. Each week, you'll get a one-hour beginners' ballroom dance lesson in a different style—jive, waltz, foxtrot, cha cha, samba, mambo—followed by a social dance accompanied by a live band or DJ. And if you have a passionate nature, try "Tango Thursdays" from 6-9pm, with a beginner lesson followed by social dancing. There are two Thursday evenings where swing dancing will switch out for tango: July 4 and August 1. All ages, bodies and abilities are welcome at these free dance events, and no partner or previous dance experience is necessary.

"Board Games in the Square" offers more sedentary Victorians two classic diversions—chess and Scrabble— every Sunday afternoon from 1-5pm, through September 29. And if you're keen to create, you might want to join in on "Crafternoons in the Square," happening on select Tuesdays from 5:15-6:15pm. On August 6, you'll find a hands-on workshop for making fresh floral crowns. On July 16 and August 20, hand-lettering on wooden signs will be offered so you can create your own home décor accent piece using carbon-transfer stencils. All supplies for these craft workshops are included, but space is limited, so arrive early to secure a spot.

For more information on these and other free events happening in Victoria this summer, see victoria.ca/cityvibe. —*Mollie Kaye*

Susannah Adams, jazz vocalist and composer

MOLLIE KAYE

Pushing towards greater authenticity, Adams is determined to write more of her own songs.

PHOTO: BILL JORGENSEN

Susannah Adams

June sunlight flares off the white-winged, bobbing butterflies busily pollinating the crops in the front yard of a James Bay heritage house. As I ride up on my bike, Victoria jazz vocalist Susannah Adams emerges from the front door, which features hand-painted doves. She gestures for me to join her at a shaded wooden picnic table set with refreshments. This tiny gem of an urban farm is her husband's creation; rabbits, ducks, quail, and chickens provide a steady percussive backdrop of clucks, crows, and chirps. "My husband's vision is to see abundance everywhere," Adams says as she pours me a glass of rose tea.

We've found a brief window to meet in between her teaching music, raising two kids, composing, performing, and, of course, helping to nurture the wee farm.

Adams is often on CBC Radio's Hot Air and Saturday Night Jazz, and has graced the stage at various music festivals, including a three-night residency at Victoria Jazz Festival. Her 2018 debut album, *As the Morning Light*, is a collection of dazzling arrangements of jazz standards and some of her original compositions, featuring Miles Black (piano), Oliver Gannon (guitar), Miguelito Valdes (trumpet), Joey Smith (bass) and Kelby MacNayr (drums).

With her cascading red hair, calm demeanour, graceful lines—all framed by tendrils of vegetation in her yard—she resembles the Art Nouveau imagery of Mucha and Klimt. I tell her this, and she appreciates the reference; she's studied art history.

Adams' conversational style is genuine, and so are her performances. For me, the irresistible appeal of her recordings blossoms from the warm intimacy she creates by being very close to the microphone, tripping lightly through surprisingly acrobatic stylings, plaintive sustained notes, and phrase accents of shimmering, emotional vibrato. Like Peggy Lee, Nina Simone, or Fiona Apple before her, Adams' technically deft, conversationally frank timbre evokes the experience of a best friend sharing the unvarnished details of her human experience—or telling you the hard truths you need to hear.

Every bit the seasoned pro at age 39, it's surprising that music wasn't Adams' earliest passion. Growing up in Britain, she studied visual arts. At 24, though, going through a rough patch, she heard recordings of Billie Holiday's "mournful, sorrowful and raw music," and says, "I really was compelled to sing, and felt so unsure of how to do that." Her sister was taking voice lessons. "I felt this pang of envy," she says. "It seemed so unattainable." Her sister shrugged and said, "Let's just find you a teacher."

At first, Adams recounts, the lessons were "more of a therapy session than anything. To release your voice is such an intimate and vulnerable place…[The instructor] listened to my woes; then, at the end of the session, I sang along to a recording of a song that was playing." In subsequent sessions, Adams asked herself, "Can I sing it without the recording?" Bit by bit, she dared to reveal more of her own interpretations and authentic voice. "After six weeks of one-on-one lessons, my teacher said to me, 'I've got gigs for this hotel, why don't we get you a gig?' I had no clue what that was about." But, she says, "There's only one way to learn, and that was to begin."

With the same open-hearted, trusting quality that later led her to shed most of her belongings and travel, at times by trans-Atlantic freighter, around the globe as a WWOOFer (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms)—and with her voice teacher along for moral support, she showed up at the hotel in a skirt and flip-flops. "I had written my lyrics in a rainbow notepad. I was there with a phenomenal pianist, singing my songs, reading from my notebook. It was my very elementary start. People liked it."

There isn't a hint of either self-congratulation or self-deprecation in her account, just a quiet awe and matter-of-fact gratitude. She calls what happened to her "luck." But she hasn't simply been a passive character in her musical evolution. "Along the way I have learned to refine," she says, "the conventions and parameters around being a performing musician—understanding what it is—and [stepping] into that role." She's reluctant to call herself a "jazz diva," but says she is "enjoying the stage aspect much more, letting more of my self come forth, freeing up a bit more and more. It's a never-ending process, really."

After her early successes as a vocalist, she moved to a new city in Britain, and "as much as I wanted to find the musicians and get back into singing again, it didn't come together for a long time." She and her Canadian husband Chris got married, intending to "travel indefinitely," working on organic farms as a couple. "Performing was not part of the footloose life," Adams says. "The music wasn't present at all."

In 2008, though, during a rare Christmas visit to Chris' Victoria parents, the couple saw a coast-to-coast snowstorm as a sign that they should maybe stay on. Adams got pregnant with their first child, and "things presented to us here." The young family decided that being neighbours with paternal grandparents, and raising kids in a city less dense and intense than London (where Adams' parents live) had appeal. "I do think it's a very good quality of life here," she says. "People are very open-hearted—not quite as cynical and jaded as they are back in Britain."

Life in Victoria has also provided new opportunities for Adams to honour her authentic passion for musical expression. After years of setting it all aside, she says, "I've met the right people…people who have taken me under their wings, and been generous with their time and helping me along." Recalling a particularly important experience at a jazz workshop in Port Townsend, Washington in 2015, she becomes emotional. "That was another pivotal moment in my life. I committed to it." She wipes away tears as she speaks. "It was a big moment of realization, that this is what I need to be doing in my life. It's not just a hobby now; this is my path."

Yet in any commitment, whether to path or person, there are times when it's hard to stay the course. Adams agrees. "You go in this spiral of 'Am I still wanting to do this?' I reaffirm, then say, 'How do I go on to the next level?'" Adams wants to avoid complacency and keep challenging herself; she's decided that original compositions are the way to do this. "That's scary. Now I'm committed to sharing my own voice at a deeper level. My aspiration is to wean myself off of singing other people's songs—other people's stories—and sing mine."

Susannah Adams performs with Roy Styffe (sax), John Lee (piano), Brock Meades (bass) and Graham Villette (drums) at Hermann's Jazz Club, July 13 at 8pm. As part of the U-Jam summer music camp, on Wednesday, July 24, 2-3:30pm, Adams leads a masterclass on jazz vocal improvisation, followed by an evening concert at 7pm. See www.susannahadams.com for more info.

Mollie Kaye started out studying fine arts and graphic design; Victoria has offered her many gifts, including the opportunity to develop her voice as a writer and singer. She thinks that was great luck.

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THE GALLERY AT MATTICK'S FARM

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June 24 – July 27
Artists reception
Saturday July 6, 1-4pm

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www.thegalleryatmatticksfarm.com

THE GALLERY AT MATTICK'S FARM

Irma Soltonovich
Of Self, Place, and Belonging
July 28 – August 25
Opening reception
Sunday August 11, 1-4pm

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

New Works by Irma Soltonovich • July 28–August 25

Horizon lines are elemental to us; humans have always had to orient to the landscape as a fundamental aspect of our survival. I look at Irma Soltonovich's paintings of abstracted horizons and see things that may or may not be there; it's a mirage, a mystery, and a map all at once. She applies paint to the canvas in calculations of sparse but effective visual cues—colours, contrasts, and geometry—so the viewer can, in a fraction of a second, place themselves into their own familiar landscape. I see specific and known places in Soltonovich's paintings the way I sometimes discover a heart in a rock on the beach, or a face in the surface of a rusting metal door.

Irma Soltonovich

Scale, style, and subject matter all must convene in harmony in order for someone's visual expression to land with viewers. Soltonovich's large, horizontal, abstract landscapes have struck such a solid chord with so many that gallery owner Dawn Casson hosts an annual solo show for the artist, regular as clockwork. "If it's August, it's Irma," Casson says, and that's all collectors need to hear in order to plan their summer holidays around the Gallery at Mattick's Farm and these shape-shifting, evocative works.

In actual fact, Soltonovich's subject matter is often drawn from the prairies of Alberta and Saskatchewan, Casson says. "She grew up in Saskatchewan; that's usually her inspiration. Warm yellows, ochres, bits of greens and reds in them…they're not super-defined…people see what they want to see. A lot of times people look at one and say, 'It's a water scene,' and another person says, 'That looks like the prairies to me.' It's in the eye of the beholder, I guess."

Soltonovich made the commitment to practicing her art full-time in 2013, after years spent painting part-time while working in the development and delivery of programs in the criminal justice field.

"Of Self, Place, and Belonging," new works by Irma Soltonovich, the Gallery at Mattick's Farm, 109-5325 Cordova Bay Rd. Opening August 11, 1-4pm, 250-658-8333, www.thegalleryatmatticksfarm.com.

—Mollie Kaye

"REACH" PHILIP MIX, 28 X 22 INCHES, OIL ON LINEN

Throughout July/August

PHILIP MIX

The Avenue Gallery

Artist Philip Mix explains his approach this way: "Every foray into the abstract realm requires a fun tactical gambit. How much reality should I omit, what can stay? Can an isocline mean one thing vertical and another when run horizontally? If the shape of a sail, normally depicted white, is filled with shadow, does the anomaly jar or intrigue? And finally, there is the most important question: is it convincing? Can I step into it and fly, or sail, away? You decide; after all, the horizon is a hands breadth at most. Hey, I thought abstracts were flat, hmmm?" 2184 Oak Bay Avenue, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

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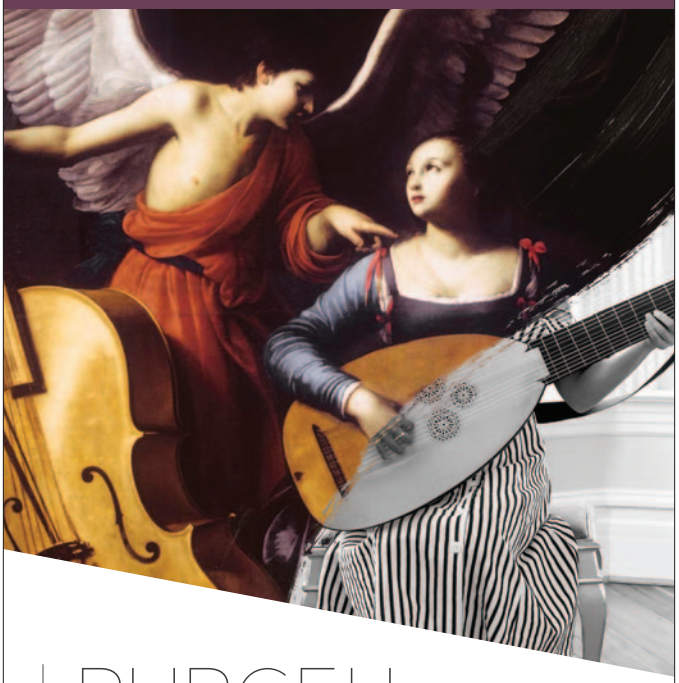

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For this year's Victoria Fringe Festival, producer Sammie Gough says there's an effort to remove whatever could stand in the way of an audience connecting with theatre. "We're working with the artists to think more about how people access their performance, and what sort of barriers might exist," she says. "We get the artists thinking about that early in their show creation process." Last year's Fringe included a show with sign language interpretation, and one offered audio-described performances. "It's something we're focusing on this year."

The overall structure of the festival always remains constant, Gough says, but "the thing that radically changes each year is who gets randomly selected in the Fringe lottery." Keeping it fresh also means that artists have begun to "create work in unconventional spaces that are site-specific…[there's] quite a cool range of spaces this year—acupuncture studio, secret alleyway hidden away in Chinatown, shopfront Downtown." The theatre work that is performed in these specific locations "is created completely in response to those spaces. That's always exciting for audiences to go to a show and have no idea if they'll be roving around and walking, or sitting down in a space, or how that performance presents itself."

Sammie Gough

Every year, Intrepid Theatre receives festival applications from 150-200 theatre companies. "Anyone who has an idea for a show can apply for the Fringe," Gough explains. "Every single Fringe fest in Canada is founded on an open-access principle. They can do whatever the heck they want with their show—no censorship. You get whatever you end up with. Could be an established touring artist, could be a new undiscovered talent; those are the kind of cool experiences you can have at the Fringe…It's a bit of a free-for-all."

The "lottery" of selecting 50 shows from the pile of applicants happens in January, Gough says. "We literally draw names out of a hat." When pressed about what we'll see this year, she's coy about revealing the lineup or giving a shout-out to any specific performance. "It's a mix of newbies and fringe favourites. We try not to highlight specific shows, just because the democratic nature of Fringe is that everyone gets to navigate it on their own terms. There's always a bit of something for everyone."

Tickets, passes and schedule available at ticketrocket.co starting August 1. Also available after August 1, 10am-5pm, Mon-Fri at Ticket Rocket, #101-804 Broughton Street. See intrepidtheatre.com for more info. *—Mollie Kaye*

"DARK ANGEL" MEL WILLIAMSON, 11.25 X 8 INCHES, OIL ON BOARD

Throughout July/August

WELCOMING MEL WILLIAMSON

Peninsula Gallery

Since Mel Williamson returned to painting after a career in design, she has won awards including "Best Work on Canvas" at the Sidney Fine Art Show in 2014. She paints in oils full-time from her studio on Salt Spring Island. Gestures and light conditions fascinate Mel: People at work, unaware of being observed, flat hazy daylight, the posture of animals, the fluorescence of hardware stores. Her main interest lies in capturing and elevating the truth expressed in small, humble moments. 2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1722, www.pengal.com.

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Water torture

GENE MILLER

Parsing the promo material for a new development near the Esquimalt Lagoon.

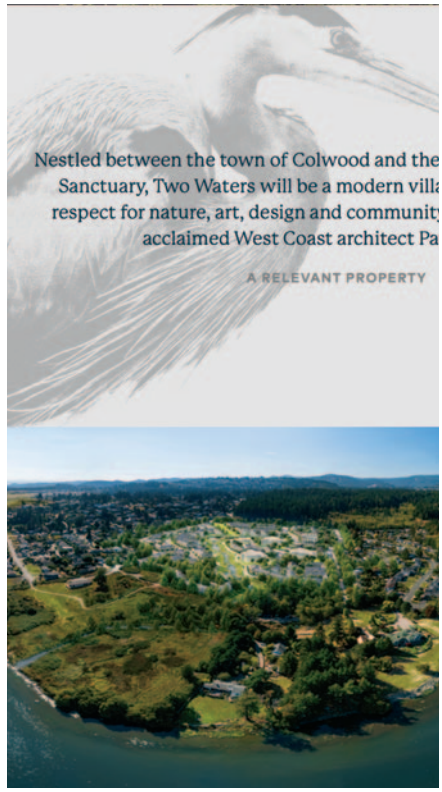
Here's a rule of thumb: when, or wherever, you see the word "nestled" in real estate advertising copy, make the sign of the cross and run at top speed in the other direction. You need nestling? Go to your partner, or the park, to your therapist, guru or support group, your pet corgi; hell, your pet rock. I urge this in behalf of the last remnant shred of authentic human emotion. That was *emotion*, not *emoticon*.

The torn genius employed by Rennie Marketing—a Vancouver-based company engaged by various real estate developers to find a route to your dreams (and your credit limit) via any orifice that can be pried open and penetrated—has advanced to Hell by at least six damnations for seduction in behalf of a new townhouse/condo project, Two Waters, that has in its crosshairs a large, verdant, ocean-side ex-paradise in Colwood bracketed by nearby standard-issue suburbs and, if Lagoon Road project signs can be trusted, other quick-sprouting projects for neighbours.

There's a whole lotta nestling going on these days in real estate promotion. Presumably, "nestled" will be claiming overtime pay because "Hidden gem!", "Opportunity knocks!", "Dreams do come true!" and "Was that an eagle calling to its young, or star-song passing over an angel's wing?" all have exhaustion breaks and time off for good behaviour.

The language in the promotional copy is skillful, self-aware and coy—if those terms don't overly contradict each other—and loaded with manufactured longing in roughly the same way that all us young guys used to protest, "No, I'm saying you're beautiful and I love you because you're beautiful and I love you, not because I want to get into your pants. Why do you always have to think I *want* something?"

Consider the totemic name of this Colwood project: Two Waters. My instincts tell me this has nothing to do with "hot" and "cold" (though "still" and "sparkling" bear further study). The project moniker pole-vaults over the likes of Meadowview Acres (never a meadow in view) or Marlene Estates (developer's girlfriend). No, this is all "one with the land," along with a conspicuous cultural and linguistic mortgage in favour of First Nations culture.



Two Waters promotional copy

Online promotional copy for this master-planned development states, in part: "We respect the land and each other. We carry the responsibility of stewardship. We share resources and nature." Definitely that "nestled" guy, finally off the crystal meth but now clearly high on grass and kumbayah.

The heraldic logo for the project, which floats at the edges of a full-page newspaper ad and a promotional mailer, both of which now sit in front of me, features two sets of wavy lines drawn at right angles to each other, encircled by "Two Waters In Balance."

Balance. What is balance? Sounds like a good thing, like something you need and from which you would benefit. Ironists might claim "balance" should never be caught untethered from "bank;" but, then, that kind of cynicism is just heartbreak's porch door. In today's world of multiplying angers and rising dangers, and trapped, as we are, in a global community whose last shred of equipoise could vanish in a risky heartbeat, "balance" is powerful cultural code. The word invokes a mountain of Zen-inflected ooga-booga and is, of course, enshrined in the Victoria Charter of Rights, Vibes and Gimmes. It has enormous market heft because it all but claims parentage from some holy book. Remember the good old days (I'm casting back to the '70s and '80s) wearing your "truth face" to advertise your rarified spiritual credentials, and to get laid? Kind of like that. "Balance," in other words, is a t-shirt, a bumper sticker, the adult option, I suppose, to "Paint With Rainbows."

"A new vision of community begins with a bird's eye view," warbles the full-page ad. And there, just beside the aerial photograph of the property, and within reach of the gag-worthy banner "It will take a village" (I swear I'm not making this up), is a picture of a heron in profile—clearly on the payroll for now, but soon to be served with a scram notice when the 'dozers start to rumble. Is that a heartbroken, prefigurative tear rolling from its eye down its long beak? Can't quite tell.

But wait: the copywriter moves way past all this manipulative child's play with a statement in the mail-piece so mystical, ambiguous, recondite, code-loaded and indivisible that you might easily conclude its various claims had been annealed in Heaven's smithy:

"Today, progressive living is as much about thoughtful architecture and design as it is about sustainable practice."

…There's a tricksome little smile on your face. You've just pulled the cork on a very decent white; the hints-of-brown-sugar sockeye and your secret-spiced mustard greens will be ready soon; the killer Caesar salad's already on the candlelit table; and once again you have perfectly timed the cork pop with the punch line of your by-now-patented ski adventure story about being chased by and outrunning, actually out-skiing, ha-ha, a mini-avalanche rumbling down the slope mere feet behind you. Your brother and his new (second) wife are over; so are neighbours Ben and Elissa from the next building (you've bonded over herbicide-free landscaping).

You hope tonight you can shoulder-check your brother if, a glass or two in him, he starts in again with that anti-bike-lane rant. Besides, you have an important announcement to

make about the Canada/Mexico inter-cultural project that you've been working on for two years….

Ahhh, progressive living!

I'll attempt a less novelistic deconstruction. "Progressive living" is code for a lucky life—the life you want for yourself—filled with self-celebration, apotheosis, the happy marriage of intelligence, education and good taste, all of it validated and made worry-free by a terrific income and a gilt-edged investment portfolio. "Living the dream" is a passable colloquial synonym.

As for the rest of that Two Waters promotional meta-poetry above, consider: how could you possibly see anything in your mind's eye but those two cha-cha-ing pixies of "thoughtful architecture and design" (to be fair, the project is designed by brilliant architectural practitioner Paul Merrick) and "sustainable practice?" On closer inspection, those pixies appear not just to be dancing, but copulating, for God's sake!

Wal-Mart, by the way, if blunter and slightly less iambic, is no less aspirational: "Save Money, Live Better."

Real estate has always been about better tomorrows, a projection of some hidden you yearning for release and expression. The text, the written thesis, of Two Waters hypothesizes and then beckons to a you still capable of emotional sunrise, innocence, hope for the future and strong skills of bad-news management; that is, insulation from today's abrasive social noise and all those worrying headlines. Honestly, what is a home if it can't keep risk at bay?

René Girard, French philosopher of social science, developed a theory of mimetic desire. That is, we borrow our desires from others. Far from being autonomous, our desire for a certain object or experience is always provoked by the desire of another person—the model—for this same object. This means that the relationship between the subject and the object is not direct: there is always a triangular relationship of subject, model, and object. In the case of Two Waters, the voice or persona of the promotional material itself has skillfully appropriated the model role.

So, you've made up your mind? You're going to buy in Two Waters beside the Esquimalt Lagoon? Best to give a read first to David Wallace-Wells' new book, *The Uninhabitable Earth—Life After Warming*, just so you have a good feel for the melting speed of the Arctic Ice Sheet and its likely impact on sea rise. After all, you don't want to buy near-waterfront only to discover you're the chagrined owner of a float-home.

Also, news junkie that you are, you will have noticed that demagoguery and autocracy, not democracy, is a growing global political trend led, and cheer-led, by that orange-haired sociopath south of us. Frankly, given mounting prospects for international fisticuffs anywhere, at any scale, Two Waters might do well appealing to our need for safety as well as lifestyle: "Today, progressive living is as much about an assured berth in Two Water's fully stocked underground bomb shelter as it is about the cornucopian food-and-medicine survival kit included with every home…and an added thoughtful touch: a 'surrender' flag in every front hall closet."

I know, doesn't quite have that ring. Those two poor pixies, backs now bent in defeat and sorrow. But trust me: when slogans like "Make America Great Again" are working, it's a sign that little else is.

Oh, if I may indelicately remind you: Trump is a property developer.

Two Waters whispers a solemn promise to return you to a lost paradise when nature was your friend and partner, and was the source of material and spiritual bounty. Two Waters pledges to restore some utterly lost harmony.

Crippled nature, unfortunately, has retreated, its very essence jeopardized by human intervention.

Retreated, but not utterly or permanently—Genesis 3:19 (King James Version): "…for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The ultimate real estate advertising headline, if you think about it.

Founder of Open Space and *Monday Magazine*, Gene Miller once ran an advertising agency in Victoria (Broughton Communications Group).

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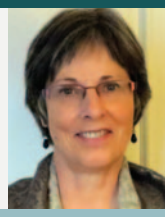

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A place of refuge

MALEEA ACKER

A deep and abiding love for ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲/John Dean Park is evident in the stewardship work of volunteer Jarrett Teague.

In old growth stands of Douglas fir and cedar, interspersed with sunlit, mossy meadows of Garry oak and arbutus, Jarrett Teague is surveying a landscape that he's helped restore into an archetype of Southern Vancouver Island. Free of mature Scotch broom and other invasives, it looks largely as it did before colonization. In winter, rains blanket the park's forests and trails; in spring, calypso orchids dot the mountain's slopes. This past May, the W̲SÁNEĆ name for John Dean Provincial Park, ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲ (pronounced Tlay will nook), was officially recognized and added to the park's moniker; Teague was thrilled to see the acknowledgement of a place that has helped sustain him for decades.

Over the last 30 years, Teague has logged nearly 13,000 hours of volunteer work in ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲/John Dean, which includes a sacred mountain on the Saanich Peninsula that once sustained the W̲SÁNEĆ peoples during the Great Flood millennia ago. In 2012, Teague was named BC Parks Volunteer of the Year. This past May, his 30-year restoration and caretaking efforts were recognized in the Provincial Legislature by MLA Adam Olsen.

In my interview with him at a Tim Horton's this spring, Teague at first seems reserved, in fact he stops speaking as soon as I begin to write notes. But he visibly relaxes over the course of our chat. About an hour into the interview, I ask him what he remembers of me. Over three decades ago, we were students together at Sidney Elementary. We haven't had contact since, but somehow we both recall one another. He was a dark-eyed kid; he took things seriously. He wanted to do good. Perhaps we recognized this in one another. He answers my question easily: "I knew you had good parents." It is a moment that has stayed with me since.

Teague isn't a stranger to good shepherding. A 22-year service member with the Canadian Forces and a father of three, he's been a doting caretaker of ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲ since 1989. "I used to spend hours on ivy removal, and I'd watch the sun move the whole way over," he gestures, and looks up, as if into a forest canopy. "Different lights, winds, birds. If you're there for that long, you really know it."

ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲/John Dean Provincial Park was established in 1921, when John Dean donated most of his 100-acre property to the Crown. Subsequent donations through the 1900s brought the park's size up to 173 hectares, encompassing the summit of Mount Newton and its surrounding forest. A "Class A" park, it was one of the first in BC developed by Forest Rangers for open access by the public; some of its trails are almost 100 years old.

Teague, who is a fourth-generation Vancouver Island resident, now lives in East Sooke, but grew up in North Saanich. "In grade six, I did some scouting in the park. I learned how to light a fire in the rain with two matches. By grade nine, I found the Friends of John Dean and started working with them." Building trails, picking up garbage, preventing erosion and pulling invasive species, Teague quickly became enamoured with the park and its history. He has published two books on the history of John Dean, *John Dean's Cabin Diary*, and *Camp 20*, a history of both ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲/John Dean and BC's other Provincial Parks.

Jarrett Teague clears tree roots from a path in the park following a storm

Mount Newton's original name, ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲, means "place of refuge." As Adam Olsen tells the story, XÁLS, the Creator, caused a great flood to occur, and told the W̲SÁNEĆ people to prepare themselves. Many gathered their belongings and wove a long cedar rope to attach to their canoes. As the flood waters rose, the people paddled to the highest mountain nearby, ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲, and tied their canoes to an arbutus tree, surviving the flood. Today, both the mountain and the tree are sacred (arbutus is not cut or burned by W̲SÁNEĆ peoples). W̲SÁNEĆ means "the emerging people," which comes from the sight of their land emerging in the distance after the flood.

For Teague, work in the forest is also spiritually significant. He has served two tours of duty overseas in Afghanistan, as well as circumnavigating the globe with the Royal Canadian Navy. The second tour, in Kabul, was uneventful, but the first, to Afghanistan in 2002, left him shaken. "I was like a mouse in a shoebox," he says. He demurs using the term PTSD, preferring to call it being "wound up." For the summer after his return, he spent much of every other day at ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲. "It helped me decompress and heal from the experience," he says.

> "I REALIZE I only have 50 more Junes left. It spurs me to enjoy the day, to think about what [the park] will be like in 100 years, and what it was like 100 years ago."
>
> —*Jarrett Teague*

Teague's time with the military has influenced his management of the park in prominent ways. He refers to his two-hour commute to and from East Sooke as his "deployment." He has a system to keep track of tasks that need doing in the park: a piece of garbage in the park for 45 days or longer is a "debt;" fewer than 45 days and it's a "deficit;" when he picks it up, it's "paid in full." These categories apply to invasive species, trail washouts, or signage in need of repair (he takes down, dries, sands, paints and reinstalls all 32 signs in the park with new hardware on a yearly basis). He has spreadsheets to keep track of each task. BC Parks often comes to him for advice.

Teague's organizational skills keep him functioning as a manager, rather than reacting. "When you're reacting," he explains, "you're dealing with the obvious, and you're missing the details. Everything becomes a priority." His professional discipline has inspired the trust of local history keepers. He was gifted with retired BC Park Ranger Davey Davidson's photographs and records of both Manning and John Dean parks. Much of his learning was done at the side of elder volunteers for the Friends of John Dean Park. "I feel I've really lost that generation of people who knew me," he muses. "They affected me."

Teague, at 43, isn't as concerned about a succession plan for his work as some of the volunteers I've profiled in this column. He has no intention of letting go his post. But he is acutely aware of the passage of time. "I realize I only have 50 more Junes left. It spurs me to enjoy the day, to think about what [the park] will be like in 100 years, and what it was like 100 years ago." This musing about time has led him to expand from restoration to teaching. He now leads Scout and Beaver troops along the same paths he was led along. His children are also learning with him. "It's kind of a neat feeling for me to see [my son] discovering and connecting with the park. I don't have to make him, or teach him; he's just doing it on his own."

Upon Teague's retirement from the military, which is an option in 2020, he plans to study as a horticultural technician, revelling in the opportunity to work in Royal Roads' gardens as part of his training.

On May 2, 2019, MLA Adam Olsen supported passage of a bill to honour the sacred mountain through addition of the WSÁNEĆ name to the park. During his speech, Olsen briefly lost his composure. Thanking the students from the Tribal School and Cordova Bay Elementary for the petition that spurred the change, he wiped away tears. "That's the first time that's happened," he murmured to a colleague at his side, before continuing. Teague also recounts the moment in his blog, "at exactly 11:19:45 am, the new name "ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲/John Dean Park" was spoken in the Legislature, it sounded perfect and beautiful…"

More information on ŁÁU,WEL̲NEW̲/John Dean Park and its history can be found on Jarrett Teague's website, www.johndeanpark.com.

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

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TRUDY DUIVENVOORDEN MITIC

There are lessons we need to learn about the meaning of "consultation."

If there's any word that's undergone a moulting of sorts in these modern times, it's the now politically overused and clichéd term *consultation*. Not so long ago this was a respected word, a solid and honest word that intimated the benefits of putting two or more heads together to discuss an idea or plan with the goal of making it a better one. Then Politics started watering it down.

In the last few years I've grown increasingly more curious and cynical about government consulting, a now ballyhooed process that mostly seems to happen with First Nations and environmentalists, and mostly when huge, land-razing projects are on tap. What do they talk about? Is the process respectful and meaningful? Are both sides equally weighted in authority and stature, and are the initiators prepared to make concessions? How do they achieve a workable consensus? When someone talks, does anyone really listen?

First Nations protest Trans Mountain Pipeline

When the prime minister says he still needs more time to "engage in meaningful consultation" with First Nations before finally announcing the decision he's already made on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, what is it that he still needs to do? Talk people to the brink of exhaustion and capitulation? Offer incentives, the way my dad long ago offered a case of beer to the highway snowplough driver for taking a quick veer up and down our hopelessly plugged lane? (We used to call that "bribery" back then.) Is the exercise of political "consultation" mostly a charade that we all play along with? Are we satisfied with just the optics of due diligence?

It's not hard to imagine the hodgepodge of authoritarian tactics governments might once have used to get business interests rolling, colonial-style, on Canada's vast tracts of territorial land. But that would have been curbed in 1982, when former prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau amended the Canadian Constitution to include Section 35, which cemented the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canadian law.

That forced governments at all levels to begin developing careful protocols for consultation, a trickier process in British Columbia because 95 percent of our province is still unceded territory, meaning that the land claims, treaties and ownership of almost the entire 944,735 square kilometres have yet to be sorted out. Consultation became a fine dance for governments because, while they typically want to discuss ways to get a mine going or a pipeline pushed through on a particular tract of land, First Nations communities ensconced on that land are astutely more interested in first raising their ownership issues, a deviation that can end up in a legal battle that stalls projects for years.

All this has reshaped the exercise of consultation, especially after several court cases around fishing, hunting and forestry all ruled in favour of First Nations. The latter, a 2004 Supreme Court case involving a forestry dispute with the Haida Nation, reinforced Canada's constitutional "duty to consult" with First Nations on any and all decisions that affect them. You would think that would count for a lot, at least legally if not morally.

But here we are, with the Pandora's box that is our Trans Mountain pipeline. The federal government is champing for its expansion, and the National Energy Board—its in-house "regulator" of all things relating to non-renewable energy—has twice conducted public consultation, and twice dutifully recommended in favour of expansion.

The first hearing was so flawed in its consultation and environmental assessment processes that the Federal Court of Appeal flatly overturned its recommendation last August. Justice Eleanor Dawson, who presided over the ruling, rebuked the Crown for its failure to engage in meaningful consultation, amounting to little more than note-takers of the proceedings. "The meeting notes show little or no meaningful responses…to the concerns of the Indigenous applicants," she wrote.

That forced a hurried second round of consulting that, not surprisingly, drew considerable skepticism from First Nations participants. To no one's surprise, the NEB announced last February that the pipeline expansion could again go ahead, adding that its "considerable benefits" justify "the likely significant adverse effects" it will someday wreak on our coastal and marine ecology.

So much for putting heads together.

What frustrates even more is the Crown's apparent presumption that, except for First Nations people and the clusters of protesters who show up at disputes, the rest of Canada is in accord. But that's where the Crown is seriously misguided. First Nations issues are everyone's issues. Environmental degradation hurts everyone.

There's been so much consultation, and so little real talk. But these are pivotal times, and an election looms. So do the summer fires. We'll see how that all goes.

Writer Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic was not surprised when, on June 18, the pipeline expansion was approved by the Canadian government. See Briony Penn's column in this edition for more on the Trans Mountain pipeline issue.

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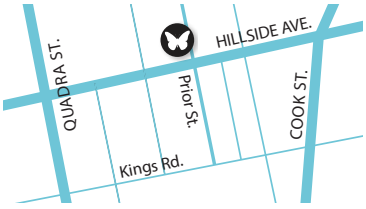

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