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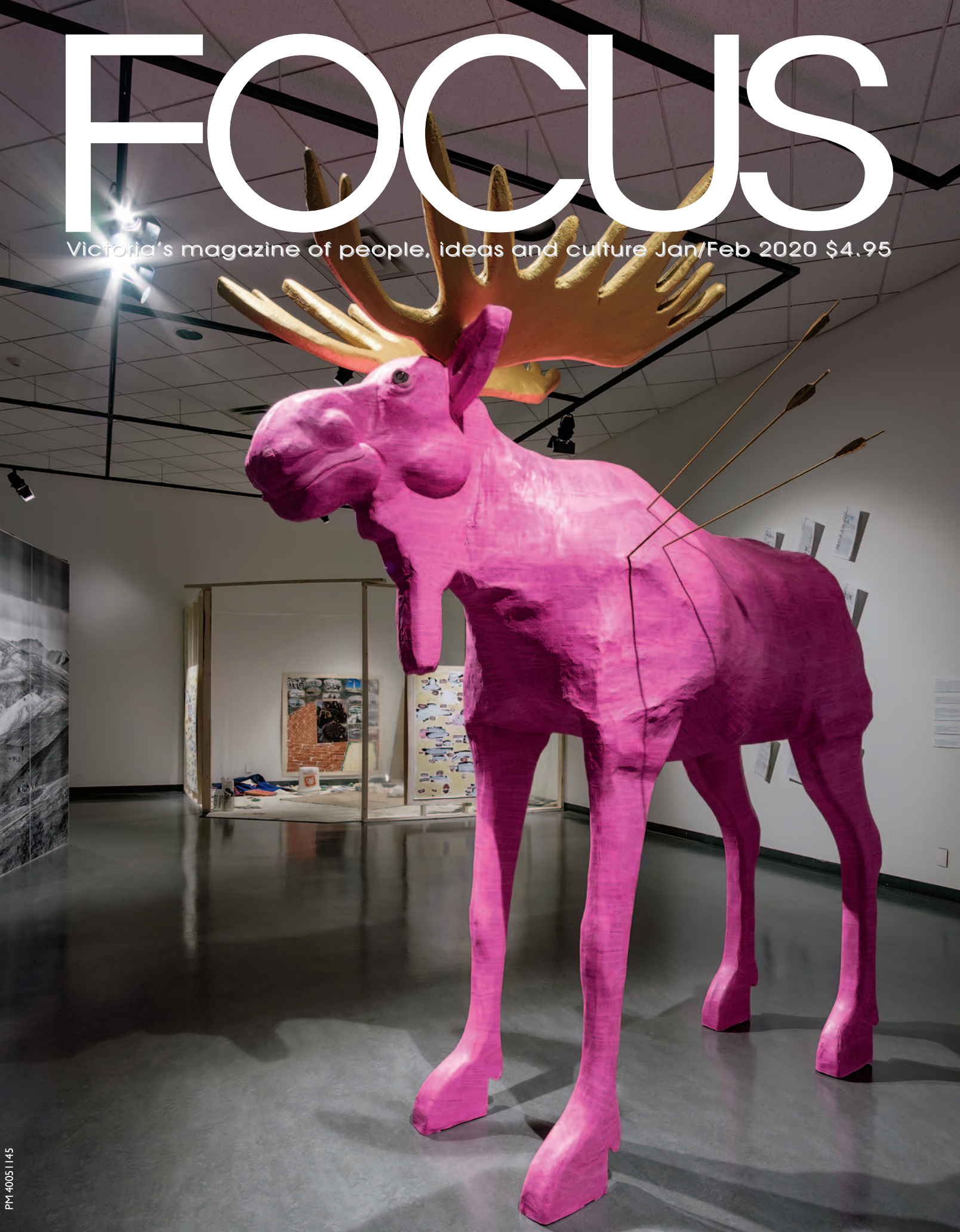

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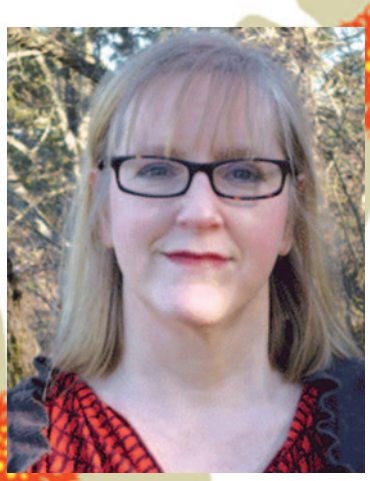

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ON THE COVER

Photograph by Devon Lindsay of an installation at the AGGV's exhibition by Yukon First Nations "To Talk With Others." The pink moose is "Bull's Eye" by Lianne Charlie, plywood, styrofoam, chicken wire, construction adhesive, newsprint, glue, pink paper, wallpaper paste, gold metallic wax, blown glass, Model Magic, and the Umbrella Final Agreement. See story on page 36.

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The 2020s: time for transformation

LESLIE CAMPBELL

The biodiversity and climate crises are a reflection of our culture's emphasis on economic growth.

While I won't be alive when the worst effects of the climate and biodiversity crises play out, children born today will be; and I think we owe it to them to be clear-eyed and fierce in our efforts to leave them a healthy planet. This edition of *Focus*, our entry into a pivotal new year and decade, provides thought-provoking reporting and analysis about the challenges of growth in the region, and what we are and are not doing to maintain the natural world on which we depend.

PHOTO: NASA

Like *Focus*' writers, Greta Thunberg is a refreshing witness to our current situation because she doesn't skirt around the truth. At last September's UN Climate Action Summit, she famously told world leaders, "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"

It seems apparent that "business as usual"—especially eternal economic growth—is a recipe for the end of much that we cherish on this planet. Many species are going extinct with predictions of more to come as climate change wreaks its havoc. Our own species may have difficulty feeding itself, and many parts of the Earth will simply become too hot and dry for habitation. As Stephen Hume writes in this edition, sea level rise and flooding will progressively render coastal areas unliveable. Climate refugees are already searching for new homes and will grow in numbers, challenging the rest of us to make them welcome.

As disasters unfold, however, our GDP (Gross Domestic Product), as a measure of economic activity, will go up. This shows the inadequacy of the GDP as a yardstick of well-being or progress, and certainly of sustainability. Even the economist who developed it in 1934 warned it couldn't be considered an indicator of well-being. Through the decades, its ups and downs have been reliably in synch with ecological destruction. It has always been easy to notice that rising GDP or economic growth comes with noise, waste and pollution, and that it is perfectly compatible with worsening poverty. But the reality that economic growth also ripped up the Earth and its ecosystems—and warmed the atmosphere—was somewhat hidden behind the scenes. Science and the environmental movement have removed our blinders. We now know (or should) that infinite growth on a finite planet is beyond unsustainable, it's disastrously destructive.

Many advocate replacing the GDP with other yardsticks as a truer reflection of the well-being of a population—from Bhutan with its Gross National Happiness, to University of Waterloo's Canadian Index of Wellness. The Green New Deal seems to have a more holistic approach, as does the "triple bottom line." And there's a growing chorus in support of a "steady state economy" or "degrowth." Proponents include the likes of E.O. Wilson, Jane Goodall, and David Suzuki.

According to the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, "In a steady state economy, people consume enough to meet their needs and lead meaningful, joyful lives without undermining the life-support systems of the planet. They choose to consume energy and materials responsibly, conserving, economizing, and recycling where appropriate…Personal and societal decisions about how much to consume take into account sustainability principles and the needs of future generations."

Technological progress still exists in such a vision, but is driven by the need for better goods and services, as opposed to quantity.

A UK scholar, Joe Herbert, takes it a step further, writing: "degrowth argues for establishing more localized economies, which reduce the reliance on high-emission international trade flows. By strengthening the role of co-operatives, solidarity and sharing economies, production processes could be democratically organized around social and ecological well-being, rather than the resource-insatiable profit motive…degrowth not only provides a practical route out of climate breakdown but also offers the prospect of simpler, more fulfilling ways of living, where more time can be dedicated to community, relationships and creative pursuits. To reframe [Robert] Kennedy's words, degrowth truly has the power to prioritize the things which make life worthwhile."

On the other hand, a system which relies on continual growth will continue to exploit the planet's natural resources, destroying ecosystems and the atmosphere that supports us all. As David Broadland shows in this edition, we are trashing our coastal forests, a natural gift, centuries in the making. The BC government and industry brag that such forestry—much of it in the form of raw logs shipped to Asia—is our largest export and a valued contributor to our GDP. But as David's numbers illustrate, given an accounting of the carbon emissions involved, it is utterly nonsensical, resulting in a "carbon bomb" surpassing even that of the oilsands. Moreover, we are blowing the opportunity for an incredible carbon capture and storage system. Our forests, if re-imagined, could transform BC and Canada's carbon footprint and the well-being of future generations.

THE HIGH LEVEL OF CONSUMPTION we in the developed nations engage in results in high levels of global CO_2 emissions. Even our purchases of electric vehicles and solar panels have both emissions and other environmental costs associated with them, as they involve resource extraction, manufacturing, and shipping. Every time the Earth is forced to cough up more resources, biodiversity is impacted.

The luxury condos we've gained throughout Greater Victoria add to the biodiversity and climate crises. Often marketed to wealthy people from away, often as second homes which they will fly to and from regularly, they strain our infrastructure and have immense environmental costs. The planet and our communities would be better off densifying existing housing stock by encouraging single-family homeowners to host secondary suites and garden suites through innovative programs. Could the CRD or BC Housing help launch

> "WE ARE IN THE BEGINNING of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"
>
> —*Greta Thunberg*

local industries to make modular or tiny-home garden suites that could be rented or purchased by homeowners willing to rent to others at an affordable (but not money-losing) rate? Right now it's simply too costly for most homeowners to finance such homes themselves.

While there's a growing call for a stable or steady-state economy that works for everyone, you won't find many politicians advocating anything but continual economic growth. In fact, any proposal that might cause just the *rate* of growth to decline, risks condemnation. This helps explain why, for instance, at the municipal level, virtually all development is welcomed with open arms by city councils (see stories by Judith Lavoie, Briony Penn, and Ross Crockford). Most of them appear to believe growth is always good—so it's up to us to educate them, or vote them out of office.

At the provincial and federal levels, the growth-is-good philosophy plays out in the abuse of forests and the continuing subsidies to the oil and gas industry (see Russ Francis in this edition).

Canada's GDP largely parallels our greenhouse gas emissions which, on a per capita basis, are more than double that of the average of G20 nations. Relevant to coverage in this edition, the Climate Transparency organization highlighted this observation: "In order to stay within the 1.5°C limit, Canada needs to make the land use and forest sector a net sink of emissions, e.g. by halting the expansion of residential areas and by creating new forests." And it's critical to start making such changes in 2020, says the research body.

But it will be far from easy, and perhaps that's why, once people get elected to office, they do things like buy an oil pipeline or encourage a bigger tax base through carbon-intensive development.

Such government decisions mean our role as citizens, actively encouraging wise, far-sighted policy change, is our most important role. While there are other things we can do at a personal level—from eating a plant-based diet to foregoing fossil-fuel-powered travel and home heating—the larger part of our per-capita footprint comes from our *collective* economy and the reality that 76 percent of the energy that supports it is from fossil fuels. Taken together, Canadian industries, institutions, the jobs they create and the taxes they and their employees pay, provide public health care, education, transportation infrastructure, waste management, care homes, pensions, social assistance, and on and on. We all benefit from Canada's collective, carbon-intensive economy. Transforming it will not be easy or comfortable.

I think it's safe to predict the 2020s will be a decade of transformation for us all, on many levels. A well-informed public is crucial to make that transformation happen, so *Focus* will continue to work on that front—aided by our readers. As our "Readers' Views" section makes clear, you have a lot to contribute to the discussion.

Editor Leslie Campbell wishes *Focus* readers all the best in 2020, mindful that the best things in life are free, including a sense of community, peaceful times in nature and with friends, meaningful work, watching kittens play…

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The Iyengar Yoga Centre may be new to you but it has been offering Iyengar yoga classes in Victoria for 40 years, originally at the YM/YWCA, and, for the past 18 years, on Fort Street. Impeccable teaching and unparalleled service to its students and community are at the heart of everything it does.

The Centre takes time training teachers—three years in fact to be a certified Iyengar teacher at the first level. The Centre's 22 teachers instruct 350 students a week in two beautiful studios in downtown Victoria above the Blue Fox Cafe. "We bring students together with remarkable teachers in a method that supports all ages and stages of life," says General Manager Wendy Boyer.

Improved energy levels, strength, posture, mobility and emotional wellbeing are some of the benefits of Iyengar yoga. While Iyengar yoga is not a "quick-fix" for health problems or conditions, those who practice report they eat better, sleep better and feel better overall.

In an increasingly busy world, Iyengar yoga can act as an antidote to the stress of daily life. "Many studies have supported the potential of yoga to decrease physical pain and prevent disease," notes Boyer.

One of the misconceptions about yoga is that you have to be fit and flexible to do it. Not true. Iyengar yoga teaches students at all levels of flexibility and fitness to build strength, stability and stamina over time. "Students report that they are getting stronger and more flexible even with one class a week," says Boyer.

Iyengar classes run for 60-90 minutes in a group setting. The size of each class varies. Students begin yoga at varying ages, capabilities and levels of fitness. In most classes you will practice a series of standing and sitting poses, to learn the structure of poses. Shoulders, hips and spines respond quickly to yoga. Students experiencing anxiety and stress say that Iyengar yoga helps them feel calmer.

The rewards are many. Students find that the more they practice yoga, the more it helps them. As a result, the more they want to practice.

The Iyengar Centre provides mats and all the props. All you need to bring is yourself.

The Iyengar Yoga Centre offers 42 classes per week. While an Iyengar yoga class for beginners is a great place to start if you are new to yoga, classes include Levels 1-4; 50+; Remedial; Transition; and Restorative. Check the website for classes which are offered seven days a week. And, your first class is free.

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Journalism refugia

Thank you *Focus* for persisting in maintaining a "Journalism Refugia" from whence so many of southern BC's endangered investigative journalists can disseminate information into the rest of the world. I always end up reading every word in every issue with great relish for the well-researched, straightforward, illuminating and expertly written articles.

Jo Phillips

Easter Island 2.0

In reading Leslie Campbell's "Tug-of-war over school lands," followed by David Broadland's "An insurance policy against the failure of local climate action plans," then "Density on trial" by Ross Crockford and "The vanishing ancient forests of Vancouver Island" by Stephen Hume—all in addition to Leslie Campbell's Sept/Oct article "Strong sanctions needed for destroying public records" and Stephen Hume's "The Cowichan River: loving and logging it to death"—I hit upon a *Eureka* moment.

What Saanich and Victoria (though not excluding other regions, up to and including the federal government) are embarking on is nothing less than Easter Island Redux (or the more up-to-date nomenclature Easter Island 2.0). Those unfamiliar with the collapse of the civilization of Easter Island can google it.

In essence, we have an unresponsive leadership, set on one course and only one course, and sadly with the encouragement of the general population, by non-participation or active support or ignorance. We use our renewable forests and fisheries much faster than they can regenerate for either future use or as carbon sinks. We throw off any natural systems by the simple expedient of wiping out keystone species and introducing foreign species (Victoria is the second "rattiest" city in BC).

We build our version of Easter Islanders' "Moai" but we call them condos and high-rises, all the while encouraging a steady (if not cascading) influx of people, testing Greta Thunberg's "Fairytales of eternal economic growth." The only prerequisite seems to be BC—Bring Cash.

With a willful series of municipal councils, provincial and federal governments, all of which pay lip service to the "climate emergency," we are as lemmings.

Richard Weatherill

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Tug-of-war over school land in Fernwood

I was interested to read Leslie Campbell's article on the proposed CRHC housing development in Fernwood. I understand the development will include a childcare facility operated by Fernwood NRG, as well as 154 units of below-market-rate housing. I also understand that this childcare facility will likely be part of the $10/Day pilot program, and workers there will likely be represented by BCGEU.

As an early childhood educator (ECE) and an activist for economic justice for childcare workers, I encourage Fernwood residents to consider that a housing development such as this is absolutely necessary if the community wants low-cost childcare in the neighbourhood. Childcare wages in Victoria are very low: for example, Fernwood NRG advertised a childcare position recently at just $16/hour, while ECEs at local non-profits represented by BCGEU make around $19-21/hour. Current childcare policy sets a low goalpost of raising wages to $25/hour for ECEs within ten years (yes, you read that right, $25/hr within ten years), while increasing wages for non-credentialed childcare workers is even less of a political priority.

This means that an experienced ECE working full-time at a facility like the one in the proposed development meets current CRHC eligibility requirements, and will be able to apply for a housing unit in the development. It also means that ECEs in the Fernwood area, and other working people rendering useful services, are currently totally screwed for housing. Take a quick look at rental listings in Fernwood and surrounding areas, compare them with the wages above, and you'll understand why there is a shortage of childcare workers and low-income workers generally.

So: want affordable childcare in the neighbourhood? You need to either pay childcare workers a wage that matches up with living expenses—in Victoria, $28/hour is the current "rental wage," the wage at which workers can afford market rent—or subsidize our housing. If the community chooses to do neither, you can expect the shortage of experienced ECEs to continue and get even worse as older staff isolated from the housing crisis retire, and rent marches upwards four percent each year while wages don't.

Suzanne DeWeese, ECE

Density on trial

Change is inevitable; unfettered change is not. A 2017 *Victoria News* article remembering Peter Pollen—Victoria's mayor for eight years in the 1970/80s—states, "During his time…Peter kept a phone book in his office that had a photo on the cover of Vancouver's skyline…It was an image he didn't want for Victoria." The article noted that the Hallmark Society—the region's oldest preservation group—honoured Peter with an award of merit for his contribution to heritage preservation."

Regrettably, City Hall has long since abandoned Pollen's measured and sensible approach toward Victoria. With today's condos-first agenda—out with the old and never mind the sustainable—Lisa Helps and her council have taken Victoria's aesthetic and functional demise to the next level.

Helps sees herself as an anti-global-warming activist and spends millions on bike lanes, but the growth she encourages effectively grinds ever-increasing amounts of traffic practically to a halt, thus ensuring ever increasing amounts of emissions from congestion and all those idling cars at the far-too-many newly installed intersections. At 2019's Climate Summit, she proclaimed that Victoria will plant hundreds of trees—where and when not mentioned—while not mentioning the mature trees razed, by the dozens, by developers—

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under her watch. Therefore, is it any wonder she's managed to infuriate residents by consistently ignoring the Official Community Plan in so many different neighbourhoods? So finally, the City of Victoria is being taken to court over the matter. Bravo, grassroots!

As I write, Helps is on CBC radio declaring the need for, and benefits of, healthy, resilient communities just as council members—who, by the way, are not City Hall staff—want a staggering 50 percent wage increase while other public-sector employees scrape by on two percent.

So, from the macro to the micro reality on the streets, what will be the legacy of all of this? With the exception of a few tourist-designated streets and areas, Victoria's core is neglected and filthy, with ridiculous, childish and poorly-visible crosswalk patterns which are already fading into obscurity. I have been avoiding the Downtown core since walking past the smeared remains of excrement—at waist height—against a wall on View Street. Many times I have seen homeless people trying to relieve themselves discretely, even though that's entirely impossible in public. Which to despair over more: the climate crisis, or extreme homelessness?

Victoria, how did we come to normalize extreme homelessness? What happened to all those promises, plans and funds for converting inns into social housing? I bet the cost of one, traffic-jamming bike lane alone would have repurposed enough suites and probably built a few public toilets around town to avoid the crime of allowing humans to suffer the indignities of having to urinate and defecate on the outside of buildings. Alas, we are no longer behaving like a sane society.

Back in 1975, my parents found here a charming little city set in a magnificent landscape with probably more trees than people. A place with a pace of life that came as a tremendous relief compared to the one we left behind in busy, overpopulated Melbourne, Australia. To my 12-year-old self, this was heaven.

Today, walking the few intact trails remaining on the outskirts of Victoria (mainly in Metchosin and further out), it's heartbreaking seeing everything that's already been lost on the landscape and the continuing dismemberment of what remains. My husband and I are planning to leave Victoria as soon as possible. Our ideal is a tiny, forgotten hamlet somewhere that's both off the electronic, wireless grid and off the map. Hopefully where someone with common sense—in the style and in the spirit of a Peter Pollen—still runs things, and where island time still runs on actual island time and not on those recently popped-up, wishful thinking, throw-back bumper stickers.

Jana Kalina

The vanishing ancient forests of Vancouver Island

It may seem like inverse logic, but the best way to conserve the BC coast's legendary Douglas Fir biome is to commit to make wood products that will endure. And the only wood in a Doug Fir log that has any chance of endurance is heartwood. But the reality is that 80-year-old second growth Doug Fir is usually about 50 percent sapwood by volume, and all that sapwood will rot or get eaten by bugs in a very short time. Logging of this immature second growth is actually accelerating the burn of BC's biggest carbon bomb.

David Shipway

Let the herring live

Briony Penn has provided a very thorough and interesting article on a very important issue with huge implications to the Salish Sea and beyond, including migrating water fowl that rely on herring and their roe to nourish them for their long journeys to nesting sites in the north. Herring are vital to the web of life in the marine ecosystem and in the traditional diet of coastal Indigenous peoples for millennia, as shown in archeologic studies of fish bones in middens.

Good science indicates a serious decline in spawning populations of herring which are crucial to salmon, including chinook, which are vital to resident orcas.

The DFO "Integrated Management Plan" serves the interests of the commercial fishing industry, but has led to the decimation of all of the herring populations of the BC coast except for one—near Hornby Island and Denman Island, between Comox and Parksville. The logical plan would be to suspend this fishery to allow a recovery to recur before it is too late.

David Wiseman, Board member, Conservancy Hornby Island

The failure of local climate action plans

David Broadland's informative and insightful article on conserving selected BC forests for carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation is a must-read for anyone seriously interested in optimizing our collective response to the accelerating climate crisis. It will form an important part of the curriculum for the ṮEṮÁĆES Climate Action Project, a community based, Indigenous-led climate action education for the Southern Gulf Islands.

Please check our website at www.sgicommunityresources.ca and click on "climate-action-project."

Paul Petrie

David Broadland unfortunately omits the need for all governments to invest in climate adaptation strategies, simply because there is little likelihood of governments anywhere actually meeting the challenge of mitigating climate change. Better than just a "plan B," adaptation is really the best "insurance policy" for our municipalities to protect their residents by climate-change-proofing our infrastructure. While mitigation is important, climate adaptation strategies may also serve to protect residents against a broader range of risks and threats, even beyond those attributable directly to climate change. While most governments include a brief mention of the need for adaptation, it will only be when significant resources are invested that we will know our leaders are seriously addressing the need for climate change adaptation.

John Newcomb

This article was courageous because it revealed new construction's detrimental Earth/climate impact. Every new structure anywhere on the planet creates an extraction hole or swath 10 times the building's size somewhere else on the planet, in addition to the carbon emitted. That hole or swath applies to the cement, wood, steel, granite, glass, drywall…everything in new construction. New structures should only be built for democratically well-established community need—not private developer profit. They also need to be zero-carbon.

See the online study "New Tricks with Old Bricks" by the British Empty Homes Agency charity. It's a compelling case for a mass renovation program rather than new construction.

Developers are not building new homes for bigger families and population growth. There's already enough housing stock for the existing Canadian population in total. We need to improve and make affordable the places that people already live in.

The Green New Deal's (GND) renovation mass-employment program will invest billions to upgrade existing homes and apartments,

starting with the Indigenous. The new GND jobs will allow folks to stay where they are currently living or move with the GND livable-wage job corps to wherever the work is needed. Homeless shall be given nice empty apartments or condominiums. There are more than enough sitting empty right now.

Larry Wartels

Any demand for Alberta bitumen in Asia?

My thanks and congratulations to Briony Penn for her excellent article in the Sept/Oct *Focus* thoroughly debunking the "need" to get Alberta bitumen to tidewater. As she points out, current tanker capacity at the Westbridge Marine Terminal is greatly under-utilized and most tankers leaving the terminal are headed for California, not China, where the price per barrel is lower. It's refreshing to read a well-researched article with references, instead of press releases from oil companies which too often contain figures that seem to be pulled out of thin air.

The facts presented in Penn's article make it very difficult for anyone to make a convincing case for building the Trans Mountain Pipeline. She also points out that mainstream media continue to under-report on this issue. Given the cost of the pipeline and the environmental ramifications, this story should be on the front page of every newspaper in the country.

It's particularly galling to me that, as Penn reports in her article, oil sands production has increased by 376 percent since 2000, when oil companies already knew that CO_2 emissions contributed to global warming. It's hard to escape the conclusion that the oil companies made the calculated decision to get as much bitumen out of the ground and build as many pipelines as they could before public pressure forces the government to take strong action against climate change. We're still waiting for that action.

Murray Goode

Climate change is now top of mind

I read with great interest Trudy Duivenwoorden's latest column on the climate emergency we are experiencing. I always enjoy her thoughtful writings, and I know many people do.

I agree with her that the politicians, for the most part, are doing next to nothing to solve the problem. They just talk and talk, and they hope the talking would be good enough to get them off the hook and reelected. By the time they actually start taking meaningful action, it'll be too late.

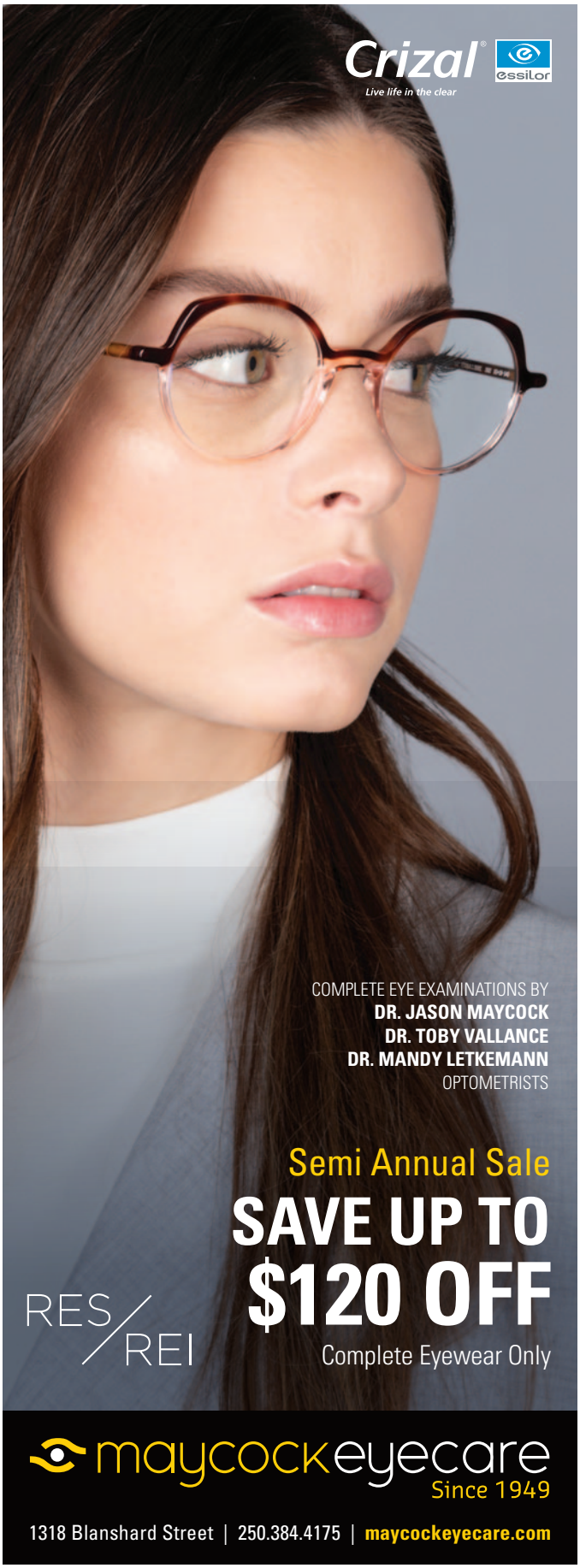
The press is doing a lot more these days, spreading the bad news ever more frequently, and often, like in Trudy's case, offering suggestions for general policy and individual actions.

However, in my view, the press is also late. The coverage that we see now should have been there 20 or 30 years ago. They could have offered suggestions, carried out frequent interviews of the scientists doing the research, performed more science journalism. So many things. All this would have created widespread awareness of the danger ahead, and most likely would have pushed people to action, individually and at the ballot box. The press can be a powerful force.

Timely reporting nowadays would be to start telling people that if we manage to solve this crisis, whatever we do—unless an unlikely miracle technological fix is found—it's going to be painful. A smooth transition to a "new order" is no longer possible, as it would have been 30 or 20 or even 10 years ago. Now the fire is at the gates, and we won't be able to come out unscathed.

Sounds bleak and dark, but it is sadly realistic.

J.G.Miranda



COP25 concluded without an agreement to combat the climate crisis, leaving a worsening mess for younger generations to clean up and survive—if they can.

"Canada is no longer the worst," writes Elizabeth May, "but we still won a few Fossils of the Day [Awards]." Prime Minister Trudeau found the climate crisis insufficiently important to be worth attending. One wonders what would!

Our youth have every right to be angry, but anger needs channelling. Calling people stupid doesn't help. But what is one to think when on a radio call-in show someone says there's no point in Canada combatting the climate crisis because we contribute so little to it globally?

We contribute little because we have a small population compared with many other countries. Per capita, however, we contribute more than most to climate change. And Canada, having a smaller, well-educated population, is ideally situated to lead in significant actions that others might find difficult to take.

Sweden is similarly small, but Greta Thunberg created more awareness about the climate crisis than any politician in the super-powers.

Canada could take the lead!

Philip Symons

Don't mention LNG!

Regarding Russ Francis excellent piece on LNG and where all those wonderful jobs-jobs-jobs have gone, adding to the confusion is this: if Canada's corporate media is your only source, you may not have read enough to understand what happened over there. Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have already issued measures that amount to moratoriums on fracking.

Canadian media, so often forgetful of detail, whether deliberately or not, have helped pro-fracking politicians (both federal and provincial) avoid having to answer several awkward questions, including: How can two countries arrive at opposite conclusions about whether fracking is sufficiently safe?

Ernst Random

Why are we in trouble?

I love Maleea Acker's story on establishing her own native garden—such inspiration! I have a dream where I go around restoring and replanting the most degraded plots of land I can find—of course, starting at home. Thank you so much for doing this and sharing your story!

Dominique Argan

Thanks for Maleea Acker's piece in the November/December *Focus*. There are so many things wrong with our current approach. I will pick on just one. As climate change dries up tadpole pools early, we are not allowed to move them to a new pool to save their lives. Huge fines prevent this. We are not allowed to release them into our back gardens that they inhabited 30 years ago. So they can never repopulate areas again. It is absurd.

I think BC needs new rules to allow us to help our native amphibians and reptiles repopulate areas that they lost in the past. My old house in Vic West had salamanders in the basement in about 2002. The only way salamanders can ever return to Vic West is with human help. Why not change the rules to allow this?

Brian White

UNDRIP in theory—but in action?

On October 24 the BC government tabled their Bill on adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. With the support of the Greens, the Bill will surely pass.

Last year I attended a meeting at our local college to hear three guests talk about the BC government's decision to proceed with the Liberal project to build the Site C dam. Amnesty International presented, as did Indigenous leader Bob Chamberlin, and journalist Sarah Cox (award-winning author of *Breaching the Peace*). I took home a copy of UNDRIP and am astounded at how many articles in this document have been violated by the ongoing construction of the Site C dam. Is there any chance that this bill could be made "retroactive" in order to address these serious violations? Probably not.

Sadly, in my elder years, I've become somewhat cynical. I see the BC government, hydro, forestry, mining companies, and the LNG promoters publicly getting that "free, prior and informed consent" and then carrying on as planned! The Minister has said so himself: "NO veto over development…minimum standards," obviously business as usual. Very disheartening.

Rosemary Baxter

Bicycle lanes on Kimta Road?

City council is engaging in what it calls consultation for a new bike path along Kimta Road to link the E & N Rail trail ending at Catherine Street to the Johnson Street Bridge. As part of the consultation process there was a walk through of the proposed route. The plan is to put a two-way bike path on the north side of Kimta Road between the sidewalk and street parking. There were a number of questions asked about this plan.

Why not continue the bike path along the E and N rail from Catherine to the Johnson Street Bridge? The answer was, this is very complicated, that part of the trail is privately owned. The long-term plan is for a bike path to be included in the rail corridor—therefore the path along Kimta will be temporary, or so we are lead to believe. In my experience, once something is put in, it is very rarely, if ever, removed. Recently, an article in the Capital Daily indicated very positive signs that the Rail trail may open again to commuter trains. This could happen as early as 2022. I'm guessing this will also include the bicycle/pedestrian corridor. The "temporary" bike path on Kimta Road won't be completed until 2020 or 2021, so why not wait a year or two for a more permanent solution instead of potentially needing to make two trails? Why the rush?

There is already a bike path along Esquimalt Road, so instead of disturbing a residential street, why not put money into linking an already established path and improving it? Supposedly, a lot of cyclists don't feel comfortable cycling on a busy street, and city council wants to make cycling accessible to all levels. It is interesting that council uses that argument for not improving an already established path along Esquimalt Road, yet they didn't hesitate to spend huge amounts of money to put new ones along busy streets through the Downtown core.

Finally, as Kimta is already a wide street, there is ample room for pedestrians, cyclists and all types of vehicles, so why not just leave it as is, and continue to work on opening up the E & N corridor? The City's answer was, some cyclists don't feel comfortable riding by parked cars. This is so absurd as to be ridiculous. I guess if I, as a pedestrian, said I was uncomfortable sharing pathways with cyclists, city council would immediately work to mitigate that situation. No, wait: I have sent numerous emails to council suggesting ways they could make the shared pathways more pedestrian-friendly, and a year later, nothing has happened.

These legitimate questions and ideas were virtually ignored, and it soon became obvious this wasn't a true consultative process. The Kimta Road route is a done deal. In fact, signs have already gone up in the neighbourhood indicating the proposed route. City council is encouraging people to interact in the process, but only as far as picking one of the three types of paths from the options provided, not the proposed route.

True to council's myopic view, this decision

has been based on some very old information about the amount of parking allowed on Kimta, disregarding the fact that the Bayview condo complex is not complete. There are very poor sitelines when turning from the sidestreets, and narrowing the street is going to potentially impact traffic flow. Parts of the route behind The Delta Hotel are too narrow, badly paved, and poorly lit for two-way cyclist and foot traffic. This area can't be widened because it is right up against the hotel wall. The lighting belongs to the condo next door, and although residents have attempted to improve this, in eight years, nothing has happened. Council is going to do it anyway despite these concerns.

I am not against bicycle paths in this city. I am, however, against the way City council has gone about creating them. They claim to consult or engage the public, but in reality, it is lip service only.

Council has chosen to support their preferred method of transportation to the exclusion of every other form, including transit, pedestrian, and yes, the dreaded car. Council claims that bicycle lanes are good for the environment, and that there are now less cars in the Downtown core. I would agree with this in theory, however when bike lanes impede the flow of traffic, leaving cars idling for longer periods of time, how environmentally friendly is this? We will never know, because council chooses to provide numbers and statistics that support their views only.

The increased number of bike lanes have also contributed to cyclists feeling very entitled. They believe they can do whatever they want, including illegal right hand turns, blowing through stop signs and crosswalks, riding on sidewalks and pedestrian-only walkways, cycling the wrong way on one-way streets, cycling on wheelchair accessible ramps…the list goes on. Instead of council acknowledging this, and working at ways to mitigate the situation they continue to ignore it. This only serves to contribute to the belief that again they are supporting one group of commuters in this city.

City council claims they want to make the city accessible to all levels of cyclists. Why not try to make it accessible to *all*? They could start by not putting an unnecessary bike path along Kimta Road and work harder to open up the E & N trail onto the Johnson Street Bridge.

Erie Pentland

LETTERS
Send to focusedit@shaw.ca

Focus presents: Hydrate IV Wellness Centre ADVERTISEMENT

Reduce pain and get your health back on track

Dr. Kristen Bovee has been offering naturopathic services in the Greater Victoria area for 18 years. Beyond her degrees in biochemistry and Naturopathic Medicine, the owner of Hydrate IV Wellness Centre on Cook Street near Fort, has engaged in regular advanced training. She and the three other naturopathic physicians who work at Hydrate have expertise in IV nutrient medicine, hormonal health, pain management, prolotherapy, skin care, cancer, chronic disease, autoimmune conditions, sports medicine and breast health.

Among the main issues that lead patients to seek out one of Hydrate IV's doctors are digestive complaints—from chronic constipation or inflammatory bowel syndrome to acid reflux. As Dr. Bovee puts it, "Gut health is foundational." With inflammatory bowel problems, the gut barrier is compromised, she explains, so nutrient absorption is not happening as it should. Testing is available to determine what foods might be causing you problems. Eating a non-inflammatory diet, along with nutrient supplementation that helps with GI cell regeneration, and clearing out any candida, can result in huge changes—including bowel regularity and minimal pain, gas, and bloating. Due to improved nutrient absorption, other conditions often improve as well.

IV treatments may be part of the recommended therapy, but not always. "It is often a good way to help a person who is severely depleted feel better quickly," says Dr. Bovee of the therapy, which works by delivering vitamins, minerals and hydration directly into your cells. Because the digestive system is avoided, doses can be higher and they are more fully absorbed, she explains. (Developed in the 1950s by Dr. John Myers, he found a particular IV "cocktail" of nutrients successful in treating asthma, depression, chronic fatigue, and fibromyalgia. New regimens are now used to treat such conditions as migraines, allergies, muscle spasms and tightness, chronic hives, rheumatoid arthritis, colitis, cardiovascular disease, chronic infections, tissue repair and adrenal support.)

Another area of concern for many, especially as we age, is joint pain from injury or arthritis. While personally-tailored IV therapy can assist with joint health, Dr. Bovee is also certified in other highly effective therapies for joint degeneration, inflammation and dysfunction, including prolotherapy and neural therapy.

Patients often experience dramatic improvements of acute and chronic joint problems—with shoulders, ankles, knees, TMJ (temporomandibular joint), elbows, low back, and neck (as well as with migraines). With prolotherapy, Dr. Bovee recommends a commitment to six treatments, one month apart for best results, noting, "Unlike cortisone, which actually stops the healing by stopping the inflammation—but worsens the joint over time—prolotherapy involves a highly-concentrated dexterous solution that encourages new tissue to form so that the joint is stabilized…I really like prolotherapy!"

Dr. Kristen Bovee

On the skin care front, Hydrate offers the science-based skin-care line AlumierMD, along with naturopathic approaches to healing skin conditions internally. "I've never seen products like these," says Dr. Bovee. They work well for people with hyperpigmentation, sun damage, and aging skin. She says, "You can blend them too, so it's fully customizable." The anti-aging retinols stimulate cell production while sloughing off dead cells. And the patented delivery system that Alumier uses for its potent antioxidant serum with Vitamin C and E means there's none of the usual oxidation (and degrading) of the Vitamin C component.

Whatever your symptoms, Dr. Bovee and her team try to get to the root of the problem, and then help you heal through their integrative, holistic approach and wide-ranging treatment modalities.

This February, take advantage of Hydrate IV's free "Fatigue to Fantastic" program. You'll get a daily recipe for an energizing smoothie, a weekly meal plan, and guidance and health tips over the 29 days of February. Just sign up through the website.

2020 is a leap year, so leap into a healthy new you—with Hydrate IV's help.

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Defusing BC's big, bad carbon bomb

DAVID BROADLAND

Over the past 20 years, BC forests were so heavily logged that net carbon emissions are now twice as large as Alberta's oil sands.

At the height of last summer's economic meltdown in the BC interior's forest industry, Marty Gibbons, president of United Steelworkers Local 1-417, based in Kamloops, told the Canadian Press: "Something needs to change immediately or these small communities that don't have other employers are going to wither and die." Gibbons concluded that "the largest driving factor is the Province's complex stumpage system that results in high fees."

The average stumpage rate in BC—the price the Province charges forestry companies for harvesting a cubic metre of tree on Crown land—was around $23 for both the interior and the coast in 2019. But the average stumpage paid for timber harvested from Crown land by major raw log exporters like TimberWest and Western Forest Products in the Campbell River Natural Resource District was much lower, ranging between $8 and $11 per cubic metre. Smaller companies paid even less—as little as $5 per cubic metre. Yet raw logs for export were selling at an average price of $128 per cubic metre through 2019.

Raw logs worth $4.146 billion were exported from BC to other countries for processing over the past five years. This huge overcut—unnecessary to meet domestic and international demand for BC's finished wood products—has averaged 6.5 million cubic metres per year over those five years, equal to 41 percent of the total cut on Crown and private land on the coast. So claims that high stumpage rates in BC are the problem that needs to be solved seem out of touch with reality.

But Gibbons is still right: something "needs to change immediately." The required change, however, might be more than what he's thinking. The interior's forest industry has been destabilized by two climate-change-related phenomena—devastating wildfire and explosive mountain pine beetle infestation—that have been amplified by the immense extent of BC's clearcut logging. Gibbons wants to knock a few bucks off the forest companies' costs so they can run more shifts at the mills. What's really needed, though, is a much deeper kind of change, one that would quickly *transform* BC's forest industry. To start, we need to end the export of raw logs and shift that same volume to a new class of forest: protected forest-carbon reserves.

There's an urgent need to remove carbon from the atmosphere and reduce emissions at the same time. The only way to remove carbon on a large scale and then store it safely for a long time is to *not harvest* healthy, mature forests of long-lived species.

The next 10 years need to be full of bold ideas as we look for and find solutions to the climate crisis. Initiatives like the Carbon Tax in Canada are necessary to disincentivize the use of fossil fuels, but planet Earth isn't going to give us time to tax our emissions into submission. We need some quick shifts that will cut 10 megatonnes with a few strokes of the Premier's pen. In BC, protecting the forest instead of destroying it is our only realistic option. If we don't do this, we'll run the risk that the rest of the world will start counting the emissions we are releasing from our forests and begin to think of us—and our manufactured wood products industry—as the Brazil of the North.

Perhaps what's required most at this critical moment is recognition by the BC government that an international market for sequestered forest-carbon is coming soon, and that forest companies need to start switching from destroying publicly-owned forests to protecting them. Not just old-growth forests, but mature second-growth stands of long-lived species, too.

Our government leaders don't seem to be thinking straight yet. Instead, deforestation on the BC coast is accelerating. Over the past six years, the area of coastal Crown land that was clearcut increased 16 percent over the previous six-year period. Our provincial forest's capacity to serve as a carbon sink has vanished. Its catastrophic collapse is recorded in a 20-year segment of the Province's annual inventory of provincial greenhouse gas emissions. In 1997, BC forests could sequester the equivalent of 103 megatonnes of CO_2 annually. By 2017 that had fallen to 19.6 megatonnes. From 2020 on, our forests will be a net source of emissions—even without including those from wildfires. The image on the page to the right shows—in yellow—the physical area of Vancouver Island, and the adjacent mainland coast, that was clearcut between 2000 and 2018. Vancouver Island has become an ecological war zone. But a different economic role for the forest is emerging, one that doesn't destroy it.

That new purpose is highlighted by a gaping hole in Canada's plan to meet its emissions reduction commitment under the 2015 Paris Agreement. Canada's 2018 progress report to the UN admits there's a nearly 100-megatonne gap in the plan to 2030 (and this assumes the rest of the plan will actually work). How will Canada live up to its promise over the next 10 years? The progress report puts it this way: "Potential increases in stored carbon (carbon sequestration) in forests, soils and wetlands will also contribute to reductions which, for a country such as Canada, could also play an important role in achieving the 2030 target."

The report offers no other possibility for filling that gap.

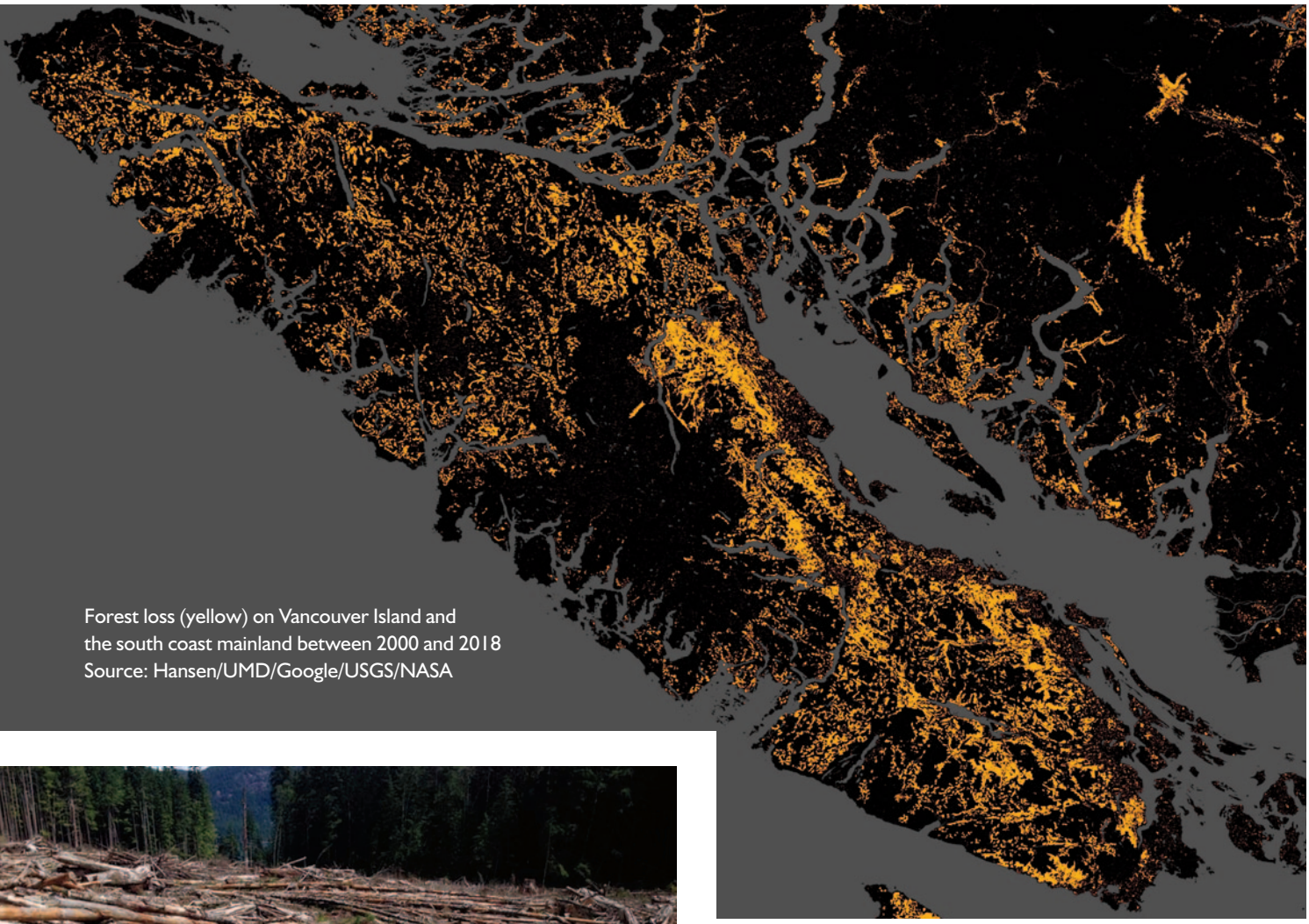
Canada, then,will likely depend on using the carbon sequestration capacity of its forests to meet its Paris Agreement committments.

Article 5 of the Paris Agreement encourages all countries to "… promote and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol, including biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems."

Depending on how Article 6 of the Paris Agreement is eventually detailed (its development was stymied at the Madrid COP), it's possible that an international market mechanism for forest carbon is coming, and it can't come soon enough.

The over-exploitation of BC's forests has added to an explosion in net carbon emissions, delivered to the atmosphere each year by the forest industry's endless road building and progressive clearcuts. Below, I'll show why this now amounts to over 190 megatonnes every year (and possibly much more), a far more powerful carbon bomb than is being dropped by Canada's oil sands industry. It's long past time for us to understand the inner workings of the bomb and to defuse it.

There are two separate parts to BC's bomb, and I will take you through each of these in some detail below.



Forest loss (yellow) on Vancouver Island and the south coast mainland between 2000 and 2018
Source: Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA

PHOTO: DAVID BROADLAND

Biomass left behind after clearcut logging on Quadra Island Crown land

First, when a mature or old forest stand is logged, assuming it's healthy, the living biomass that's killed and cut up into small pieces begins a premature process of decay, often hundreds of years before that decay would occur naturally.

Secondly, when that mature or old, healthy stand is clearcut, its potential to sequester carbon in the future is lost and it could then take anywhere from 60 years to several hundred years before a new replacement forest could sequester as much carbon as was being stored in the previous stand.

Let me take you through the inner workings of each of these parts of BC's carbon bomb. First, let's consider the magnitude of the carbon emissions released when wood prematurely decays.

WHEN AN AREA OF FOREST IS CLEARCUT, three decay processes are initiated that result in emissions of carbon to the atmosphere.

First, the removal of the trees allows the sun to warm the forest soil to a higher temperature than was possible when it was shaded by trees. That additional warmth speeds up decay processes and the release of greenhouse gases, a process somewhat akin to the melting of permafrost in the Arctic. Soil scientists tell us that forest soil contains even more carbon than all the trees and other biomass that grow in it. Recent studies have reported that as much as 20 percent of the carbon in the layer of soil at the forest floor is released to the atmosphere after an area of forest has been clearcut. This release is a wild card in our emerging understanding of the impact of clearcut logging on carbon emissions. For now it remains unquantified, but it's definitely not zero.

The second decay process begins after an area of forest is clearcut and the unused parts of trees left on the forest floor begin to decay. In his 2019 report *Forestry and Carbon in BC*, BC forest ecologist Jim Pojar estimated that 40 to 60 percent of the biomass of a forest is left in a clearcut. That includes the branches, stumps, roots, pieces of the stems that shattered when felled, the unutilizable tops of the trees, and unmerchantable trees that are killed in the mayhem of clearcut logging.

For our purpose, we will use the mid-point of Pojar's 40 to 60 percent estimate: half of the biomass is removed, and half remains on the forest floor. The Ministry of Forests' log scaling system tells us what volume of wood is removed from the forest as merchantable logs. We then assume that an equal volume of wood is left in the clearcut.

In 2018, the total volume of wood removed from BC's forests, as reported in the ministry's Harvest Billing System, was 54.1 million cubic metres. As per above, we are using the same number for the volume of wood that was left in clearcuts all over the province. So the total volume of wood in play is 108.2 million cubic metres. Both pools of wood—the wood left behind and the wood trucked away—begin to decay after a relatively short period of time following harvest. Each cubic metre of wood will eventually produce about 0.82 tonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions (arithmetic at focusonvictoria.ca). So the wood left behind will produce 44 megatonnes and the wood trucked away will also produce 44 megatonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions—eventually.

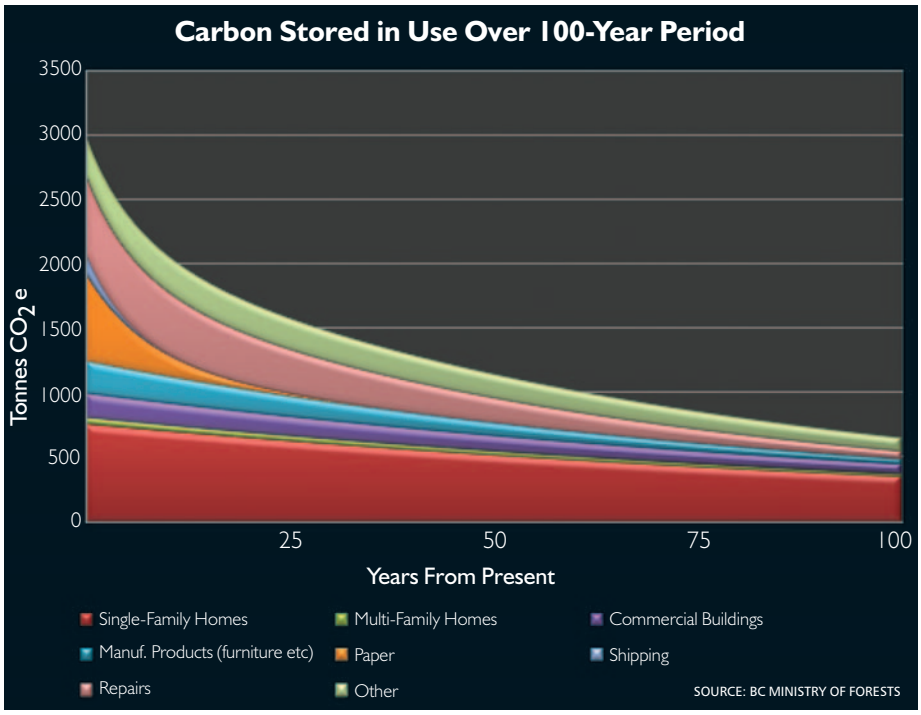
The average 6.5-million-cubic-metre cut for raw log exports accounts for 11 megatonnes of that 88 megatonne carbon bomb.

You might have heard that the carbon in the logs that are harvested and turned into finished wood products will be safely stored in those products indefinitely. But the Ministry of Forests' own research shows that after 28 years, half of the carbon in the wood products is no longer being safely stored; at 100 years, only 33 percent of the wood is still in safe storage (see graph above). The rest will have returned to the atmosphere or is headed in that direction.

BC's Greenhouse Gas Inventory quantifies the magnitude of the currently acknowledged deterioration of wood products. For 2017 it noted that "Emissions from Decomposition of Harvested Wood Products" contributed 42 megatonnes annually to the provincial greenhouse gas inventory, which is close to our estimate of 44 megatonnes for 2018.

For ethical reasons, we ought to attribute all of those future emissions to the year in which the wood was harvested.

Note that the period of safe storage of carbon in wood products is much shorter than the expected life of most of the tree species that grow in coastal BC. A Sitka spruce is capable of attaining 700 years of age. Douglas fir commonly reach 600 to 800 years of age, and have been known to survive to 1000 years. Red cedar can reach even greater longevity. The Cheewat Lake Cedar near Clo-oose has been estimated to be as old as 2,500 years.



This BC Ministry of Forests graph shows how the carbon stored in wood products declines over time. After 28 years, half of the carbon stored has been lost to the atmosphere. At 100 years, 33 percent remains.

The coastal forest's longevity—compared with BC's interior forests—arises, in part, because the coast's wetter climate lowers the incidence of drought and wildfires that could kill the forest. As well, there are no mountain pine beetles in coastal BC.

By eliminating the export of raw logs and instead protecting an equivalent volume of long-lived coastal stands each year, 11 megatonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions could be avoided. That would be a much more substantial reduction in provincial emissions than, for example, the BC Carbon Tax has produced after 10 years.

THE SECOND PART OF THE BOMB—the loss of sequestration capacity—is a measure of the net growth, per year, of the carbon stored by our forests. Provincial data shows that sequestration capacity held steady at about 103 megatonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions per year between 1990 and 1999, and then began to decline through to 2017, the last year for which data is available. But the rate of decline suggests that our forests are now a net source of emissions, even without including the emissions released as a result of natural disturbances such as wildfires.

The impact on climate stability of BC's forests losing the ability to absorb 103 megatonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions per year is no different than the impact of releasing 103 megatonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions every year. Let me give you just a glimpse of how unbridled logging has reduced sequestration capacity. Consider the impact of logging roads.

Logging in BC has required the construction of a vast and very expensive network of industrial-duty roads that have gouged out an equally vast area of previously productive forest and covered it over with blasted rock and gravel. The public has paid for these roads through reduced stumpage payments. They're poor, if not impossible places for trees to grow.

In BC, logging roads and landings are allowed to occupy up to seven percent of the area of a cutblock. As well, to avoid slash burning, the unmarketable wood left in a clearcut is increasingly consolidated in semi-permanent piles that, like the roads and landings, reduce the space available for a new forest to grow.

A recent report at *The Narwhal* by Sarah Cox described a study in Ontario that examined the extent of such forest loss in that province. Cox reported that researchers there found "logging scars created by roads and landings… occupied an average of 14.2 percent of the area logged." So our province's seven percent restriction could well be an underestimation of the forest base that's being lost. But let's use seven percent and calculate how much forest has been lost.

Sierra BC's recent report, *Clearcut Carbon,* put the total area logged in BC between 2005 and 2017 at 3,597,291 hectares, which included private land on Vancouver Island.

PHOTO: LESLIE CAMPBELL

The author measures the circumference (27 feet) of an apparently healthy 700-800-year-old Douglas fir on Quadra Island. Douglas fir are known to live for as long as 1000 years.

If seven percent of that area was covered with roads and landings, the area of forest lost over that 13-year period would be 251,810 hectares. That's larger than Vancouver Island's largest protected area, Strathcona Park.

Sierra BC chose a 13-year period for its report because it takes at least 13 years after a clearcut has been replanted for the area to shift from being a source of carbon emissions to a carbon sink. The report grimly observed: "For at least 13 years, these areas are 'sequestration dead zones': clearcut lands that emit more carbon than they absorb."

In the case of roads, though, the forest land they now occupy has become a permanent just-plain-dead zone, and another one the size of Strathcona Park is being created every 13 years.

While the blame for BC's forests becoming a net source of carbon emissions has been directed at non-human causes like the mountain pine beetle and wildfires, the forest industry's production of 251, 810 hectares of just-plain-dead zones and 3.6 million hectares of sequestration dead zones every 13 years is pushing ecological stability to the brink.

Once upon a time, management of BC's forests was based on the concept of "sustained yield." It was a commonly held belief of residents of this province that this meant the annual allowable cut was restricted to no more than the amount of new forest growth each year. Many of us, including myself, have mistakenly believed that approach to managing the public forests was how the Forest Service still operated. This is clearly not the case.

The Forest Service has turned the resource into an annual carbon bomb that has become one of the largest carbon emitters/carbon-sink killers in Canada. At more than 190 megatonnes a year (88 from premature decay emissions and 103 from loss of the forest-carbon sink), it's well over twice the size of emissions from Canadian oil sands operations and three times the rest of BC's emissions. Yet we cut far more than we need for our own use. That's just plain nuts.

The most obvious starting point for repairing BC's broken forest-carbon sink would be to ban the export of raw logs. That would make it possible to put the 6.5 million cubic metres of trees that weren't harvested into a protected carbon reserve each year until the provincial forest-carbon sink has been rebuilt to at least 1997's level: 103 megatonnes per year.

YOU MIGHT THINK that the greatest challenge to eliminating raw log exports and putting that uncut volume into protected carbon reserves would be the huge loss in employment that would result. You'd be wrong.

There were 17,800 people employed in "forestry and logging with support activities" in all of BC in 2018, according to BC Stats. This figure doesn't include BC's wood products manufacturing jobs, but eliminating log exports wouldn't affect those jobs since raw log exports create zero manufacturing jobs in BC.

2018 was a very good year for employment in the forest industry. The total volume cut in BC forests, including on both public and private land, was 54.1 million cubic metres. Of that, 30 percent was cut on the coast and 70 percent in the interior. Based on that split, about 30 percent of the employment in "forestry and logging with support activities" was on the coast, or about 5340 jobs. In 2018, raw log exports were at a five-year low of 5.03 million cubic metres, equivalent to 31 percent of the coastal cut. So eliminating log exports that year would have eliminated about 31 percent of those 5340 coastal logging jobs, or 1650 jobs. It would have also eliminated, or at least greatly delayed, 8.3 megatonnes of emissions.

To put those 1650 jobs in perspective, they represented less than one-tenth of one percent of BC's total workforce in 2018. They are amongst the most carbon-emission-intensive jobs on Earth. In the approaching low-carbon economy, employment will need to shift from carbon-emission-intensive to carbon-absorption- intensive. Any job that is part of a low-cost process for removing carbon from the atmosphere is going to be in demand. Allowing trees to grow is currently the lowest-cost process for absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. This is unlikely to change.

When BC starts to put thousands of hectares of forest land into carbon sequestration reserves each year, optimizing the amount of carbon stored will require scientists, surveyors, mappers, planners, foresters, tree planters, thinners, pruners, salvagers and fire suppressors. It's likely to include some selection logging. If anything, optimizing the forests' capacity for sequestration is likely to require more workers than are provided by road building and the mechanized form of clearcutting widely practiced on the coast. Where would the money for all this employment come from?

The Carbon Tax is slated to rise to $50 per tonne in 2021. If the 5-year-average export cut was ended and the trees left standing, a net reduction in emissions of 11 megatonnes would have an annual value of $550 million. That's a lot more than necessary to keep 1650-2000 jobs in a transformative BC Forest-Carbon Service. Do the arithmetic yourself.

David Broadland is the publisher of *Focus*. He is working with a group of scientists, journalists and citizens to explore the potential for conserving selected BC forests for carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and short-distance tourism potential. He welcomes your feedback.

The generation gap and housing's "missing middle"

ROSS CROCKFORD

To satisfy the Millennials' need for housing, the City of Victoria aims for greater density.

Downtown had seen many big projects over the past decade, but nothing like this. On December 3, Starlight Developments revealed its plans for a block and a half of Harris Green—replacing the existing Market on Yates, London Drugs and other businesses with 100,000 square feet of new retail space, topped by five towers up to 25 storeys tall and containing some 1,500 rental apartments.

The unveiling took place at a land-use meeting run by the Downtown Residents' Association, and the members had questions. What will happen to the businesses there now? Starlight said it would phase the construction so they could move to other parts of the development with minimal disruption. Who will police the proposed half-acre of green space? Starlight said it would create a "governance model" with the City of Victoria. With all the parking underground and entrances only on View Street, how will it handle the traffic? Starlight said it would conduct traffic-demand studies and adjust its plans accordingly.

The audience sounded generally favourable toward the project, if exhausted by the prospect of more blasting and beeping trucks, and their questions sounded reasonable to my aging ears. But then I went home, and on the Vibrant Victoria internet forum, I encountered a very different impression of the evening.

"The room was 90 percent senior citizens who blathered on and on about how there is too much construction in Victoria and new towers block their views from the condo they bought last year," fumed a forum poster nicknamed "victorian." As far as they were concerned, the meeting was "mostly just boomer complaints about how terrible it is that Victoria is not in the 1960s anymore."

I posted my own account of the event, and asked victorian to meet to discuss our differences of perception, but they declined. The "boomers" simply didn't care about "a failing housing market, lack of rental homes, or [having] a vibrant and economically successful city," victorian replied. "Unfortunately, the size of the post-war generation and the long lives they are expected to live will continue to hold our city, province, and country hostage for quite some time into the future, and it's time for those of us who have more future ahead of us than behind us to fight back."

ONE MIGHT DISMISS SUCH AGEIST HOSTILITY as the gripe of a solitary crank, but similar frustrations are being voiced worldwide. As the *Globe and Mail*'s Doug Saunders noted recently, one common trait of the young protesters who rattled Hong Kong, Beirut, Santiago, Moscow, and other cities in 2019 is that they do not feel in any way represented by the older leaders who run their countries.

"Their anger represents a positive force of change—and a register of this decade's failure to fully deliver the fruits of 30 years of worldwide human improvement to the next generation," Saunders wrote. "Most of these protesters do not enjoy the lives and livelihoods that they and their parents had expected to be available for them. Many want something completely new—a new political system, a new way of managing the economy, a new ecological commitment."

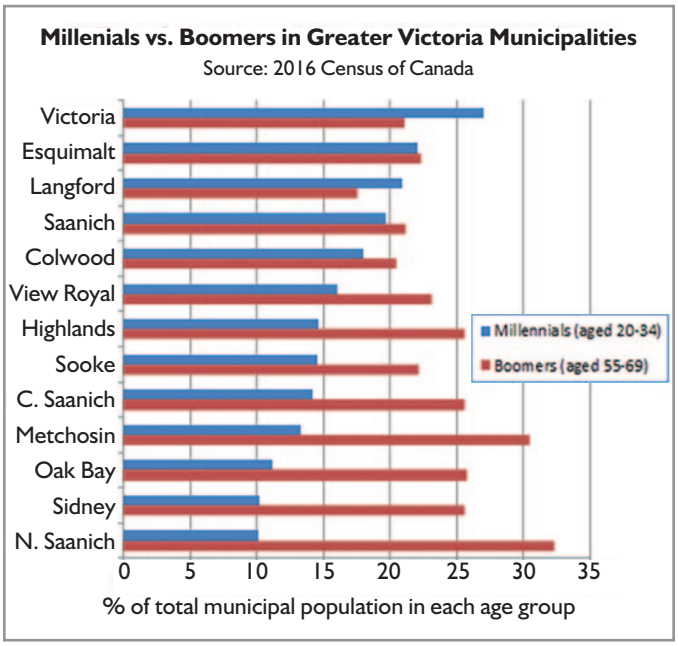
Canada has largely avoided such conflict because we continue to enjoy a buoyant economy, and elect youngish politicians who claim

Starlight Developments proposes to build 1,500 rental units in Harris Green

to be listening. But a generation gap is opening up here too. The Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964 and comprising some eight million Canadians, retain the lion's share of economic wealth and political influence, while making increasing demands on government pension plans and health care. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996 and numbering around 7.4 million, on the other hand, increasingly argue that they're facing stagnant wages, crumbling infrastructure, climate change, and massive personal debt due to the high costs of education and housing. (Justin Trudeau, born in 1971, falls squarely in Generation X.)

"The movement we are part of is about intergenerational solidarity, which means people of all ages looking out for each other—and our particular focus in that is fighting for young people, and giving young people a chance," says Eric Swanson, the Victoria-based executive director of Generation Squeeze, an advocacy nonprofit with more than 35,000 supporters across Canada. "We have a lot of people coming to us as they hit that crunch, where all these things start happening at once, and people are forced to make tough decisions, forced to leave the community they love and prefer to live in, forced to delay starting a family or perhaps not having one at all, forced to take on multiple jobs or precarious work, and through all of that living with increasing anxiety, from personal debt that you have to take on now to buy a home, anxiety around your or your children's future when it comes to climate change," says Swanson, who's 36, and has a one-year-old daughter. "That's why we need governments at all levels to start responding more urgently, and in a more coordinated fashion."

Gen Squeeze was founded in 2014 by Paul Kershaw, a professor at UBC's School of Population and Public Health who often publishes research showing how Millennials have been getting the short end



of public finance. In one paper, Kershaw calculated that Canadian governments spend up to $40,000 per person age 65-plus, but only $11,000 per person under 45; in another, Kershaw estimated that young Canadians pay 20 to 62 percent more in taxes to support retirees than they did four decades ago, even though many seniors are wealthier than at any time in national history. (Perhaps unsurprisingly, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons once accused Gen Squeeze of "trying to start an inter-generational war.") Increasingly though, Gen Squeeze's research and advocacy has been focused upon dampening the crippling price of housing in Canadian cities, Victoria included.

To that end, Swanson says Gen Squeeze has been working to "dial down harmful demand" on urban housing. It lobbied Vancouver and Victoria to restrict short-term rentals, and helped persuade the BC government to pass the Speculation and Vacancy Tax—and apply it

The Gen Squeeze message

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to the entire capital region, much to the frustration of Langford Mayor Stew Young. ("We are seeing provincial data revealing global capital coming here [to buy housing] too, not just in metro Vancouver," Swanson says.)

More controversially, Gen Squeeze has also encouraged municipalities to "dial up" the supply of housing, by supporting large housing developments opposed by neighbourhoods—leading to accusations that Gen Squeeze is just a stooge of wealthy corporations. (Along with VanCity Credit Union and the Vancouver Foundation, Gen Squeeze's funders include the developer Wesgroup and the rental owners' association LandlordBC.)

"We need to build a lot of homes," Swanson replies. Although publicly-funded housing and co-ops are part of the solution, he says, private developments also increase supply. But will many private units actually be affordable? In the spring of 2018, Swanson urged Victoria's council to approve a project at 1201 Fort; now it's being sold as Bellewood Park, with condos priced from $665,000 to $1.9 million.

"We need to build more housing Downtown, near urban cores, employment centres, and amenities, and be comfortable with the fact that it's going to take some time for that housing to become affordable, as the unit ages," Swanson says. "Simultaneously, we need to recognize that a lot of the problem in the end price is the underlying land value."

To drop those values and spur housing, Gen Squeeze advocates increasing taxes on unimproved and underused land, and decreasing income taxes—an idea first proposed by the 19th-century economist Henry George, and which it's currently researching for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Gen Squeeze has also called for a luxury tax on residences worth over $1 million, and eliminating the exemption on capital gains from the sale of a principal residence, a loophole that costs the federal government $6 billion a year. "Nobody does anything to earn that money," Swanson says, although he admits cutting the exemption means "we will have to invest more in seniors as well, because a lot of people are banking on home equity to fund their retirement."

SUCH ARGUMENTS SEEM TO BE increasingly influential—especially in the City of Victoria, where Millennials hold a growing share of political power.

According to the federal census, in 2011 nearly the same number of Millennials

Gen Squeeze Executive Director Eric Swanson

(18,270) and Boomers (17,070) lived in the City of Victoria. But by 2016, the numbers had tipped decisively in favour of Millennials (23,165) over Boomers (18,100). They will likely tip even further in the 2021 census, given Victoria's hot economy and boom in apartment construction.

That trend might explain why Together Victoria got all three of its first-time, Millennial-aged candidates elected to council in 2018, and why Mayor Lisa Helps was re-elected. (Helps was 38 when she first won the mayoralty in 2014, making her one of the younger mayors in the City's history, but the youth record likely goes to Alexander R. Robertson, who was 30 when he became mayor in 1870.) And since then, the council has fast-tracked concerns that often split public reaction along the generational lines that put them in power: bike lanes instead of cars, expanded services instead of low taxes, and new housing instead of heritage, trees, and quietude.

The next big fight over new housing is coming soon. On November 21, the council directed City staff to come up with a plan to increase the stock of lower-cost, "missing middle" housing, such as multi-unit houses and townhomes—and during the discussions, Helps indicated that she wants to eliminate single-family residential zoning across the entire city, as Minneapolis did this past year, to get such housing built.

"I'd like to see us go at least as far as Minneapolis, where they have triplexes as of right [on single-family lots]. I'd like to see fourplexes as of right," Helps told her staff. "There was a big stir in the North America-wide planning community when the headline was that Minneapolis got rid of single-family zoning. From staff's report it doesn't seem quite that drastic, but I think we need to do more with the land that we have."

One critique of such blanket "upzoning" is that it jacks land values even higher, and only produces expensive townhomes in desirable neighbourhoods. So the council, to its credit, also told staff to build an "affordability" requirement into its "missing middle" plan. City staff will present their draft recommendations this coming spring.

Urban municipalities are now pushing for similar upzoning in cities across North America, in an attempt to address a housing crisis generated by a multitude of factors, including an economy producing a lot of Downtown-based, tech- and service-oriented jobs—mainly employing Millennials—and outdated transportation infrastructure that prevents commuting from cheaper housing farther away.

Over the past three years, Seattle, Austin, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington D.C. have all upzoned parts of their cities to permit greater housing densities, especially along transit routes. And in November, the City of Vancouver directed its staff to draft bylaws automatically allowing six-storey rental housing on arterial roads and four-storey rentals on side streets near parks, schools and shopping.

"At best it's an incremental improvement, but once we get this type of bylaw on the books, then it's relatively easy in subsequent years to extend that," says Adrian Crook, the founder of Abundant Housing Vancouver, a volunteer-run YIMBY (Yes, In My Back Yard) advocacy group. "I think that's how we get zoning reform. It's not a single pen stroke, it's a bunch of them."

Of course, another attraction of upzoning to municipal governments is that it eliminates the lengthy consultations and public hearings that are required to rezone residential properties for higher densities. Crook, who was in Victoria recently to speak about the YIMBY movement to the Urban Development Institute, cites a recent battle over 21 rental townhomes in Vancouver's high-end Shaughnessy neighbourhood, which concluded in a public hearing with dozens of speakers, consuming 10 hours of city council time. (The council rejected the proposal and a 13,000-square-foot mansion is being built on the lot instead.)

"That is the problem with our current housing-approval process," Crook says. "The

> "I'D LIKE TO SEE US go at least as far as Minneapolis, where they have triplexes as of right [on single-family lots]. I'd like to see four-plexes as of right," Mayor Lisa Helps told her staff. "I think we need to do more with the land that we have."

people who can potentially benefit from those 21 rental townhomes, they may not even live in Vancouver right now, and they're not going to be motivated to show up at a council meeting. But the surrounding neighbourhood is highly motivated, because they perceive harms to be directly visited upon them. So that's what we're constantly fighting."

Crook, who's 43, says it's "reductionist" to claim the two camps split entirely along Millennial-Boomer lines, but he admits that those demanding density and new housing are generally younger, while the oppositional "incumbents" in residential neighbourhoods are older. "They're a generation that was raised on Jane Jacobs, and fighting freeways," Crook says. "That's a good fight, but now they see any type of growth as a bad thing."

Crook has seen it in his own family. "My mother lives in Port Moody, in the house I grew up in. She very much fits that Sierra Club-model of environmentalist, but she voted in the current council because she thinks there's been too much development and change in Port Moody. She loves the Skytrain and West Coast Express, but doesn't want the areas around the stations developed," Crook says. "It's a really weird, contrarian perspective, to want all the amenities but nobody living around them."

Ross Crockford was born at the tail end of the Baby Boom, and lives in a triplex that predates his neighbourhood's single-family zoning.

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Are developers calling the shots in Langford?

JUDITH LAVOIE

Residents are concerned about possible bias and the sacrifice of green space as Langford continues housing push.

"One day a forest, the next day a clearcut," shrugged a Costco shopper, staring at a denuded patch that seemed to have appeared overnight above Langford's big-box stores.

The 20-hectare patch, slated for a mixed commercial and residential development, went through the usual processes at Langford City Council—including a public hearing—but for many it is hard to keep up with the breakneck pace of development in one of BC's fastest-growing cities.

New housing has transformed landscapes, from sprawling rural to small-lot urban, in areas such as Happy Valley and Latoria Roads. There is no sign of a slowdown, despite growing discomfort that the unremitting push to build housing means the loss of natural landscapes. Those concerns are exacerbated by suspicions that developers are controlling the agenda to the detriment of those pleading for larger lots and retention of contiguous green space.

A new development in south Langford

Langford's Official Community Plan calls for 40 percent open space on previously undeveloped land. But wiggle room allows open space to drop to 25 percent if there is a significant community benefit, such as affordable housing or a school site. Critics say those requirements are often waived, or green space is divided into fragments, with playing fields or recreation facilities making up much of the mix, as opposed to more natural parkland.

"They [council] often don't follow their own requirements. They constantly make exceptions for…the benefit of the developer, not for the natural resource," said South Langford resident Mike Turner.

The "clearcut-blast-build" formula, followed by promises to plant saplings, cannot replace the loss of critical and endangered habitats, said a member of Citizens of South Langford for Sustainable Development, one of the recently formed groups asking for a more environmentally and socially sustainable approach to development.

"Langford development requirements do not need to undermine the integrity of our natural ecosystem; instead, they should complement each other," said Tim Allan, a member of the group. "The community has made it clear that preserving natural parkland is important… Council and developers need to hoist in that message, keep the lines of communication open with the community, and more deliberately integrate natural parkland into their planning," he said.

Langford incorporated in 1992 and the City's aggressive push to provide housing has taken the population from 18,000 in 1996 to more than 40,000 today.

Mayor Stew Young, who has been in charge since 1993, proudly proclaims Langford's come-hither approach to developers, saying reducing red tape and delivering fast approvals remains one of council's highest priorities. Langford is renowned for completing rezoning applications in six months, minimizing the time that developers are left in limbo holding expensive land, which helps them keep housing costs more affordable.

According to Langford staff, the pushback from a few residents is weighed against the needs of a broad cross-section of citizens who need homes, along with the need to increase the tax base—which provides amenities ranging from sidewalks to arenas.

Langford planning director Matthew Baldwin said there is some friction in South Langford because it is transitioning from the haphazard pattern of development pre-incorporation to a more organized, urban form of development. That means small-lot or condominium development in areas with more spacious homes or surrounded by green space which is used by the community. But it is impossible to roll back the clock 40 years to a time when there was no development pressure or housing crisis, Baldwin said. "You can't do it that way any more because the fundamental economic underpinnings of land value and construction costs would make that home prohibitively expensive."

Speedy approvals of developments in Langford have come in for criticism (and will likely increase given the removal of the new 11-storey Donwood One's occupancy permit, forcing 86 households to move just before Christmas). Much of the approval work is done behind the scenes as municipal staff work with developers to fine-tune applications before they go to council.

"Quite often we have robust discussions at planning and zoning and resolve a lot of the issues," Baldwin said, noting, "By the time things get to a formal public hearing, there are often no more issues, as people feel their issues have been addressed. Members of the public who had concerns are aware that those concerns have been addressed, and then they may decide not to attend the public hearing." He pointed out that no one turned up when there was a public hearing for 3,000 residential units on Bear Mountain.

Councillor Denise Blackwell, who chairs the Planning, Zoning and Affordable Housing Committee, said background work by staff aims to bring unambiguous proposals to council. "By the time an application gets to the committee stage, it is usually just a matter of tweaking the proposal, adding certain conditions that suit the particular circumstances or address unforeseen concerns raised by neighbours," she said, adding that, since incorporation, the total area of protected green space has increased from 8 percent to more than 20 percent. "Council has also worked to acquire strategic park lands, develop active recreation for all, and continues to support efforts of the region as a whole to protect green spaces through the CRD's Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy," she said.

However, the City's friendliness towards developers troubles some residents, dealing with what they see as a council that does not prioritize

> "THE FACT THAT MOST, or all of the non-elected members are property developers who have dealings with the [Planning, Zoning and Affordable Housing] Committee and the City and who do not appear to declare conflicts of interest, presents—in my opinion—a reasonable apprehension of bias."—*Matthew Nefstead, West Coast Environmental Law*

the environment. A group in the Latoria Road area was surprised when told by council that they had to deal with Draycor Construction Ltd to address concerns about a proposed development.

Council was dismissive when the group first turned up at a council meeting, said Laurie Anderson. "We don't agree with the lot sizes that are being proposed, and there are a lot of environmental concerns… They just dismissed us and said we had to speak with the developer," she said.

There is increasing concern that developers, many with long-term ties to the community and council, hold undue sway.

The Planning, Zoning and Affordable Housing Committee, which provides advice to council, but does not have decision-making authority, is made up of two councillors and five appointed citizens including Kent Sheldrake, co-owner of Draycor Construction Ltd.; Art Creuzot, owner of Luxbury Homes; and Malcolm Hall, owner of Lifestyle Ventures development company and Solo Suites airbnb hotel.

The six-member Board of Variance, which operates at arm's length from council and deals with matters such as relaxation of zoning regulations or tree-protection requirements, includes Cliff Curtis owner of TBJ Properties; Jim Hartshorne, owner of Keycorp Developments Ltd and Westhills Land Corp; land development consultant Rachael Sansom; and Ron Coutre, owner of SouthPoint Partners Ltd and president of Westshore Developers Association.

A spokeswoman for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing said no complaints have been received about the makeup of Langford committees. But some residents are alarmed by the perception of bias.

A presentation on behalf of developers of the property behind Costco was made by Hartshorne, chair of the Board of Variance; a controversial rezoning application for 734 Latoria Road, made by Kevin Parker, co-owner of Draycor Construction, whose partner Sheldrake is a member of the planning and zoning committee, was approved with 17.5 percent green space, despite public opposition.

The selection criteria used by mayor and council is unclear, Allan said. "Given its current membership, the Planning, Zoning and Affordable Housing Committee appears to be overwhelmingly weighted to favour development. With such an apparent bias, it is difficult for it to reflect the broad views from the citizens of Langford," he said. Some members have served several consecutive terms and will continue to the end of 2022, Allan noted.

"The [committee] needs to have a cross-section of representation from not only the developer community, but also public housing representatives, seniors, business, Chamber of Commerce, environmental groups, just to name a few," said Allan.

Turner pointed out that committees are usually balanced between interests such as citizens, First Nations, government, and environmental groups. "I would say that any committee making recommendations to government needs to be balanced between all the special interests that have a stake in whatever they are discussing. So to have it dominated by one group that has a clear, vested interest more than any other group is not appropriate," he said.

J.Ocean Dennie, founder of the Friends of the T'Sou-ke Hills Wilderness, is worried that plans to punch an alternate route to the Malahat will result in a sprawl of development, and he has little faith that Langford will protect wilderness values. "What it comes down to is who is sitting at the table, who is making the decisions and who is pushing the agenda. As concerned citizens, a lot of the time we just don't have that information. We don't have time to keep up with the backroom deals," he said.

Lawyer Matthew Nefstead, who was hired by West Coast Environmental Law to help those fighting for more Latoria Road green space, wrote in his analysis, "The fact that most, or all of the non-elected members are property developers who have dealings with the Committee and the City and who do not appear to declare conflicts of interest, presents—in my opinion—a reasonable apprehension of bias."

But Blackwell said some members of the committee are semi-retired and, as chair of the committee, she asks individuals to recuse themselves if there is a perception of conflict of interest.

The argument heard from Langford staff is that council wants the expertise provided by developers and, for environmental input, relies on registered professional biologists or professional foresters. "I don't think it would serve anyone on the committee or council or the public at large to have one qualified professional questioning another qualified professional's opinion," said a staff member.

With controversy over the makeup of committees, there is a push for more transparency from Langford council—one of the only municipalities in the Capital Regional District that does not webcast meetings. "Why are there no cameras recording the meetings?" asked Terrie Wilcox, who mobilized a group of neighbours worried about overdevelopment in the Goldstream Avenue area, where plans call for redevelopment of St Anthony's Clinic, including a 15-storey condominium building.

Wilcox worries that development is racing ahead of infrastructure, and most of the input heard by council is from tradespeople and developers. "I agree with development due to the housing shortage, [but] Langford is moving far too fast with very little change, if any, to infrastructure," she said, pointing to road dust on her patio table from incessant traffic.

Like many Langford residents, Sarah Forbes agrees that housing development is needed, but the "pitchy-patchy approach" of separate developers is resulting in isolated communities connected by commuter corridors.

"With the large-scale development, we could have some really world-class communities if we had a more sustainable approach to development. It's a huge opportunity that is being missed," said Forbes. "I do support development. We need to grow as a community, but we can do better…We have this great opportunity to grow this whole city, and we could develop it more sustainably with real sustainable practices in mind," she said.

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

The warm-up to waterworld

STEPHEN HUME

Scientists are now saying global climate change will usher in even higher seas and more flooding than previously predicted.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NASA

Greenland's icesheet is melting seven times faster than it was during the 1990s

Fifty years ago, I was an indifferent student drifting through random courses. In my post-teen *ennui*, I mostly hung around the student newspaper office drinking terrible coffee in the hope of chatting up a girl.

The furthest thing from my mind was that my life was actually an *après nous le déluge* moment; that in my lifetime I'd be contemplating floods of biblical proportions that, over the next 50 years, will likely force close to a million Canadians from their homes, including thousands in communities on the South Island, Sunshine Coast and Lower Mainland.

From Oak Bay to Campbell River to Port Alberni, homes, resorts, industrial sites and businesses are now at discernible risk of future flooding wherever they have been built along walk-on beach front or on the flood plains and alluvial fans where scores of streams and rivers that punctuate the coast of Vancouver Island meet tidewater.

It seems like a science fiction scenario from that Kevin Costner sci-fi flick *Waterworld*. Whole city centres drowned? Previously high-demand neighbourhoods rendered uninsurable? Billions of dollars in residential, commercial and industrial real estate written off the board by the environmental consequences of climate change? Here, in our Island Eden?

Yet that's what new research published last October now points toward. It used advanced neural network computing to correct earlier digital models forecasting sea level rise. Earlier calculations of land elevations—and therefore of how much farther inland the high tides of the future might reach, particularly if amplified by a storm—turned out to have underestimated by 30 percent.

The study "New elevation data triple estimates of global vulnerability to sea level rise and coastal flooding" by Scott Kulp and Benjamin Strauss of Climate Central in *Nature Communications* warns that over the next 30 years, about 500,000 Canadians living on coastal lowlands may have to deal with significant annual flooding.

And worst-case scenarios—in which atmospheric carbon emissions continue without abatement on the current trend—will make about 850,000 coast-dwelling Canadians vulnerable to annual floods by the time 2020's first-year students are my age and wondering how their half-century flew by so quickly.

Worldwide, the researchers warn, about 250 million people now live within one metre of sea level. Even conservative estimates point to the near-inevitability of a two-metre rise by the end of the century. Other scientists suggest—and the new research correcting older models lends credence to their alarm—that the geological record warns us that more rapid and higher sea-level rise is not only within the realm of possibility but, perhaps, even probability.

A research team from Australia observes that 125,000 years ago

GREENLAND, Antarctica, Iceland, the Rockies, the Himalayas, the Alps, the Andes—ice is vanishing at a rate that now astonishes scientists used to dealing with change over millennia and geological epochs.

under conditions similar although not identical to the present—atmospheric carbon dioxide levels were then about a third lower than today—sea levels rose quickly to about 10 metres above today's levels.

"What is striking about the last interglacial is how high and quickly sea level rose above present levels," write Fiona Hibbert, Eelco Rohling and Katharine Grant, ocean and climate researchers at Australian National University. "Temperatures during the last interglacial were similar to those projected for the near future, which means melting polar ice sheets will likely affect future sea levels far more dramatically than anticipated to date."

They point out that polar warming did not occur simultaneously during that melt. But thanks to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, warming and loss of ice mass are now happening in both the Arctic and the Antarctic at the same time. "This means that if climate change continues unabated, Earth's past dramatic sea-level rise could be a small taste of what's to come," the Australian scientists say.

It seems reasonable, then, to consider people living up to 10 metres above present sea level to be at potential future risk from combinations of rising seas and higher seasonal tides with storm surges. Those parameters increase the number of people at risk globally to one billion.

At 20, I couldn't imagine being 40. So I understand how these timelines seem unimaginably long for some, even some scientists. But when the predicted events are occurring, the time between then and now will seem like the blink of an eye.

BACK IN MY DAYS OF BLISSFUL IGNORANCE, I'd consider the dolorous prospect of another afternoon researching overdue essays on Greek epitaphs or Wordsworth's view of the metropolis. Instead I'd ride my motorcycle down to Cadboro Bay and take the waterfront past Willows Beach through the Royal Victoria Golf Course to McNeill Bay. From Crescent Road, I'd follow Penzance past the Chinese Cemetery out to Harling Point, named for a local resident who famously expired of hypothermia following a tragic marine rescue in Gonzalez Bay 35 years before my visits.

Harling Point's real name, its first one, at least, is *Sahsima*—Coast Salish for "harpoon." And it's an important spiritual site. It was here that *Xals*, the transformer who mediates between the natural and the supernatural and brings order and balance to the world, changed a seal hunter to stone, simultaneously granting him power over the seals hunted by the Songhees. As Royal BC Museum curator Grant Keddie once observed, Sahsima is a place that signifies the gravity of the natural balance in maintaining the world's order, a notion that seems ever more important as we relentlessly upset the equilibrium of local, regional and global ecologies.

I'd clamber through a dense fringe of broom and prickly gorse and onto the inexpressibly ancient rocks. They still bore recent scars of an Ice Age, left 22,000 years ago by boulders dragged beneath glaciers flowing over the Saanich Peninsula. Those ice sheets were two kilometres deep at maximum, and over the Saanich Peninsula weighed about 250 gigatonnes. The number is incomprehensibly large, like so many in geological time. It represents 250 kilograms with 12 zeros behind it. (That immense mass of ice, by the way, would

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PHOTO: STEPHEN HUME

Willows Beach and the adjacent upland area will eventually disappear beneath the rising sea

be equivalent to less than a quarter of the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere by us since 1850.)

I knew this only because one of those fascinating young women at the student newspaper told me about a geography field trip. She urged me to look for the fault line where rock from ancient continents had collided.

And so there I'd sit with an apple and a piece of cheddar on a blustery afternoon, straddling two vanished continents. The sun gleamed on the last remnants of ancient ice fields on the Olympic Mountains. I watched the endless Pacific suck and gurgle into the deep fissures that ice and moving water had carved into the basalt and chert from 40 million years ago when Wrangellia collided with what geologists call the Leech River Complex.

On a day when the tide was right and the swells were big, bulked up by the surge from some storm beyond the horizon, the seas would boom into the rocky chutes with enough force to make the rock vibrate. Glistening white foam would jet upward, spindrift twisting away on the wind.

My procrastination around schoolwork wasn't wasted time. In fact, it was my first genuine encounter with the idea of time, relativity and what that might mean. There was synchronicity and yet there wasn't. I thought of how those 2000-year-old Greek epitaphs, which had seemed so distant in the classroom, might have been written that very morning, compared to the epitaphs scrawled by glaciers 20,000 years before upon the very rocks where I sat.

And the slow glaciers themselves—what were they, in a time frame of 40 million years? Even Wrangellia was young compared to eternal, changeless Mother Ocean, who was herself writing an epitaph for the vanished continent, grain of sand by grain of sand, even as I watched. The timeless tides come in and go out, I thought, and nothing changes except us, as ephemeral as the spindrift.

But the ocean *is* changing. It's increasing in volume as it heats, and as polar ice caps and high elevation ice sheets melt at faster and faster rates. Most of us have noted the retreat, for example, of the Comox Glacier, the dwindling snow on Island mountains, the Coast Range and the Olympic Mountains. But these are mere glimpses of something vast.

In Alaska, about to log its hottest year ever, glaciers shed mass into the sea at record rates. Some show consecutive years of record ice loss. Others show near-record loss but can't set new records because they've lost so much mass already.

Glaciers in the St Elias Mountains of northwestern BC and the southern Yukon lost about one-quarter of their mass since I was a first-year university student. Glaciologists estimate that over the next 50 years, about 80 percent of the Canadian Rockies' ice fields—the water supply for carbon-pumping Alberta—will melt away.

Greenland, Antarctica, Iceland, the Rockies, the Himalayas, the Alps, the Andes—ice is vanishing at a rate that now astonishes scientists used to dealing with change over millennia and geological epochs.

"These [glacier] collapses would drive up sea levels, devastate marine life and disrupt ocean and atmospheric circulation patterns that dictate temperatures and rainfall around the world," says one late-November report by James Temple in the *MIT Technology Review*. "The death of forests [from drought and fire] would release vast stores of greenhouse gases while the melting of ice would reduce the planet's reflectivity—and raise the risk of setting off still more tipping points."

Thawing permafrost releases greenhouse gases. Ocean acidification caused by warming releases greenhouse gases. Burning forests release greenhouse gases. Humans show no sign of curbing their release of greenhouse gases.

CLIMATE CHANGE DENIERS FREQUENTLY ACCUSE SCIENCE of exaggerating the threat of climate change. A report in *Scientific American* by three scholars, studying how scientists disseminate their findings, says it's precisely the opposite. Not only have scientists not exaggerated, they have seriously underestimated and understated the speed and scope with which change is occurring.

The United Nations' much-vilified Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change turns out not to be the extremist conspiracy touted by denialists. Instead, it's been too conservative. There is bias, it turns out, but it's toward exaggerated caution.

What current data really shows, the report says, is that "disintegration of ice sheets and glaciers is occurring far faster than predicted by theory—as much as two orders of magnitude faster—throwing current model projections of sea level rise further in doubt."

This concern seems to be corroborated by research of American glaciologists, who reported earlier this year that Antarctica's annual loss of ice mass increased 600 percent between 1979 and 2017.

"As the Antarctic ice sheet continues to melt away, we expect multi-metre sea level rise from Antarctica in the coming centuries," said Eric Rignot of the University of California, the study's lead scientist.

Climate scientists with the World Meteorological Organization, which just released its 2019 report on the state of global climate, conclude that Greenland lost 350 gigatonnes of ice this year, that the melt is accelerating, and that it's accelerating in the Antarctic, too.

Another worrisome study reported in *Nature* during the UN summit on climate change in December stated that Greenland's glacier was melting seven times faster than what the IPCC had predicted in the 1990s. Based on observations by 96 polar scientists using satellite imagery and measurements of flow and volume since 1992, scientists labelled it a huge concern, as tipping points might be breached sooner than expected.

There's uncertainty about what will happen between now and the end of the century, but it's clear that if the rate of melt on those two big ice sheets—Greenland's and the Antarctic's—has been significantly underestimated, all hell can break loose in the oceans.

There is enough ice in those two sources to raise sea levels by more than 60 metres. That's not expected to happen or, if it does, to happen over centuries, but so far expectations have regularly been confounded by events.

As climate science writer Eugene Linden pointed out in the *New York Times* in late 2019, had a scientist in the early 1990s suggested that within 25 years a single heat wave would measurably raise sea levels while scorching the Arctic and producing temperatures worthy

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PHOTO: STEPHEN HUME

Already flooding on some high tides, sea level rise could inundate Cadboro Bay's waterfront

of the Sahara desert in Paris and Berlin "the prediction would have been dismissed as alarmist." But that happened last summer. In parts of Florida, residential neighbourhoods have endured more than 80 consecutive days of ocean flooding. For some, the worst-case future has already arrived.

WHAT HAS ALL THIS TO DO WITH US, living in our complacent West Coast Eden?

Well, many on the Island, surrounded by the rising sea, already live or work at or below the two-metre elevation that's now the conservative estimate for sea-level rise. The entire Windsor Park area in Oak Bay, for example, has two metres of elevation. The entrance to the BC Provincial Archives building is one metre above sea level.

So, if on the evidence and given the consistency of underestimation, it seems reasonable to assume that a 10-metre rise is now a possibility, then the risks for householders, businesses and infrastructure begin to look large, indeed.

For example, the steps of the provincial legislature building are six metres above sea level, as is the foyer of the Royal BC Museum. Bastion Square is five metres. New residential complexes around the Selkirk Waterway are four metres. The entrance to St Anne's Academy is six metres. Esquimalt High School is four metres. Shopping centres in downtown Campbell River are all less than eight metres.

Interactive maps created by the same researchers who found previous estimates of coastal elevations to be wrong, calculate flooding from sea-level rise at different temperatures. At four degrees of global warming, Oak Bay is bisected by a new sea channel that extends from Oak Bay Marina to Beach Drive at McNeill Bay. Willows Beach, with its multi-million-dollar homes, is inundated as far back as Beach Drive.

Cadboro Bay Village is below the tideline as far as Arbutus Road. Much of Tsawout Indian Reserve at Saanichton Bay is under water. Downtown Sidney is almost entirely flooded from just north of the airport interchange to North Saanich Marina. Swartz Bay ferry terminal is under water. Land east of Patricia Bay is flooded inland almost as far as Pat Bay Highway.

In Victoria, James Bay becomes an archipelago. The historic buried stream flowing from Fairfield to near the Inner Harbour becomes an inlet. Rock Bay floods up Discovery and Pembroke streets almost as far as Douglas. The sea extends up Bridge Street from Bay Street to Ellice. Along the Selkirk Waterway, all the land below Tyee Road is drowned. Properties fronting the Gorge are largely flooded.

High-value areas in the potential danger zone near Victoria are found in Cadboro Bay, Telegraph Cove, Maynard Cove, Cordova Bay, Sayward Beach, Saanichton Bay, Ferguson Cove and Bazan Bay. Farther up Island, Cowichan Bay, the estuaries of the Chemainus, Englishman, Qualicum, Somass and Campbell rivers, Parksville, Lantzville, Rathtrevor, Saratoga and Miracle beaches would all be at risk from sharply rising sea levels combined with storm surges and seasonal high tides. For rural residents, saltwater intrusion into wells, septic fields and farmland becomes an issue.

Are these scenarios extraordinarily far-fetched? Is it sensationalist fear-mongering to raise them for discussion? Well, if anybody has a vested interest in figuring out what might lie ahead, it's the insurance industry. And the insurance industry is worried.

Several US studies conclude that real estate values in coastal risk zones already feel the impact. Researchers at the University of Colorado's business school estimated that properties exposed to sea-level rise are already selling, on average, for seven percent less. A sea-level research group called First Street Foundation says that on the US East Coast and Gulf Coast, exposed properties have lost $16 billion in appreciation value since 2005.

In Canada, the senior research director at the Bank of Canada's Financial Stability Department warned earlier this year that climate change has the potential by the end of the century to reduce global annual GDP by up to 23 percent. Those who thought the recession of 2008 was bad should imagine one ten times deeper.

Lloyd's, a global player in insurance, carefully studied the damage claims following Hurricane Sandy, which struck New York in 2012. It concluded that sea-level rise increased flooding losses by 30 percent. During the storm,16 historical records for high tides were broken on the Atlantic seaboard. New York's subway flooded.

"Rising sea levels around the world could have significant implications for insurers in the context of storm surge," Lloyd's concluded in its 2014 report. And Munich Re, one of the corporate giants that insure insurance companies, says that significantly higher insurance premiums for property owners in areas vulnerable to sea-level rise are already emerging.

So one prospect that Island waterfront property and coastal flood-plain property owners may face is whether their properties

will in future be deemed uninsurable and possibly become unsellable.

All this raises important questions for policy makers, provincial and municipal governments, insurers, taxpayers and property owners that deserve a robust public discussion.

It's time for a clear-eyed and serious exchange of views about who pays the bill for risk and damage which, it seems inevitable, will increase year by year.

What should happen when property becomes increasingly vulnerable to a known risk? Some jurisdictions in the United Kingdom, for example, already plan to move entire low-lying coastal communities to higher ground lock, stock and barrel. Others, including Richmond on the Lower Mainland, are betting on dykes, levees and flood-control infrastructure.

Where does future liability lie if development is zoned by provincial and municipal authorities for real estate that lies in risk areas vulnerable to flooding should the sea level rise more dramatically than current predictions?

What about taxation? Right now walk-on waterfront is taxed at a premium, because it's a high-demand commodity that generates high value. But what if the value depreciates rapidly because of flooding risk and an eventual inability to insure?

Most municipal taxpayers could never afford to buy beachfront homes. Where should the burden for mitigating risk to such properties from sea-level rise fall? That is, should all taxpayers be paying for anti-flooding infrastructure that protects high-value residential districts that most of those taxpayers are financially excluded from living in?

Should we be having a conversation about if, when, or whether provincial and municipal governments should start restricting development in flood-prone areas, or even providing incentives to shift residential and commercial occupants to safer ground, or planning to dyke areas to make them flood-proof?

And, of course, the big question for all of us is, who pays and how?

Stephen Hume spent half a century as a journalist writing about Western Canada, the Far North, BC and the Island. His byline has appeared in most major Canadian newspapers. The author of nine books of poetry, natural history, history and literary essays, he lives on the Saanich Peninsula.

Focus presents: Tom Watson, Odlum Brown Limited

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Investing in community and the environment

Most days, rain or shine, you can find Tom Watson cycling from his Langford home to his Odlum Brown office in Downtown Victoria where he's an investment advisor. That's a 35-kilometre return trip. On the few occasions he doesn't cycle, he drives an electric car. It's all about lowering his personal carbon footprint.

An avid environmentalist and investment advisor for 30 years, Tom Watson 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. Besides assisting the Conservancy to build a stronger financial footing, lately he's also been working with TLC and Langford citizens to persuade a developer to preserve 40 percent of a large property as community greenspace.

His environmental ethics play out, as well, in the solar panels lining his home's roof, and in the double walls and radiant heated concrete floors that help keep his home's carbon footprint low. "It is a very efficient and passive house," says Tom, adding, "I live what I preach and I invest the same way—and find it actually works."

To prove that, Tom willingly shows clients his own investment portfolio which includes carefully-chosen investments in the electrification of the transportation system and alternative energy.

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."

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 involved in renewable energy like wind, solar and geothermal. These utilities would not only be buying green energy assets, but also increase their dividends regularly.

"I continue to purchase equities that fit in the ESG category, being environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and showing good governance." He also prefers corporations that regularly increase their dividends or distributions, and where possible local companies. "Investing capital can lead to a better world," he says,

Walking the talk: Tom Watson commutes to work by bicycle or electric car

noting that buying good quality equities doesn't depend on good timing or the fluctuations of the market.

As proof, Tom provides long-term performance reports for all of his clients which show the solid returns they have made over the years. He credits these returns to his firm's independent, research-based approach, his 30 years of experience, and his Bachelor of Science degree in Economics and Psychology.

With a passion for ethical investing, Tom helps his clients live according to their own values, while maintaining financial security. Tom welcomes your call to learn more.

Thomas G.L. Watson, Investment Advisor
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Replacing Saanich's EDPA bylaw proves challenging

BRIONY PENN

Concerns over slow progress lead to questions about campaign donations from developers.

The scrapping of Saanich's EDPA bylaw allowed this property, which includes an endangered Garry oak ecosytem, to be redeveloped

Several years ago, Saanich resident Merie Beauchamp and her husband bought a large lot overrun with invasive species. It had subdivision potential but was also subject to the Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA) bylaw. Under the EDPA, they would be required to work with Saanich planners and biologists, should they want to subdivide, in order to minimize the impact to the endangered Garry oak ecosystem.

Both Beauchamps had biological backgrounds and were curious about what lay under the brambles and daphne. Said Merie: "We removed the invasives and the land came back to life. The native wildflowers began to reappear, the Garry oaks suppressed under the invasives started to take off, the butterflies, birds and other wildlife returned and we realized that we could help restore the natural diversity of this piece of land."

The couple decided that they had an opportunity to manage this restored area, which lies adjacent to a protected area. Conventional thinking would describe them as having cost society in foregone development values. "True cost accounting," however, would value their actions in terms of averting the rising costs of the biodiversity and climate change emergencies. Beauchamp wants people to get excited about true cost accounting and to educate people about the harm of the business-as-usual approach, but it is a hard thing to do with a council that is mostly stuck in an old paradigm.

In May, the UN Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released a report that gave humanity a dire prognosis. A million species are now threatened with extinction, and our own species may follow if we don't do something about the threats.

In the District of Saanich, over 90 of those species are at risk along with the ecosystems that support them. As one of the most affluent, well-educated, and still biologically-rich urban/rural districts in Canada, Saanich could be playing a leading role in reversing this trend. However, this region has lost ground—literally and figuratively. Garry oak meadows have been blasted into oblivion for everything from swimming

"A CONFLICT OF INTEREST BYLAW for municipal donations might be a good start. Then let's get Natural Saanich back on track." —*Merie Beauchamp*

pools to subdivisions ever since Saanich scrapped its progressive Environmental Development Permit Area (EDPA)—a bylaw and planning tool that had, since 2012, a proven record of guiding development away from, and around, endangered ecosystems.

A byelection in late 2017 had resulted in a pro-development majority on council, which moved quickly to rescind the EDPA—though a replacement was promised. A battle for sustainability was waged in the suburbs, with lawyered-up landowners and developers on one side, and Saanich residents who supported the bylaw on the other.

Saanich resident Merie Beauchamp

Since then, the battle has continued with divisions growing deeper. And the casualties of the lack of regulation are evident all over Saanich—endangered ecosystems wiped off their last remaining spots on Earth: at Mount Douglas Cross Road, Rainbow Road, Ten Mile Point, Gordon Head Road, Milner Road, Holland Avenue. Until journalist Wolf Depner was moved from the *Saanich News* to a new beat in Oak Bay, you could read regularly about yet another endangered meadow getting ploughed under by a bulldozer.

The public discourse has only grown more heated. The College of Applied Biology permanently rescinded the membership of Ted Lea, a key player in the opposition to the EDPA, for violation of the college's code of ethics stemming from his role in the matter. Councillor Nathalie Chambers urged her fellow council members to reinstate the EDPA given its removal was, in part, based on faulty reports from the biologist—or at least place a moratorium on Garry oak removals. (She failed.) University of Victoria faculty and students have weighed in on the science. Citizen's groups, like the Falaise Community Association, have gathered people at a Tree Love Town Hall this spring "because of a growing concern for the protection of the residual Garry oak ecosystems under threat." Citizen watchdogs, like Katherine Whitworth, are tracking what appears to be the increasing control of council by developers through electoral donations to councillors—and Chambers is calling for a ban on such donations.

A perusal of the political donors to councillor campaigns reads like a who's who of the local development industry, studded with family names like Jawl, Miller (Abstract Developments), Mann, Vanderkerkhove, Geric, and Knappet. Though donations from corporations are prohibited, and individual donations capped at $1200/year ($2400 in an election year), there's nothing to stop multiple family members and a company's staff from donating (this has also been noticed in other municipalities).

The industry benefits when it controls the land-use planning process and has every incentive to populate council with people who share their views. That is not news. What is news is that according to the authors of the UN's IPBES report, the key driver of extinctions worldwide is changes in land use. It also notes the trend is reversible. "Nature can still be *conserved, restored* and *used sustainably*." The authors stress the necessity of transforming governance and accountability, so that the full costs of *not* conserving or restoring natural systems and of *not* using land sustainably are assessed. Accountability also entails the rigorous uncoupling of politics from land use change and its biggest driver, the development industry.

Not surprisingly, the conflict in Saanich is exacerbated by highly confusing narratives being put forward by pro-development councillors in which citizens are told that they must choose: housing versus nature; public versus private land stewardship; farming versus conservation; restoration versus conservation; wetlands over Garry oak; emissions reduction over carbon sink expansion. Claiming that one action over another is prudent and efficient is far easier to sell politically—especially if it retains the status quo.

From where the researchers of our climate and biodiversity crisis sit, however, choice is a luxury that the world doesn't have. If we are going to avert this emergency, then we actually have to transform our thinking and figure out a way to integrate all these components of the crisis, now.

As Dr Eric Higgs of the University of Victoria's School of Environmental Studies puts it, "Every effort matters. We have to stem the loss *and* restore. For example, if we are at roughly five percent remnant Garry oak habitat presently, what would it take to get to six percent or 10 or 20 percent? What could happen if citizens were encouraged to take action in their front and backyards, new developments had stringent offset requirements, old trees were cherished, and Saanich really took seriously the need for nature-based solutions?"

BEAUCHAMP WAS AGAINST SCRAPPING THE EDPA, and says the impacts of its loss have been immediate and unnecessary. The move has also devalued and demoralized other efforts for conservation and restoration on private land. She cites as an example, the controversial 4355 Gordon Head Road property where an endangered ecosystem that had previously been protected under the EDPA (through restricting building to an already existing building footprint) was destroyed for a swimming pool by moving the development closer to the cliff to take advantage of ocean views. "Why, when an alternative existed, would we allow an endangered ecosystem to be destroyed for someone's swimming pool? The cost is borne by the next generation."

In the Milner Road development, four city lots of Garry oak woodland were razed with the lifting of the EDPA. Lauraine Derman, former Councillor Vic Derman's widow, wrote to Saanich, stating, "At present, we see the 'Sustainable' Saanich moniker being abused and ridiculed as we witness some developers flaunting regulations and racing to destroy unique, ecological sensitive areas previously under EDPA protection. A case in point (among others)…is the well-publicized Milner/Leveret incident."

Saanich Councillor Rebecca Mersereau

Dr Eric Higgs

Saanich Councillor Natalie Chambers

Against this backdrop of ecological destruction, many citizens wanted to see some sort of replacement for the rescinded EDPA—and quickly. Saanich staff had been working to create the "Natural Saanich" Environmental Policy Framework—which would include polices and regulations related to addressing climate change, biodiversity and stewardship—and envisioned the Framework being completed by 2022. But they also suggested some possible interim measures to address gaps left by the loss of the EDPA. These potentially included an enhanced tree bylaw (protecting other at-risk species), an enhanced fill bylaw (stopping wetland infill), and an adjusted development application. These were considered by staff as "low-hanging fruit as they are easily achievable and relatively effective," according to meeting minutes.

But the Framework, particularly its interim regulatory measures, was questioned by some councillors, including the Chair of Saanich's Environmental and Natural Areas Advisory Committee, Rebecca Mersereau. Minutes of a June 2019 meeting show she questioned the effectiveness of regulatory measures. In this, her views were at odds with the committee she chaired.

Mersereau argued in a July Facebook post that "developing and administering regulations also consumes resources and limits our ability to use other strategies to achieve the same goals, or other environmental goals we consider important. As much as it would be nice, resources are not available in an unlimited supply to help us achieve our environmental goals. If we were more cognizant of all these challenges, and if biodiversity conservation is truly a priority in Saanich, I believe we would have long ago invested more resources into protecting and even enhancing biodiversity in our extensive protected parks network."

Beauchamp has disagreed on development-related issues with other members of Saanich council, but nowhere has the narrative been more confusing for her than with Mersereau, who has degrees in biology, education and water resource management; was mentored by former Councillor Vic Derman; and once supported the EDPA.

Beauchamp now draws a clear relationship between councillors' decisions and their financial backers, and believes that rules around conflict of interest and disclosure must be tightened to ensure land-use decisions serve wider interests.

She cites four donors from the development industry to Mersereau's campaign, and adds "politics shouldn't be mixed with science."

Dr Higgs has also responded to Mersereau on the interim regulatory measures question: "We need regulatory capacity to limit negative actions, and reward virtuous ones. This is why I *support very strongly* the kind of integrated package of initiatives comprising the Natural Saanich project. Stripping out the potential for discouraging or stopping heedless actions on private lands, or focusing only on remaining jewels [parks] that make up such a tiny fraction of historical habitat, will result in a future Saanich that is like every other municipality that failed to address issues sooner."

Higgs points to the March 1, 2019 United Nations General Assembly 2021-2030 declaration of the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and suggests, "It would be unfortunate and ironic if Saanich were now to turn its back on the power and promise of hundreds of projects on public and private lands. Yes, environmental conditions are changing—a fact I know too well from my own research on novel ecosystems—but this is hardly an argument for letting the perfect stand in the way of good outcomes, especially those that support innovative approaches to biodiversity conservation and restoration. Every remnant patch of biodiversity that can be conserved or restored makes a difference to climate adaptation and flourishing ecosystems, whether natural, novel, or hybrid."

At the heart of Higgs' analysis is the fact that 75 percent of the world's land base has now been "significantly altered by human actions" and an international consensus of biologists advocate *Nature Needs Half*—a goal already in the CRD Regional Parks Strategic Plan. There is no research that comes to the conclusion that we will survive the political expediency of scrapping regulations on private land use for protecting endangered ecosystems. Landscape ecologist Jan Kirkby, who worked on Saanich's original Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory mapping, notes "with strong, forward-thinking leadership and public education, landowners and land managers can embrace these conservation-based planning tools as they have in many other jurisdictions. EDPAs provide guidance and opportunities to enhance both natural and property values of the land. There are also tools like the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) for conserving special features and sensitive ecosystems on private land."

Local governments are indeed free to change zoning to achieve conservation goals without compensation. But that is rarely done and only as a last resort. Kirkby emphasizes "most developers and property owners labour under a critical misconception, that there is such a thing

as 'development rights' in Canada, that people ought to be able to do whatever they want on their land, and no local government has or should have the right to restrict development. These beliefs and views originate in the US and are supported by their constitution; however, Canada's constitution supports the collective over the individual."

TWO YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE DEMISE OF THE EDPA. And now some fear that Saanich council will further delay measures that would hopefully fill the gaps left by its loss. Mersereau, however, assured *Focus* in an email: "Council has approved an expedited timeline for the development of the EPF, so I'm hopeful that by mid 2020 we'll all have a better sense of at least the scope of it."

Yet even the original process was to take until 2022, so any further delays are worrisome to those witnessing ecosystem destruction as the development boom continues.

For now, a technical group to advise the process has been approved. But no "interim measures" (as the staff report advocated) to protect endangered ecosystems are likely in the near future, says Councillor Nathalie Chambers, who has repeatedly asked for them to deal with the biodiversity emergency.

She is also advocating tighter accountability of councillors. Under the *Community Charter*, council members have to declare their own personal investments and may not vote or exercise influence over them. Chambers suggests, "They should *also* have to recuse themselves when voting on development issues when they receive developers' donations." She suggests accountability might have prevented some other recent moves that were developer-friendly: a proposed new bylaw raising development cost charges (DCC) was delayed, denying Saanich taxpayers $2 million; Local Area Plans were halted in favour of fast-tracking housing; and Abstract Developments, which has eight downstream applications, was granted special privileges on the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability, having access where Chambers, for example, has none.

Chambers' concern over the development industry's "undue influence" has led her to propose a resolution for the Union of BC Municipalities to eliminate developer donations.

Councillor Mersereau did not address *Focus*' questions regarding Higgs' challenge of her ecological rationale or Chamber's comments of undue influence, but referred us to her July Facebook post which asserts: "Yup —that's right! We're in a process to discuss a process… If we have a good process set up to objectively evaluate how effective each option will be at helping us achieve our goals—whether they are voluntary, financial, or regulatory options (which the EDPA is one example of)—I can support the options that emerge at the top, regardless of what form they take."

Higgs responds, "We should not be caught in the midst of spats that result in inaction, but leading with the framework, policies, legislative action, and public programs that result in the very kind of Saanich that people will value in the future."

What do we need to get there? Beauchamp suggests "a conflict of interest bylaw for municipal donations might be a good start. Then let's get Natural Saanich back on track."

Briony Penn is an award-winning writer of creative non-fiction books including *The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan*, *A Year on the Wild Side* and, most recently, *Following the Good River: The Life and Times of Wa'xaid*, a biography of Cecil Paul *(Rocky Mountain Books)*.

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RUSS FRANCIS

While political leaders exude enthusiasm, some large firms involved seem to be looking for the exits.

To hear our political leaders tell it, liquefied natural gas (LNG) is the solution to all that ails us. For instance, in December 2019 federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau called Canadian LNG a "very positive opportunity." Premier John Horgan promises $23 billion in new government revenue from the LNG Canada project, where construction is underway on the shores of Douglas Channel, south of Kitimat.

Several other LNG projects are in the wings. By far the largest of these is Kitimat LNG, projected for Bish Cove, also on the Douglas Channel, not far from the LNG Canada site. Continuing the tradition of zero Canadian content, Kitimat LNG is a partnership between wholly-owned subsidiaries of California-based Chevron and Australia's Woodside Energy. The plant would be supplied with fracked fossil gas via the proposed 471 kilometre Pacific Trail Pipeline. While there has yet to be a final go-ahead, things have been churning along.

The BC Oil and Gas Commission has issued Kitimat LNG 26 permits for roads, water and site use. The plant site is on Haisla Nation Reserve Land, and Kitimat LNG has signed a benefits agreement with the Haisla Nation. It also has an agreement with 16 First Nations along the route of the pipeline, via the First Nations Limited Partnership (though the Unist'ot'en are still protesting it running through their territory). Construction is due to start in 2022/23.

Kitimat LNG's ambitions are growing. On April 1, 2019, it asked the National Energy Board to approve boosting production from the originally planned 10 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of LNG to 18 MTPA, and to double the term of its export licence from 20 years to 40, starting when the plant expects to begin operations in 2029. In a December 4, 2019 letter, the National Energy Regulator (which has superseded the National Energy Board) granted the increases. This would make Kitimat LNG nearly as big a player as LNG Canada, which plans on exporting 14 MTPA to start, expected to double to 28 MTPA.

Despite the project's apparent progress, both partners now appear to have cold feet. Woodside Chief Executive Officer Peter Coleman announced he wanted to reduce the company's 50 percent stake in Kitimat LNG "from a capital management and risk management point of view," according to a September 11, 2019 report in *LNG World News*. That's corporate-speak for: "This costs too much and is too risky."

The other partner is Chevron, one of the world's largest fossil fuel companies, with 2018 sales of $159 billion US. Less than a week after the National Energy Regulator approval, Chevron announced that it, too, wants out of Kitimat LNG. And—unlike Woodside—it is hoping to unload its entire 50 percent holding. Why? Said Chevron Chief Executive Officer Michael Wirth in a December 10, 2019 statement: "We are positioning Chevron to win in any environment by ratably investing in the highest return, lowest risk projects in our portfolio."

So now both owners of Kitimat LNG believe it is too expensive and too risky compared with other projects. Not helping prospects is the fact that Chevron had previously committed to not only build, but also operate the Bish Cove facility.

THE PENDING DEPARTURES OF THESE CORPORATE PLAYERS are in spite of the BC government's giveaways to the liquefied fossil fuel companies, including tax cuts and reduced hydro rates. And let's not forget the royalty credits, which provide huge discounts to the payments that companies make for taking Crown-owned oil and gas.

For reasons unknown, until now there has been no way to discover which companies get how much in credits. Even a recent report from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) could only provide totals—$830 million for all fossil fuel production in 2017-18, with "at least CAD 2.6 billion to 3.1 billion in outstanding royalty credits from fossil fuel producers…[E]ach year, fossil fuel producers claim millions of dollars in credits to reduce the amounts of royalties they pay…These billions in outstanding credits is money that fossil fuel producers will not have to pay in future years and that BC's citizens will not see put toward social services."

The IISD report, *Locked In and Losing Out*, says such subsidies are undermining BC's efforts on climate change. Besides phasing out fossil fuels, it recommends "BC should publicly release all data related to government spending on fossil fuel subsidies each year since currently very little data is available."

Thanks to a two-year battle by Ben Parfitt, resource policy analyst with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, we now have at least some of that information. After the government rejected his Freedom of Information requests for the data, he filed a number of requests for review with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, ultimately succeeding. Commenting on the government's initial refusals, Parfitt said: "To refuse to release information on oil and gas royalty credits is troubling."

Having finally received the deep-well credit royalty data, Parfitt shared it with *Focus*. These credits earned Woodside Energy and Chevron $3.2 million in the 2016 to 2018 period. The amount handed to all companies in that period totalled $2.1 billion. And while Parfitt was successful in obtaining the data on royalty credits, in December, 2019 he was still trying to learn the amounts that fracked-gas producers actually did pay after the credits were deducted. The government's usual practice is to publish details of all financial spending and revenue. Royalty credits, like other tax credits, are a type of public spending, known as "tax expenditures."

The data Parfitt obtained shows that when it comes to royalty credits, LNG Canada has handily outdone its would-be competitor down the channel. From 2016 to 2018, the consortium's five partners and their wholly-owned subsidiaries collected $266.5 million from taxpayers in deep-well royalty credits. A further $167.3 million was shared by Encana, Cutbank Dawson Gas Resources Ltd—wholly owned by LNG Canada partner Mitsubishi—and other unspecified companies. Then there are two infrastructure royalty credit programs, which earned LNG Canada partners Petronas and Shell (and their subsidiaries) more credits worth $23.9 million in 2016- 2018. Plus a further $27.5 million to Mitsubishi's partly-owned Cutbank.

A further handout to entice liquefied, fracked gas comes in the form of carbon tax rebates.

FROM 2016 TO 2018, the consortium's five partners and their wholly-owned subsidiaries collected $266.5 million from taxpayers in deep-well royalty credits.

A November 7, 2019 cabinet order brings LNG under the government's CleanBC industrial incentive program. It ensures that producers of LNG will likely never pay more than $30 per tonne in carbon tax, which, for the rest of us, is now at $40 and due to stop increasing at $50 in 2021.

Sonia Furstenau, the BC Green house leader, said in an interview that this is an abuse of the industrial incentive program, which was meant to help large, established GHG polluters reduce their emissions. "It was never intended to provide incentives to new fossil fuel industries," she said. "It's Orwellian to apply it in this way."

During the last Question Period before the legislature rose on November 28, a determined Furstenau wanted details of the refunds. In response, Minister of Environment and Climate Change George Heyman confirmed that all present and future qualifying LNG players are eligible for the program, in perpetuity.

What is the cost of this additional subsidy? To use government figures, once LNG Canada is up and running with all four trains (production units), the facility alone will emit 4.2 megatonnes (Mt) of GHGs each year. By that time, with the carbon tax at $50 per tonne, LNG Canada's rebates will cost taxpayers 4.2 million x ($50 minus $30) = $84 million annually. Even $50 is far too low, according to a November 27, 2019 report from Canada's Ecofiscal Commission. Rather, it needs to be at least $210 if we are to meet the 2030 Paris targets. At $210, BC's carbon tax refunds to LNG Canada would amount to $180 per tonne, for a total of $756 million annually. Even that is peanuts to the company, but it's on top of the growing list of other subsidies.

The carbon tax refund program is subject to several conditions, including the facilities in question meeting emissions "benchmarks," according to a detailed response to questions asked of the Environment and Climate Change Strategy Ministry. If it's any comfort to taxpayers, the rebate program ends if the world carbon tax ever reaches the BC price.

AS OF *FOCUS'S* DEADLINE, there were no takers to buy Chevron and Woodside out of Kitimat LNG. What about the Province? That's not likely, as BC's finances are no longer in such great shape. On September 27, 2019 Finance Minister Carole James called on the public service to cut $300 million, and the Insurance Corporation of BC may stick us with an additional $400 million charge in the 2019/20 fiscal year.

Why not ask the feds? After all, in 2018 they coughed up $4.4 billion for Kinder Morgan, netting Kinder Morgan Canada—which is approximately 70 percent owned by Texas-based Kinder Morgan—a $2.7 billion profit. A Canadian government purchase of Kitimat LNG might even soothe some of Alberta's hostility towards the rest of us. What's to lose—besides the end of life as we know it?

Russ Francis taught sessions for more than a decade at UVic's Environmental Law Centre.

January, February & March Events

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Aging in the Anthropocene
with **Jan Inglis**
Four Tuesdays, February 4 – 25; 1:30 – 3:30 pm
$75 or $20 drop in; Church of Truth, 111 Superior Street

Earth Spirituality, a Meta-spiritual Journey into the Sacredness of the Universe
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City of Victoria cheats on emissions count

DAVID BROADLAND

The Climate Leadership Team massaged an engineering report to justify policy directions the City had already taken.

An engineering company's report obtained from the City of Victoria through an FOI request shows that the City cheated on its first attempt to plot a critical path to lower territorial greenhouse gas emissions. The way in which the report's findings were changed suggest that the City was intent on manufacturing information for its *Climate Leadership Plan* that would provide support for policy directions it was already pursuing, or wanted to pursue.

Stantec Engineering was hired by the City to assess the municipality's emissions in 2017. The City published its *Climate Leadership Plan* (*CLP*) in 2018.

Focus reviewed the *CLP* in mid-2019. While the 66-page report is full of high-level visions and soft goals, the only hard information about emissions, and how those might be reduced, were numbers that appeared in percentage breakdowns of the sources of emissions, and in a wedge graph titled "Pathways to 2050 GHG Emissions Reductions." These were attributed to a "GPC Compliant Inventory, 2017." *Focus* requested the inventory and the City released Stantec's report to us in late October. There are several interesting differences between the information in the City's *Climate Leadership Plan* and Stantec's report.

Stantec estimated GHG emissions that occured within the municipality's boundaries in 2017 were 465,482 tonnes. It classified those emissions by categories that were in accordance with the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emissions Basic+. But the City's *CLP* used "387,694" tonnes and "370,000" tonnes on different pages, thereby reducing at least 77,788 tonnes of emissions with six taps on a keyboard.

If the emissions Stantec estimated had been used, the paper pathway the City had plotted for reducing those emissions by 2050 would have missed its target by a wide margin.

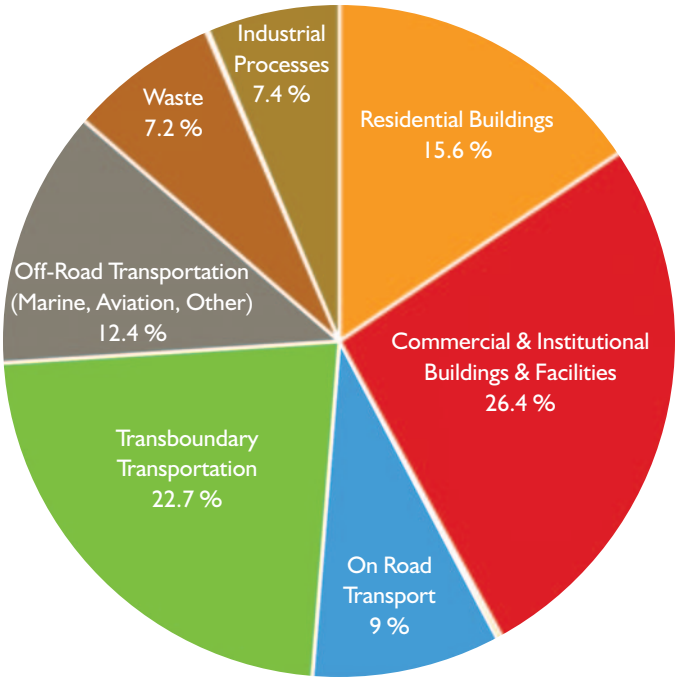
A more telling difference between Stantec's and the City's account of emissions is the way in which the categories used by Stantec were changed by the City. The GPC protocol has established categories of territorial emissions that allow comparison with other jurisdictions and provide a method for consistently measuring progress from year to year. Adhering to the GPC categories creates transparency, which in turn allows accountability.

Adhering to the GPC Basic+ protocol is also a requirement for any city that wants to be listed on the Carbon Disclosure Project's A-List, or is a signatory to the Compact of Mayors. Because of the way the City altered Stantec's reported emissions, the *CLP* doesn't meet the requirements of either of those projects. Neither is it GPC compliant.

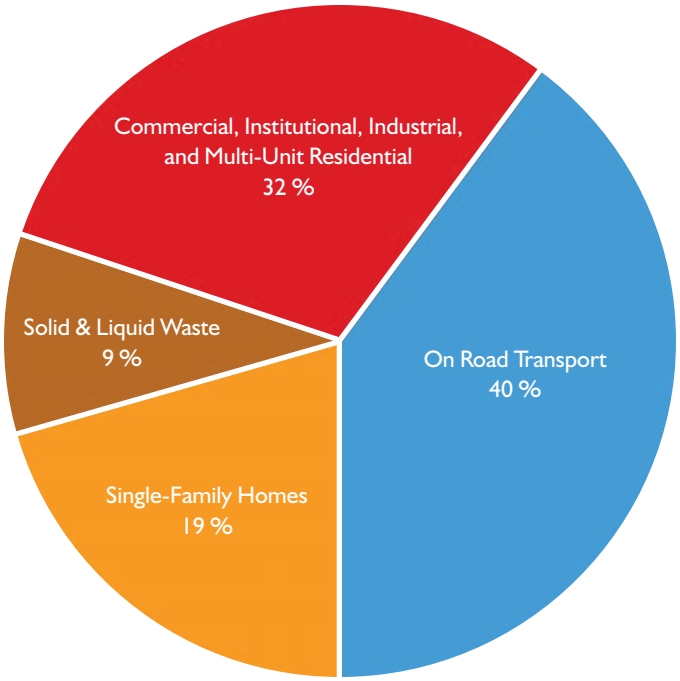
The City eliminated three of the seven categories for which Stantec had found significant emissions (see pie charts below). That included the category "Industrial Processes and Product Use (IPPU)," which had the highest rate of growth in Victoria—66 percent over the last 10 years. The City also eliminated the GPC categories "Transboundary Transportation" and "Off-Road Transportation," which accounted for, combined, 35 percent of all territorial emissions. Lastly, the City moved multi-unit residential buildings out of the GPC category "Residential Buildings" and lumped it in with the GPC category "Commercial & Institutional Buildings and Facilities."

Why would the City eliminate the Industrial Processes and Product Use category? The most significant IPPU emission sources in Victoria

What Stantec reported to the City of Victoria
Total 2017 emissions = 465,482 tonnes CO_2-e



What the City of Victoria did with Stantec's report
Total 2017 emissions = 387,694 tonnes CO_2-e



THE SUBSTANCE of the *Climate Leadership Plan* is based on inaccurate reporting of overall emissions, deletion of those the City doesn't care to reduce, and exaggeration of emissions it has already committed to address.

are the concrete batch plants around Rock Bay, which supply much of the concrete used in construction of buildings in the Downtown core and in the city's neighbourhoods. The City has no intention of restricting such growth, of course, because new construction increases the City's tax base. So it got around that pesky problem by deleting the category.

In the City's version of Stantec's report, single-family homes have suddenly become greater emitters than Stantec had found for single-family and multi-family buildings combined. Perhaps to stymie any efforts at holding the City accountable (like this story), it then moved multi-family residential buildings in with "industrial" and "commercial, institutional" buildings and found that this category now had emissions of 124,062 tonnes, only slightly higher than the 123,370 tonnes Stantec had attributed to just commercial and institutional buildings in its assessment. Trying to figure out the City's rationale for doing that produces a sensation in my brain that I imagine is something like having a mini-stroke.

In a similarly puzzling shift, the City made a separate category for single-family homes and held it responsible for a bigger percentage of emissions than Stantec had found for multi-family and single-family residential housing combined.

It may be entirely coincidental, but there is a move afoot at City Hall, led by Mayor Lisa Helps, to eliminate single-family zoning throughout the City of Victoria. If it comes to that, the mayor and her supporters will be able to point to the *Climate Leadership Plan* and say, "Look, our GPC Compliant Inventory shows this will address a big source of emissions."

Another of City Hall's controversial directions might be at the heart of the difference between Stantec's findings and the City's spin of Stantec's findings regarding transportation emissions.

Stantec found that "On Road Transport" accounted for nine percent of total territorial emissions. Victoria's version boosted that to 40 percent. This category is intended to measure emissions from cars, trucks and buses that don't cross the City of Victoria's boundaries. In other words, it's *not* intended to include vehicles that make longer trips, too long for most people to make by walking or cycling. Emissions that result from longer trips are counted under "Transboundary Transportation," a category the City eliminated.

In the City's version of reality, cars, trucks and buses making short trips on its streets are the single biggest emissions problem by far. That version supports its choice to spend money and create community division in the hope of getting people to cycle instead of driving a car.

Stantec found that "Off-Road Transportation" (marine, aviation, other) accounted for 12.4 percent of emissions, even higher than on-road transportation. Yet the City's climate-action brain trust deep-sixed these emissions altogether, perhaps influenced by the tourism lobby.

This is classic decision-based evidence-making.

In early 2019, City staff requested that council approve a $540,000 increase in spending related to further development of its climate initiatives. Those initiatives included expanding the size of the City's public relations department.

David Broadland is the publisher of *Focus*.

Continuing EDUCATION

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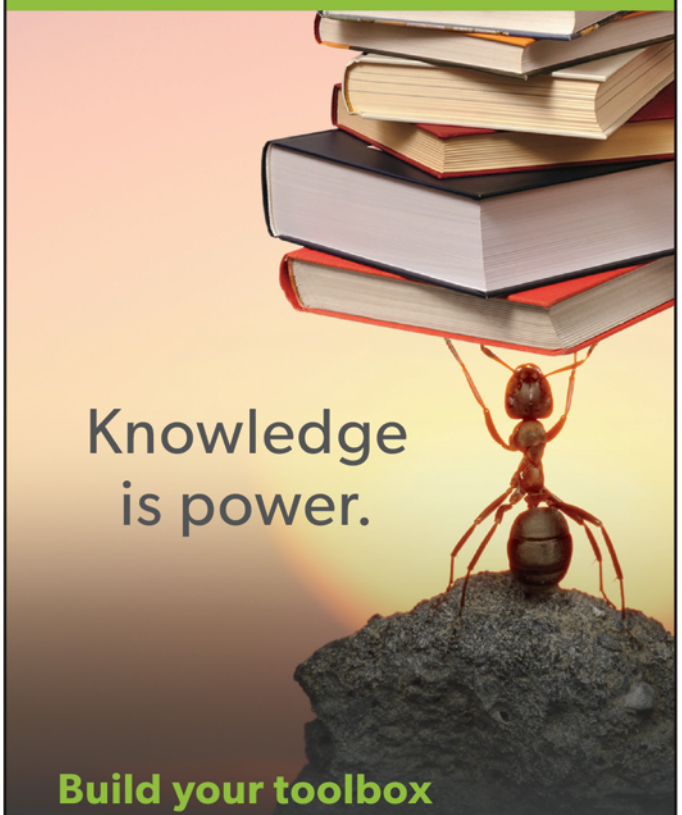

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To Talk With Others

KATE CINO

A pivotal moment for Yukon First Nations is explored in five installations at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

PHOTO BY DEVON LINDSAY

Installation at the To Talk With Others exhibit at the AGGV: "Non-Negotiables" by Valerie Salez, 2018, video and yellow pinewood table

In August 1977, then Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau was on vacation in the Yukon. At the Yukon Indian Centre in Whitehorse, he met with five Yukon First Nations leaders, who stated their concerns about the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. At the end of the meeting, Trudeau was presented with a photograph of a local man named Scumbullah. Trudeau was told Scumbullah was over 100 years old and still lived off the land using a bow and arrows. "It's a beautiful photograph and a very striking face," said Trudeau. "I know his face is asking me more questions than you are."

The questions Trudeau refers to are revealed in the minutes of a 13-page document available as you enter To Talk With Others, an exhibit at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. In the minutes, First Nations leaders speak clearly about the importance of land claim settlements. They believe settlements will further self-governance and social advancement. Trudeau puts forward the importance of the economic benefits of development, coming from the pipeline, citing roads and infrastructure. One poignant counter-argument comes from Willie Joe, president of the Yukon Native Brotherhood. He offers to take Trudeau on a tour of the local Whitehorse Indian Village, just metres away. The village, situated in a "developed" urban area, has sub-standard living conditions. "We don't even have running water in the place," Willie Joe says, "and we are in the 20th century."

Daniel Johnson, chair of the Council of Yukon Indians, offers Trudeau a different perspective on "opportunity." Trudeau views the pipeline as an opportunity for advancement. Johnson would favour an opportunity to improve social conditions and cultural practices in his community. Johnson queries Trudeau about the in-migration population who make money from business deals—and then leave. "This is our home," says Johnson, "we don't have any place to go back to."

It is interesting to note that in June 1977, the Berger Inquiry (commissioned in 1974) had already recommended a ten-year moratorium on the pipeline, citing environmental and social concerns. We wonder why Trudeau, two months later, is still pro-pipeline?

The minutes reveal a pivotal moment for Yukon First Nations. They have rallied and organized, using the power of written statements and confident dialogue to present their viewpoints.

Valerie Salez is To Talk With Others' project coordinator and one of five artists in the show. In 2009, she worked as a collections assistant for the heritage branch of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nations. While sorting, she came across the minutes of the 1977 meeting with Pierre Trudeau. "This was a time before political correctness," she says, "and I was struck by the degrading and patriarchal tone of Trudeau's comments." She was also struck by the relevance to current issues. The elder Trudeau's remarks about the Mackenzie pipeline echo in

> “MY HEART IS IN THE YUKON and this documentary is my love-letter to the Native people and their homeland.”
>
> —*Valerie Salez*

Justin Trudeau’s statements to First Nations about the Trans Mountain Pipeline. Salez pondered the historic significance of the document for several years and envisioned an artistic response. Three years ago, Canada Council funding and artist support for To Talk With Others came together. Salez asked Indigenous artists to interpret and articulate the conversation in their own way. Five unique responses are shown in the exhibition, which has toured the Yukon and is now at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

Artists in the exhibition include: Ken Anderson, Lianne Marie Leda Charlie (Tagé Cho Hudän, Big River People), Valerie Salez (first-generation Canadian), Doug Smarch Jr. (Tlingit), and Joseph Tisiga (Kaska Dene).

Visitors to the show are greeted with a series of eight beaded face portraits. They honour the seven present at the meeting, as well as Scumbullah. These exquisite portraits by Yukon traditional beaders were commissioned in 2018. Biographies accompany the portraits of the attendees and the beaders.

Ken Anderson has two eloquent pieces in the show. “I wouldn’t want one through mine,” shows a black pipe surrounded by a white picket fence. The “grave” nature of exploiting Earth’s natural resources is suggested. Anderson’s “the mosquito becomes me” is a beautifully-carved face mask. (The artist has requested lower case.) Mounted on a pipe, visitors can stand behind the mask for an interactive experience (and a selfie).

Doug Smarch Jr is an artist and designer from Teslin, Yukon. His mixed-media series “Closing Old Fences” refers to the sensory confusion resulting from human relocations, habitat loss and uncertain times.

Joseph Tisiga uses two installations (“The Human Scale” and “Opportunity for Shifting Perspectives”) to chronicle stressful relationships amidst clashing cultures.

Salez is a first-generation Canadian with Polish and Spanish ancestry. She spent her formative years in close connection with Yukon First Nations: sharing friendships, challenges and ceremonies. Having lived in the Yukon for 40 years, she’s familiar with all the artists in the show. When her family left the Yukon to move to Victoria, Salez chose to stay in the Whitehorse area. “My heart is in the Yukon,” she says, “and this documentary is my love-letter to the Native people and their homeland.” In her film *Non-Negotiables*, Salez queries the value system driving resource-based industry in the Yukon. What is *not* for sale or trade at any price, and why? Her documentary features a home-made yellow pine table, suggesting a board room or bargaining table. “The table was driven, dragged and carried to several remote locations,” she says.

Salez uses a mesmerizing mix of aerial views and closeups to reveal the people and places of the Yukon. The film points out the priceless nature of Yukon’s pristine wilderness. Using a drone with a licensed operator, Salez takes us skyward, offering panoramic views of the landscape. Then the drone descends into a location where the pine table has been placed, acting as a sort of small stage for various activities, including Indigenous dancing, beadwork, moose hide scraping, mountain-bike jumping and mask carving. In a barren landscape altered

From the AGGV Collection: Unknown Artist, Untitled, woodcut, 15.5 x 11.2 cm, Gift of Roy Cole, 1992.051.126.

PHOTO BY DEVON LINDSAY

Untitled installation, Joseph Tisiga, 2018, paper on board, collage, watercolour, ink and acrylic

Installation: "Bull's Eye" by Lianne Charlie, plywood, styrofoam, chicken wire, construction adhesive, newsprint, glue, pink paper, wallpaper paste, gold metallic wax, blown glass, Model Magic, and the Umbrella Final Agreement

PHOTO BY DEVON LINDSAY

by mining, the table top spells out the word *Ganeix* (recovery) in Tlingit. Seeds gathered to replenish the land form the letters.

First Nations communities remain greatly impacted by intergenerational trauma. Sadly, this results in too many deaths. One village was in mourning and unable to participate in their traditional "stick and bone" gambling game at the table. Instead, their dark coats are draped on the surface, a reference to emptiness and loss.

Salez appreciates the macrocosm/microcosm aspect of *Non-Negotiables*. On the ground, we live in a complex world of actions, words and policies, she explains. "Looking from above gives a different perspective," she says, "and shows the precious and precarious nature of our surroundings."

Exhibitor Lianne Marie Leda Charlie is an Indigenous Governance instructor at Yukon College, as well as a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Hawaii. Her striking sculpture called "Bull's Eye" is a hot-pink moose with golden antlers. "I had no idea how to construct this being," she admits. Therefore, "Bull's Eye" was a community effort, using the skills and knowledge of all present at each working session. The pink hide of the papier-mâché moose is made from pages of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* (1990). The 309-page document is the framework for modern treaty-making in the Yukon. For Charlie, the sculpture amalgamates two opposing world views: Indigenous ways of being, in balance with the environment; and a modern treaty-maker, overwhelmed by paper and procedures.

She plans to use the moose as a teaching aid. "Bull's Eye" embodies the main concepts in her thesis, which is about 300 pages in length. Charlie's dissertation examines the *Umbrella Final Agreement*'s ongoing impact. "Today in BC," she says, "there are many current challenges in treaty negotiations." Charlie's "Part of the Land" and "Baby Belt" also use paper metaphorically to describe the tense narrative of contemporary life. In "Part of the Land," a paper landscape, stretched on copper piping, stands in for a traditional hide. First Nations have limited access to fur and hide, she notes, natural products that endure and protect. Charlie laments the loss of skills needed to process a moose hide and make useful items. "Instead we use paper products to make flimsy replicas of reality," she says, noting "you can't carry a baby in a paper belt."

Charlie appreciates the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria hosting this travelling exhibition. She hopes To Talk With Others increases understanding of complex issues and situations. At the AGGV opening on November 1, elder Shirley Adamson spoke about being politically active in 1977. Over the years, she worked hard to facilitate the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Having an elder present gives a sense of hope and continuity to youth, notes Charlie. "The younger generation bear the weight of responsibility," she says, "making the guidance and presence of elders most important."

To Talk With Others runs at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria until Feb 23, 2020. 1040 Moss Street, www.aggv.ca.

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

"BABY INCALMO VESSEL" PAULL RODRIGUE, 13.5 X 9 INCHES, BLOWN GLASS

Throughout January & February

GLASS SCULPTURE BY PAULL RODRIGUE

West End Gallery

Ontario-based artist Paull Rodrigue specializes in creating elegant glass sculptures. Manipulating and maneuvering molten glass to create colourful, translucent vessels requires patience and precision. The heated material is unforgiving and cools quickly making it difficult to manipulate. The end product can only be examined the following day, after the glass has cooled in a kiln. "The seductive qualities [of glass] continue to entice me and I look forward to the 'court and spark' and the dance that ensues," says Rodrigue.1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

Yiddish Columbia State Orchestra turns 20 • January 16

PHOTO: CHEK NEWS

The orchestra at Pagliacci's

The very darkest, shortest days of the year may be past, but it's still cold and dark. Klezmer music is helpful at this time of year. It's the soundtrack of hope mixed with angst, of bright darkness and dark brightness. It's never all one thing; klezmer bakes life's contradictions and oxymorons right into the music. So why not wallow joyfully with the Yiddish Columbia State Orchestra (YCSO), Victoria's own klezmer combo, at their official 20th birthday party at Hermann's Jazz Club on January 16?

The YCSO 's founder, vocalist and accordionist Marion Siegel, told Chek News in 2018, "I had a concept of playing klezmer music, and I'm a Jewish mother; I like to feed people. I called up the best musicians in the city and said, 'You wanna have really good dinner [at Pagliacci 's] and play some music a couple times a week? '" The band's weekly gig at the Downtown eatery every Sunday evening has been an institution for decades, with tourists and locals alike revelling in the high-spirited, swing-infused tunes. "[It's] a Jewish band playing in an Italian restaurant in a Victoria town," Siegel quipped. "How could you be more Canadian than that?"

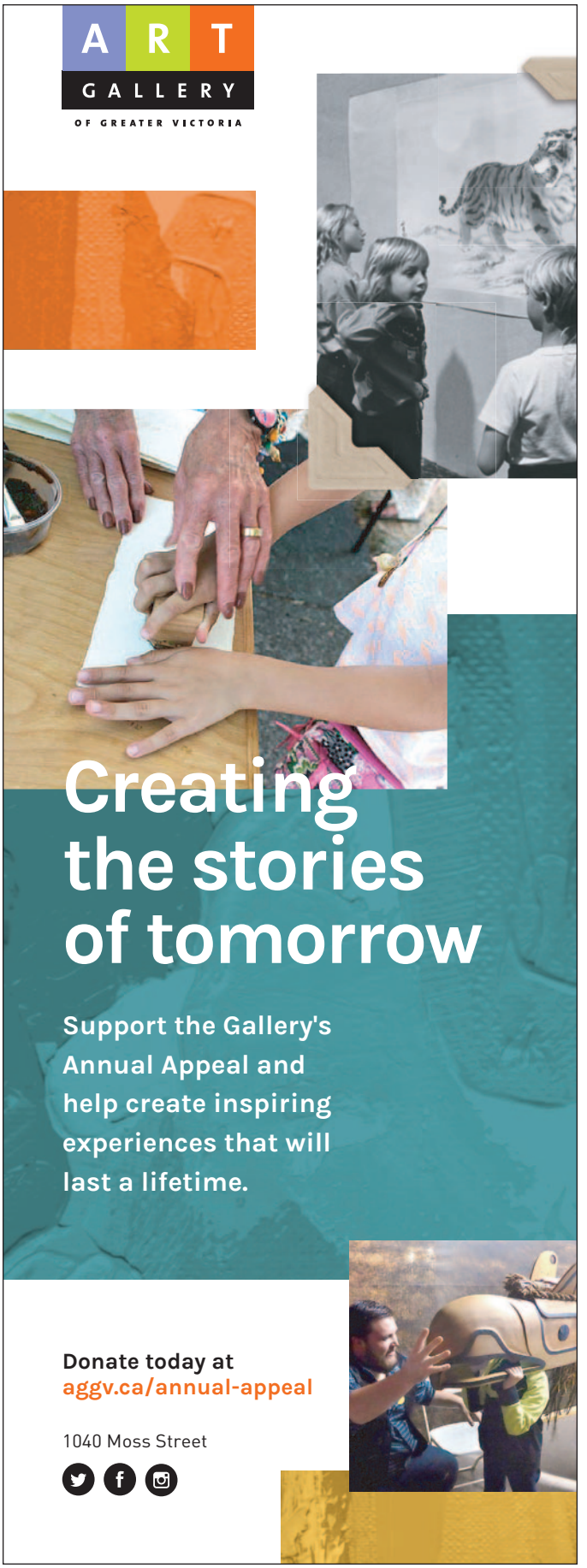
Guitartist Avram Devon McCagerty says most people encounter the YCSO at Pagliacci's. They've only played Hermann's once before in these 20 years. "We decided to put on a show to celebrate…We love Hermann's, we want to support it. We love playing Pags, but [the audience is] eating. Sometimes they come for us, sometimes for the spaghetti—'come for the noodle, stay for the noodling.'"

I ask McCagerty whether his personal decision to embrace the Jewish faith came before or after his tenure with the YCSO. At one of their wedding gigs, he was chatting with "Rabbi Harry," and "my mother had just told me that her mother's mother was Jewish. During a very long band break, and many, many drinks, we were schmoozing," McCagerty says. "He said, 'We'll go for coffee and see where you wanna go with this thing.'"

The band is made up of Jews and gentiles. I love that trumpet player Michael Mazza is Italian, but his last name is pronounced "matza," like the flatbread. Joining Mazza, McCagerty and Siegel are Nick La Riviere, Julian Vitek, Dave Klassen, Chandra Crowe, and cousin Rod McCrimmon. "Jewish means 'family,'" McCagerty insists, "so you can marry in."

Doors at 5:30, show at 7:30, Hermann's Jazz Club, 753 View St, $15. Reserve tickets at hermannsjazz.com.

—Mollie Kaye



"HAPPY NATIONS" PHILIP BUYTENDORP, 20 X 24 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

Throughout January & February

PHILIP BUYTENDORP

Peninsula Gallery

Philip Buytendorp started painting at an early age on extended painting trips into the wilderness with his artist father. An accomplished outdoorsman and mariner, his work is significantly influenced by painters from the Group of Seven, particularly Tom Thompson. Buytendorp's bold brush strokes and vivid colour palettes are reminiscent of mountain scenes painted by Carl Rungius, an artist he greatly admires. His current work includes West Coast landscapes from his boating trips throughout the Inside Passage. 100-2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1282, www.pengal.com.

"COASTAL BEAUTY" CORRINNE WOLCOSKI, 36 X 72 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

February 1–15

CORRINNE WOLCOSKI

Madrona Gallery

The new works in this solo exhibition largely focus on Wolcoski's recent travels up the West Coast to Haida Gwaii. This collection further explores the play of light on water and the incredible drama of the sky on the West Coast. She is a graduate of the Emily Carr University of Art and Design and is heavily involved in the Vancouver arts community. This is her fifth solo exhibition with Madrona Gallery. Opening reception with artist in attendance, Saturday, February 1, 1-4 pm. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

"VIBRANT SHORE" KYLEE TURUNEN, 36 X 36 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

January 27–February 23

KYLEE TURUNEN

Gallery at Mattick's Farm

Kylee is a Canadian artist, currently living in Port Alberni, BC. Growing up with the constant exposure to her artist father, she picked up an appreciation and excitement for creating art. Since completing the Fine Art program at Toronto's Centennial College in 2009, she has continued to develop her skills as a fine artist, working primarily in acrylic and oil paint. She works with colour and form, often playing with opposites like curves and straight edges, or light and dark tones to create contrast. 109-5325 Cordova Bay Rd, 250-658-8333, www.thegalleryatmatticksfarm.com.

"BLUE MOON MASK" TIM ALFRED

January 10–February 22

SALT SPRING NATIONAL ART PRIZE

2019 WINNERS + LOCAL FINALISTS

Victoria Arts Council Gallery

The Salt Spring National Art Prize is a biennial competition and exhibition of Canadian visual art, presented by the Salt Spring Arts Council. Its intent is to encourage artists whose practice demonstrates originality, quality, integrity and creativity–resulting in significant work with visual impact and depth of meaning. In all, it gives out $39,000 in prizes to 10 artists each year. Opens January 10, 6-9pm. 1800 Store St. www.vicartscouncil.ca.

Celebrating British Columbia Artists

Islet I 48x60" Oil on Canvas by Naomi Cairns

A Group Exhibition
January 11 - 23, 2020

west end gallery
1203 Broad Street | 250.388.0009
www.westendgalleryltd.com | Tues-Sun

THE AVENUE GALLERY

Large Slab Vase with Black and Gold Top, raku and bamboo

Featured Artist
Geoff Searle

2184 OAK BAY AVENUE VICTORIA
www.theavenuegallery.com 250-598-2184

GAGE GALLERY
ARTS COLLECTIVE

2nd CHANCE:
FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS

4 ARTISTS
1 SHOW
JAN 2 -18

MARTINA EDMONDSON
FRANCES BECKOW
AGNES ANANICHUK
JONATHAN CRAVEN

Opening Reception
Sunday January 5, 1-4pm

Gallery Open Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am to 5 pm
2031 Oak Bay Ave • 250 592 2760 • gagegallery.ca

"LUPINE" MEGHAN HILDEBRAND, 54 X 48 INCHES, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

January 11–25

COLOUR THEORY

Madrona Gallery

This exhibition follows the evolution of colour from the early 20th century to today. From traditional oils used in works from the likes of A.Y. Jackson, to the invention of acrylic paints in the 1950s and '60s, to the vibrant pigments used today, Colour Theory traces changes in technique and materials through the years. Featured artists include: Meghan Hildebrand, April Ponsford, Halin de Repentigny, Hashim Hannoon, Morley Myers, Sean Yelland, Nicotye Samayualie, William Perehudoff, Jack Shadbolt. Opening January 11, 1-4 pm. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

The promise of an arts hub

PHOTO: GARRISON MCARTHUR PHOTOGRAPHY

A model for Bastion Square: Toronto's Artscape Youngplace

A new black-box theatre, a recital hall, artists' studios, media labs, classrooms, a work-oriented gastropub—all these amenities and more could sprout up and thrive under one roof Downtown, if the Province advances its plans to revive the old courthouse building in Bastion Square.

On November 15, the Province received five submissions to its "request for information" for possible uses of the 1889-built courthouse, a national historic site. One pitch was for a commercial development, one for a community centre. The Maritime Museum of BC also proposed returning to the courthouse—where it had been based for 49 years, until the Province closed the building in 2014 for safety reasons—and revamping it into a $45-million national maritime museum, with a new 12,000-square-foot annex for travelling exhibits. But what didn't get as much headline ink was the bid, supported by the City of Victoria and the Downtown Victoria Business Association, to turn the building into an arts hub.

"It's really missing in Victoria, this kind of central, arts-community space. We certainly don't have it Downtown," says Ian Piears, the current project lead. Piears, a former actor and puppeteer with the UK's National Theatre, credits his growth as an artist to similar hubs he used in the United Kingdom. "You're meeting different people and showing your work," he says. "Unfortunately in Victoria, with space being so precious, people are off in their own little areas, and don't have that opportunity to collaborate more."

One example of such a hub in this country he cites is Artscape Youngplace, in Toronto's Queen West neighbourhood. Originally an old public school, in 2013 it underwent a $19-million renovation, and today it's home to an Indigenous theatre centre, a bookbindery, a contemporary art gallery, and film and video production companies. Victoria-born pianist Eve Egoyan has a studio there too.

In April of 2018, Piears and other local artists conducted a design charette with HCMA Architecture to similarly reimagine the courthouse. The main hall of the ground floor could become an experimental project space, opening to an outdoor stage onto Boomerang Court to the north. The Province has required that some of the building's heritage elements be preserved, such as its "birdcage" elevator, and its third-floor courtroom—which might become "The Stand," a lecture hall and memorial to First Nations' conflicts with the colonial justice system. A rough estimate pegged the arts-hub reno at $20.5 million, which included a seismic upgrade, a new service elevator, and a commercial kitchen.

Those plans aren't set in stone. Piears says flexibility will be crucial to the space, and its users will ultimately decide how it develops. Although tickets might be sold to shows in the theatre or recital hall, the goal is that the hub is constantly full of activity, and that the public can always see and participate in it. "The thing that's come through again and again is that the door is always open," Piears says. "You're not paying an entry fee to get inside."

The Province says there are no guarantees it will proceed with redevelopment of the courthouse, but Piears remains optimistic. The Province knows the building is important, he says, and "hopefully, they'll keep the momentum going. It's a huge shame for it to sit there empty." To sustain that momentum, he's soliciting letters of support for the project, from artists who would use it for performances, organizations that might become tenants, potential private funders, and members of the public (email: 28bastioncreativehub@gmail.com).

The need for such a space increases daily. "As prices rise, it gets pretty prohibitive to stay Downtown," says Matthew Payne, artistic director of the always-inventive Theatre SKAM, which has staged shows in parked cars, on loading docks, at Macaulay Point's artillery emplacements, and along the Galloping Goose trail. (SKAM celebrates its 25th birthday on January 11; see skam.ca for details.) Currently, SKAM runs popular classes in acting and stagecraft for kids in a rented house in North Park, and stages plays in a Fort Street retail space soon to be demolished to make way for a seniors' development. Payne helped advise the design charette for the courthouse, and says an arts hub there would be a great opportunity for SKAM: "After 25 years, we've evolved to a place where we could really use a permanent home."

— Ross Crockford

"LAST POST" JENNIFER HEINE, 10 X 10 INCHES, OIL ON PANEL

Throughout January & February

JENNIFER HEINE

The Avenue Gallery

A mixed-media artist working in Richmond, BC, Jennifer is inspired by the hunt for unexpected beauty in the everyday and the challenge of expanding the vocabulary and means with which to express it. An elected member of the Society of Canadian Artists and an Associate of the Federation of Canadian Artists, she has been showing in professional galleries for 25 years and her work is collected internationally. She has completed art and design studies at UVic, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and BCIT. 2184 Oak Bay Ave. 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

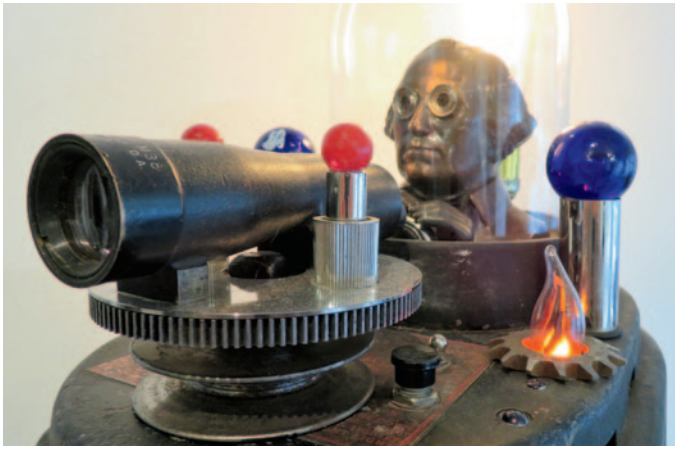
"GEORGE WASHINGTON IN SPACE" JONATHAN CRAVEN, ASSEMBLAGE SCULPTURE

January 2–18

SECOND CHANCE: FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS

Gage Gallery

This exhibition references a second chance for both materials and subject matter where four artists explore the concept of repurposing. Agnes Ananichuk, Frances Beckow, Jonathan Craven and Martina Edmondson offer works of recycled material, both conceptual and physical. Watch for the transformation of an old chrome door handle, a brass gear and a vintage pressure gauge, or "disposables" such as used coffee filters and teabags. Everything and everybody deserves a second chance. Opening Jan 5, 1-4pm. 2031 Oak Bay Ave, 250-592-2760. www.gagegallery.ca.



"ALLEGRO" PIERRE GIROUX, 36 X 60 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

February 8–20

PIERRE GIROUX: NEW PAINTINGS

West End Gallery

Giroux paints ghostly interiors and exteriors filled with gesture and light. Drawing inspiration from houses in his local area of Southern Ontario, as well as grander rooms in Europe, his abandoned spaces evoke memories and nostalgia. Says the artist, "The paintings play upon the fine line between reality and slight surrealism, always drawing upon the viewer to move within the rooms…My hope is to evoke the memories of the many spaces we've visited, lived in and the role they've played upon our senses." 1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

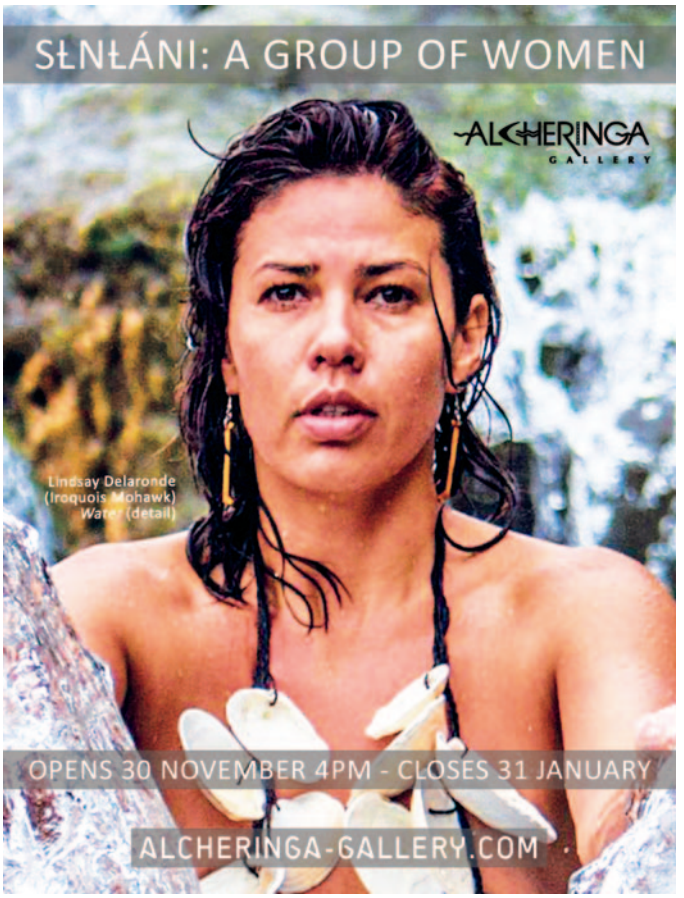
"GYPSY WHARF-SOJAN BADIAR GHAT" DESIGN BY SURAYIA RAHMAN, EMBROIDERED BY ARTISANS OF ARSHI

February 8–May 24

WOVEN, EMBROIDERED AND STITCHED IN TRADITION: WOMEN'S TEXTILE LABOUR IN 20TH CENTURY ASIA

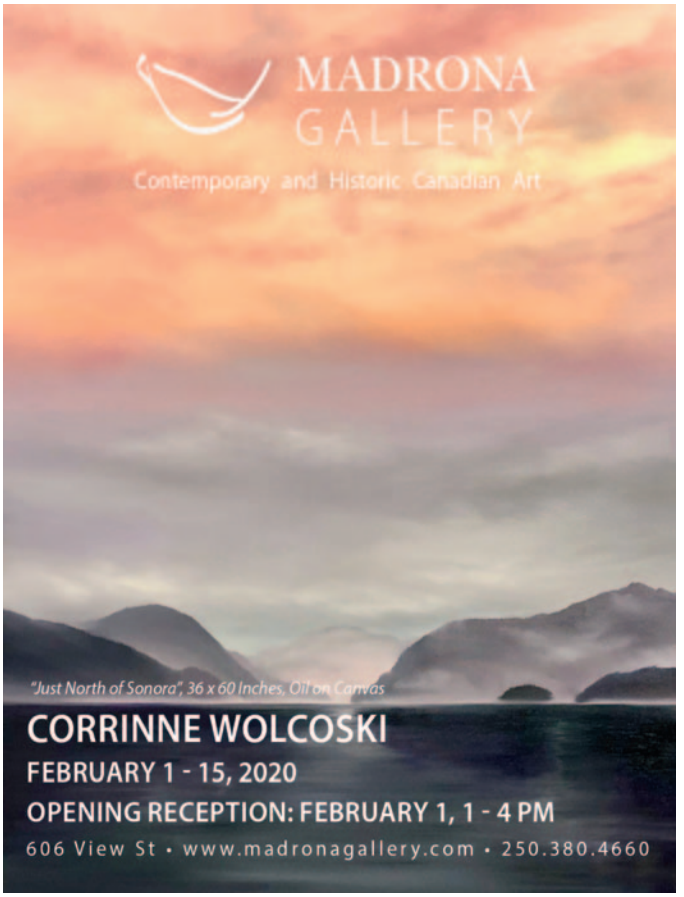
Legacy Maltwood Gallery, UVic campus

This exhibition showcases a dazzling array of luxury textiles, exquisitely crafted in China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Bangladesh. They shed light on women's roles as makers, consumers, and connoisseurs between the late 19th century to today, an era of monumental shifts in the production, accessibility, and commodification of garments. At the McPherson Library, Mearns Centre, and at UVic Libraries Special Collections & University Archives Rm A005, www.legacy.uvic.ca, 250-721-6562.



PENINSULA
Gallery
Fine Art Since 1986

"Evening Silence"
by Ray Ward
8 x 10 inches, oil on hardboard
2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney • 250.655.1722 • www.pengal.com



South Shore
Gallery
Original Fine Art by West Coast Artists

250-642-2058 In the heart of Sooke at 2046 Otter Point www.southshoregallery.ca

Kidd Pivot: *Revisor* • February 7 & 8

Seats may be hard to come by, given Dance Victoria's (DV) short-run production of Kidd Pivot's *Revisor*. But I still want to highlight the multi-layered efforts behind this show, and acquaint the readership with a shining star in the international choreography firmament: Victoria's own Crystal Pite.

Stephen White, producer at Dance Victoria, says this show's creation was supported collaboratively by several local donors, and is not the first work DV has commissioned from this globally celebrated talent. For Pite, the verbal and the visual are creatively intertwined. She uses language extensively, and says in an interview with *Octave Magazine* in November of 2019, "The connection between language and the body is endlessly fascinating for me; how it affects how we see and hear, how the language affects the dancing, too… it's caused us to move in ways I think we wouldn't have moved in otherwise."

PHOTO: MICHAEL SLOBODIAN

Crystal Pite

Kidd Pivot, founded in 2002, is Pite's company; she collaborates with associate artistic director Eric Beauchesne; actor/writer Jonathon Young; and an established team of nine dancers. *Revisor* (based on Russian playwright Nikolai Gogol's political satire *The Inspector General*), explores "conflict, comedy and corruption in the potent relationship between language and the body."

"It's definitely dance theatre," White says. "It's a continuation of Crystal Pite's interest over the last five years integrating text. She has made about four pieces with Jonathon Young; the last one toured internationally and won many awards." He mentions that Pite has been recognized in the *Guardian* as a "top 21st century choreographer."

While the production has comic overtones, the subject matter of political corruption could not be more grave or relevant in the current moment. "This piece is the most innovative piece of hers, because she takes this idea of playing with text to the furthest degree," White says. "It's a great honour and a pleasure to watch her develop over the past two decades."

February 7-8, 7:30pm at the Royal Theatre. Tickets at www.rmts.bc.ca
—Mollie Kaye

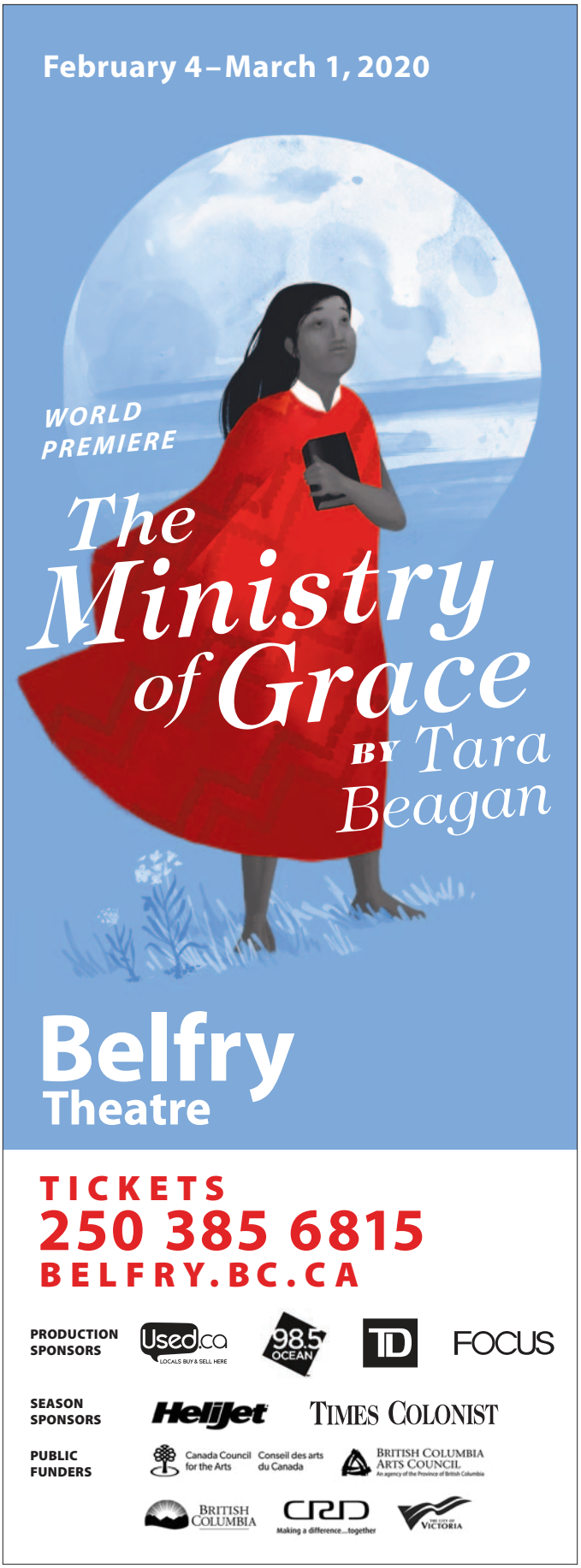
"WALKING TOGETHER" CAROL GOLD, BRONZE SCULPTURE, 14 X 6 X 9 IN

Throughout January & February

CAROL GOLD

Peninsula Gallery

Carol Gold's work has been widely exhibited in the US and Canada, receiving numerous awards and public art commissions. She creates her sculptures first in wax and then casts into bronze. Says the artist, "With these figures, I strive to convey a mood as well as to create a sense of motion in space. Through the years my sculpture has moved in the direction of increasing simplicity and growing integration of organic and geometric forms." 100-2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1282, www.pengal.com.



Twenty years of harmony

MOLLIE KAYE

Victoria Children's Choir director and founder Madeline Humer is passing the baton.

Ducking into the warm, crowded, Christmas-music-and-conversation cacophony of a Downtown Starbucks on the dreariest of December afternoons, I spot a curly-haired woman seated at a table. I've never met her, but I've seen that head from the back, conducting some impressively polished performances of the Victoria Children's Choir (VCC). Madeline Humer—"Mads" to the kids who have sung for her—and I exchange a wave. I'm here to ask why, after 20 years as VCC's founder and artistic and concert choir director, she has decided to pass her baton to a successor.

As we settle into our conversation, it's striking how genuinely ebullient she is—about her work with the kids, *and* about stepping down. Describing her musical passions, VCC's history, and her hopes for the future, she is ablaze with vision and delight. This is no small feat for anyone, at any age, in any season—and I'm inspired by her energetic positivity on this particular day, damp and dark as it is, talking about the end of her tenure in a valued role. There isn't an iota of shade coming from Humer (perhaps a fitting name for someone so jolly), and thinking back on all the dour choir directors I've had, I can imagine how much the kids will miss her.

Humer grew up in Victoria; singing and blending her voice with others was always a passion. Since classical choral repertoire was a vital part of most kids' lives here in the 60s, she says, "I sang classical repertoire at school; [church] choral classes were full." There was, she recalls, no hard line at school between the "three R's" and the arts; it was all seen "as education—including painting, including music—[the fine arts were] part of that culture."

The 70s, she says, were a time of major shifts and upheaval. Churches all over the world lost their choirs "for all sorts of reasons," and to this day, she laments, they are still struggling, "even in England." Humer was studying music in Vienna in the early 70s and remembers the vote at King's College which "only just scraped through to keep the choir." The recovery process, she says, "has been very difficult for educators; the idea of singing in the choir is not as appealing for kids." Classical music, once so prevalent, "is not 'every day;' most families have some CDs of classical music, and go to kids' symphony concerts," but it's not woven into life the way it was a generation or two ago. "There was a rich, rich choral background for kids," she says. "I think I was lucky, that it was something I was fascinated with from a very young age, when music was [more] accessible through records and concerts…I just loved that *harmony*, whatever it was," Humer says with a warm smile.

PHOTO: TEGAN MCMARTIN

Madeline Humer

Victoria Children's Choir

One thing that hasn't changed, she insists, is the sheer enthusiasm young people demonstrate for classical music, once it appears on their radar. "We're cheating our children if we don't give them an opportunity to know their choices," she explains. "They get exposed to so many other types of music, everywhere—but they have to make an effort to find classical music. Kids are really hungry for it when they find it. They're overjoyed." She says she's not passing judgement on other forms and traditions; "all music has value. Classical music is one of our heritages; it's a shame that it's gotten lost…in every [children's] choir that I've had, if you ask them what they want to sing, to show off, they choose a classical piece. Why wouldn't they?"

Humer, who adores the Baroque period of music especially, trained and sang as a professional soprano soloist and taught English-language songs to children as an educator in European schools. When she divorced, the single mom and her two young kids relocated to Victoria, and Humer began a new chapter in her life. She took a post at Glenlyon-Norfolk School as an educator and choral director. Her work there was so successful that the Victoria Symphony gave hiring preference to her Glenlyon-Norfolk choirs anytime the repertoire called for a children's chorus.

Eventually, Humer felt it was best to form a not-for-profit community choir to answer those requests, and their inaugural rehearsal was on September 11, 2001 (Humer vividly recalls the exact date; there was a decision made, she says, to carry on, despite the catastrophic events of that morning). Originally called the Victoria Symphony Children's Choir, Humer and the orchestra soon reached the conclusion that "Victoria Children's Choir" would, for various reasons, be a more strategically beneficial moniker going forward.

Over the past two decades, Humer's encouragement, insight, and meticulous direction have afforded hundreds of Victoria children the opportunity to grow their vocal abilities and confidence while preparing and performing challenging choral repertoire. Tens of thousands of local audience members have enjoyed their stage appearances with the Victoria Operatic Society, the Victoria Symphony, the Pacific Baroque Festival, and other professional arts organizations, and at high-profile events such as the official welcome ceremony for the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and with The Tenors at the Royal Theatre. The choir has also made a name for itself internationally. In 2011, it performed at the Summa cum Laude International Youth Music Festival in Vienna—

placing first in the Treble category—and, in 2015, at the 70th anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands. The choir celebrated Canada's 150th Birthday with a Maritime Tour in July, 2017.

There are now three Children's Choirs, two for younger musicians (starting at age 7), with the Concert Choir that Humer directs being for more experienced 12-and-ups.

Humer speaks so excitedly about the singers, the repertoire, and the choir camps she's organized for her young musicians; I ask if she's sad about leaving it all to someone else. She breaks into a huge smile and says, "Oh, it's someone absolutely wonderful, and [VCC will] be announcing it sometime in the new year. I'm excited for the future. I said I'd be happy to sit on the board; I could help with fundraising. The person who is taking over has expressed a hope that we can sit down and discuss many aspects of the organization, including repertoire."

Humer feels a sense of responsibility to leave on a high note, as it were, so that the organization she so loves can enjoy a smooth and positive transition. "I've seen too many colleagues my age hanging on by their fingernails to things they have started," she says. "To me, the perfect departure is when everything is doing well; I have a sense with this choir that that's where they are. I don't want to be holding on. I want to hand this over with great joy to its new future. I'm very proud."

Humer, who understands the enormous health and social benefits of singing together in groups, says her passion for vocal music will inevitably propel her toward new ventures in that arena. "At my age, I have opportunities to get involved in other things. I'm a passionate environmentalist. I'm feeling very strongly about…music being part of our education system. Maybe I've still got something to say, something to add from my experiences, to help kids who might otherwise not get a chance to try out this stuff."

The Victoria Children's Choir will perform during the Pacific Baroque Festival in early March. See www.pacbaroque.com and www.victoriachildrenschoir.ca.

Mollie Kaye is a vocalist and satirist who hopes more Victoria kids will join the Victoria Children's Choir and enjoy the lifelong benefits of learning to perform classical choral music.

THE GALLERY
AT MATTICK'S FARM

"Along the Shore" by Kylee Turunen, 30 x 30 inches, oil on canvas

January 2-26: Estate Sale featuring Myles Lowry, Georgia Angelopoulos, Catherine Moffat, Anthony Thorn and others

January 27- February 23: Kylee Turunen

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

PETER N VAN GIESEN

Central Art Studio & Gallery at The Bay Centre
peternvangiesen.com • peter@peternvangiesen.com
www.centralartstudiogallery.com

Eventually, I'd like to see a day where inclusion and respect are simply second nature to us all, and we cease sorting or labelling with prefixes like "gay" or "queer." For now, though, these self-affixed identifiers seem a required part of an evolutionary process by which previously marginalized artists can claim their rightful place at the table. Hence, Intrepid Theatre is presenting its sixth-annual OUTstages, "a decidedly queer theatre festival," founded by curator Sean Guist, who was recently appointed Intrepid's co-artistic and marketing director.

Sean Guist

Guist notes that when OUTstages began, there was a void of professional queer art and professional queer theatre in Victoria. "We recognized that, and created this festival to fill that void in that community…because there's a hunger for it."

Heather Lindsay, Intrepid's artistic and executive director, says she is "so honoured to work alongside" Guist, and that OUTstages "is now recognized across Canada as a dedicated home for underrepresented and queer artists and community." Intrepid's website promises a festival "packed with theatre, music, drag, cabaret, soundscapes and a new local work in development!" Offerings will include:

Where the Two-Spirit Lives: One part confessional, one part drag extravaganza, and all parts celebration that explores what it means to be Two-Spirit in contemporary society.

eat your heART out Cabaret: Raucous cabaret numbers. Fabulous performance art. High camp. A queerly Valentines/Anti-Valentines Day featuring Salty Broad Productions.

Like Orpheus: A candid dive into queer club culture and the trauma of sexual assault. Winner of Best Aspect of a Production for "Technical Presentation and Direction" at the Dublin International Gay Theatre Festival.

Play Reading: How To Build a Home: A new solo show from local performer/creator Emilee Nimetz that explores how to create a life for yourself when you've come from a broken home, and how broken stories move within our bodies.

Guist insists that exchewing the prefixes is an important translation for some. "Audiences who are looking at this and thinking: 'The queer festival isn't for me'—they are wrong. More than anything, it's just really powerful, thrilling theatre."

For information, tickets for all shows, and festival passes, go to Ticket Rocket's new location, 1050 Meares Street (Mon - Fri, 10am-5pm), or intrepidtheatre.com. *—Mollie Kaye*

"BRYNN HAWKER" BLAKE LITTLE, PHOTOGRAPH © BLAKELITTLE 2019

January 11 to April 11

FLUID, a photographic portrait series by Blake Little

Legacy Gallery, Downtown Gallery

As people who identify as trans, gender fluid, non-binary, Two Spirit, and other gender-diverse identities face complex and challenging societal responses, the act of representing oneself can be a brave act of defiance. FLUID, a new photographic portrait series by LA-based artist Blake Little, sets out to collaborate with local, national and international trans and gender fluid people to reflect some of the concerns and potentials of how they choose to represent themselves. Reception Jan 25, 2-4pm. Legacy Art Gallery Downtown, 630 Yates St, Victoria, legacy.uvic.ca, 250-721-8298.

Indigenous theatre includes all of us

MONICA PRENDERGAST

The Belfry's *Ministry of Grace* brings a survivor and grandmother's story to the stage.

Playwright Tara Beagan

Indigenous playwright, actor and director Tara Beagan, from the Nlaka'pamux First Nation, would like to tell you a story. It's a story that happened to her maternal grandmother in the 1950s. Let's call her Mary. Although Beagan's grandmother was reluctant to talk about it, this story remained one of the playwright's favourites.

In 1950, Mary went down to California to work as a cotton picker. She felt the need to get away from her home community, as her children had been forced into a residential school and she was grieving their loss. She had attended the same residential school herself, and knew too well what her daughters were going through.

The play opens with Mary having been terminated as a harvest hand on the cotton plantation for defending herself from the plantation owner's sexual advances. Detained in a chain-locked barn, Mary and her practice of reading aloud to illiterate labourers comes to the attention of a travelling evangelist. Here was a Native Indian (in the American terminology) who could read! The evangelist, an outcast from the Catholic church, hires Mary to read scripture in his travelling tent revival and renames her Grace. She spends some time on the road in this way—as an "attraction" called "Tamed Heathen"—before moving back to Canada and her children.

Fast forward many decades later, and granddaughter Tara Beagan has chosen to turn her grandmother's story into a play, titled *Ministry of Grace*, that is premiering in an all-Indigenous production at the Belfry Theatre from February 4 to March 1 (*Focus* is a proud sponsor).

I had the chance to speak with Beagan on the phone from her home in Calgary about the play and the production she will be directing here.

After telling me her grandmother's story, I asked if there are other levels of inspiration for this play, beyond the remarkable family history. She replied, "I love the writing of John Steinbeck and that era of the mid-1900s, with the Wild West being so-called 'tamed' and with this beautiful and vast landscape for storytelling. This play is an ode to my inner Steinbeck."

I was curious about the role of the evangelist, named Brother Cain, in the play. How is he portrayed, I wondered? Beagan said, "He is a sympathetic antagonist, I think, because his human torment is very present. He is representative of my own journey being raised in the Catholic faith. My Irish father rejected the church when I was in grade four. In the play, Brother Cain (played by Stafford Perry) has been excommunicated by the church, and is haunted by this loss. He resents Mary Grace's easy relationship with God, and tries to become his own God."

Another key figure in the play is Clem, described by Beagan as a "Cree colossus," who works for Brother Cain as a roadie and develops a love interest in Mary Grace. This role features Sheldon Elter who impressed audiences in last year's Belfry production of *Bears*.

Ministry of Grace is just the most recent of over a dozen plays Beagan has written and most often directed as well. Of *Ministry*'s development, she said, "I workshopped the play in Toronto with my theatre company Article 11. We worked at Historical Fort York outdoors with [Indigenous playwright] Daniel David Moses as our dramaturg. I wanted the sense of the travelling revival show with the audience under a tent, so working outside at the Fort was ideal."

I asked Beagan if this kind of design will be part of the Belfry production and she said, "When I visited the Belfry, which is such a beautiful space and of course a former church, I really saw that the audience at the Belfry feels like the space is theirs. We want to create the sense of the tent by draping canvas, possibly illuminating the lovely ceiling,

> "THERE IS NO HOPE for reconciliation if we can't feel for one another."
> —*Tara Beagan*

bringing in old truck parts, that kind of thing. I want the audience to feel transported to a different time."

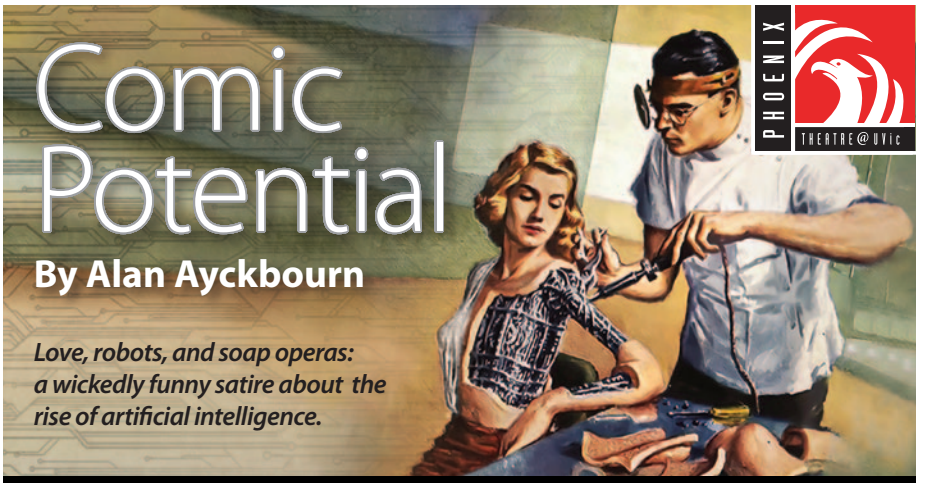
Beagan often collaborates on her productions with her life partner, set designer Andy Moro. When I asked about their working process together, she answered, "There is a culture of 'no' in theatre, where requests are too often denied. My experience with Andy is that he will say 'yes.' Directing became possible with Andy as an ally. I am able to direct in a way that releases the design to him, so I can focus on the actors' journey."

Beagan and I also chatted together about our backgrounds, finding out that we had both lived in Toronto for many years, before moving back out west, she to Calgary and me to Victoria. I told her about my own Catholic upbringing and how I call myself a "recovering Catholic," which earned a knowing chuckle from Beagan. I also felt moved to tell her about my experience of growing up in Regina under a kind of apartheid, with the city to this day divided between the mostly white settlers in the south and the Indigenous community in the north, divided by the CN Railway tracks. She listened to me empathetically, as I tried to articulate a bit of my own journey of reconciliation, a coming to terms with a past in which Indigenous people were erased, made absent from my life.

So what does Beagan hope the largely white settler audience will take away from seeing *Ministry of Grace*? Her response was thoughtful: "There is still a real lack of empathy toward Indigenous people in Canada. There is no hope for reconciliation if we can't feel for one another. We [Indigenous theatre artists] are just starting to get to see our own stories on stage, supported by settler people. We need to expand our empathy, and theatre can do that. Indigenous theatre includes all of us."

Amen to that.

Monica looks forward to another busy year with plenty of theatregoing along the way.



February 13 – 22, 2020

A romantic sci-fi satire set in the near future, *Comic Potential* imagines a world where actors are replaced with lifelike robots known as "actoids." When an aspiring young writer visits a TV studio, he discovers the charming android Jacie Tripplethree (serial number JCF 31333) and realizes that the programming glitch that makes her laugh hysterically also makes her more human. Will he lose his heart to a robot? Tune in to find out!

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"Burl wood is extremely dense and hard, in some cases very brittle, and this is also what makes them so beautiful," says artist Bruce Edmundson who admits to a great deal of experimentation with tools, species, and methods. "I have learned that to experiment and take risks is to court success. I want to express the natural splendour of the wood while enhancing it with the human touch. I want it to be unique, the hand of one person enabling nature's inherent strengths and beauty." 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

The Willowman • February 19–22

"A brutal dark comedy or a lighthearted tragedy, you decide," is how Paper Street Theatre's website explains *The Willowman*, an exploration of the "twisted mind of Irish playwright Martin McDonagh (*The Pillowman, Seven Psychopaths*) in what will surely be the most terrific, or horrific, improv show you've ever seen."

Artistic director Dave Morris, who founded the company, says that although the word "improv" has associations with comedy, Paper Street's audiences get to see theatre—an ephemeral, one-off, unique-to-that-night version of theatre—which can't be repeated. For Morris, this premise is far more inspiring than working from the same script night after night.

"Long-form improv" is the name for this format, says Morris. "The slogan for Paper Street is 'improvisation that feels like theatre.' As you sit in the audience and watch the show, other than the fact that we're making it up, you should feel like you're watching theatre. It's an entire two-act play; we wear costumes that suggest the style of the show, depending on what that is; there will be a set in the theatre, and hopefully you'd be convinced you're watching a play. That's the kind of improv we do. People get confused; they don't believe it's improvised, and some people who expect comedy are disappointed."

It isn't that comedy is completely eschewed at Paper Street; it's just not the driver, says Morris, whose three-production season and improv classes are now based at Intrepid Theatre's Blanshard Street space. "Improv has a stigma around it," he says; many people's "first experience of it was a comedy show in a bar…standup…dirty and offensive, pulling people up on stage and making fun of them… We do none of that. We do theatre." Morris thrives on the present-moment aspect of the work, saying, "I like watching things get made, the creation process. Once it's made, then there it is: our trophy to remind us that we made this thing. With improv, we all make it together, then it's over, it's gone; it's just for us. I love the intimacy of it…it's specific to that audience, that night. It's not any of the things you think it is. It's great. A once-in-a-lifetime experience, every time."

Presented at Intrepid Theatre, 2-1609 Blanshard. Viewer discretion advised. $15 at eventbrite, paperstreettheatre.ca.

—Mollie Kaye

emv:VICTORIA

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Global Warming, The Musical

GENE MILLER

The planet is circulating a new memo: intervene abusively in natural systems—and pay the price.

Someone recently informed me that this column—not the installment you're now reading, but the entire *oeuvre*—is "operatic." The news was delivered in language that could only be construed as judgment: no ambiguity, righteous voice, with the wordless hint that harsh sentencing might follow a guilty verdict.

Me? Operatic? Please! Not that I don't appreciate opera, but I'm always the levelest head in the room.

Smarting, I went straight to dictionary.com seeking redemption. Synonyms and analogues to "operatic" include "hysterical," "hyperbolic," "florid," "overly emotional and dramatic" and "wildly exceeding limits of conventional emotional expression."

There, dodged all of that by a mile!

Liberated by such third-party validation, I went for a kind of online victory lap: a wandering trot from "operatic" to "opera" to "operetta" to "musical" to "Broadway musical" and on… you know how it goes (and yes, all roads lead eventually to online porn—not me, of course, but other people). A few zigs later, I landed on a YouTube video of long-ago matinee idol Georges Guétary singing the Gershwin movie tune from *An American in Paris*:

I'll build a stairway to Paradise
With a new step every day.
I'm gonna get there at any price;
Stand aside, I'm on my way.
I've got the blues, and up above it's so fair.
Shoes, go on and carry me there!
I'll build a stairway to Paradise
With a new step every day.

So brave and hopeful in the face of the economic tribulations of the late 1920s and history's ominous and steadily amplifying 1930s drumbeats. (Funny, I write "1920s" and "1930s" trippingly, like it was just over our shoulders, and it's almost a century ago. Shit, *I'm* almost a century ago!)

Our cultural memory suggests that life's troubles back then were met with a lovely optimism, a better-times-coming, future's-assured courage, and not today's cracks-of-doom futility or sense of handicap, immiseration and paralysis. (I believe I have already reported to you that current public mood-testing everywhere indicates rising levels of social unhappiness and, specifically, climate pessimism.)

Brave and hopeful Georges Guétary and friends, singing through the Great Depression

Life back then still held an innocent gosh'n'-golly feel, at least south of the border. Canada, whose welcome signs then, as now, stated: "You Must Declare All Fun and Happiness" was, with a bureaucrat's bloodless passion, busy re-casting the Ten Commandments as the Ten Thousand Bylaws.

By the way, in our edgeless age of shopping and self-improvement, the Ten Commandments will likely fall victim to marketing (if they haven't already) and be re-packaged as "Ten Fabulous Chances for a Better You!" or "Open All Ten Doors Of Your Happiness House!"

The social optimism of the Fred Astaire age is long spent everywhere, our own times simply that era's lost and weeping grandchild. So I've put my hand to producing lyrics appropriate to today's worries:

I'm on the highway to climate change,
Run my engine all day long.
[Whisper chorus: "High test, high test"]

You think my actions are very strange
Setting planet death to song.
Just one lane? What's the matter with ten?
Drain your brain,'cause you never know when.
I'm on the highway to climate change
Flooring it can't be wrong.

Don't you remember the good old days,
When garbage just was junk?
["Toss here, toss there"]
Now we're trapped in an eco-maze—
"No, you may not drop that hunk!"
Re-use, recycle, and the rest of that crap,
Nothing left to like without consulting a map.
Sure, you remember the good old days
When garbage just was junk.

Now, global warming is scaring some,
But most don't have a clue.
["Dumb 'n' deaf, deaf 'n' dumb"]
Should we use a bike getting to and from?
Please, tell us what to do.
I have to say I still want to use and toss
Hands clasped, I pray for a world filled with dross
I say delay climate worry—I'm the boss…
Run my engine all day long.

A recent newspaper headline reports: "People talk about deep sadness: scientists study climate change grief." Such melancholy even has a name: *solastalgia*.

And if I haven't already thrashed the last smidge of can-do out of you, here's an excerpt from the widely circulated summary of an academic paper by Jem Bendell, professor of sustainability at the University of Cumbria, England: "The purpose of this conceptual paper is to provide readers with an opportunity to reassess their work and life in the face of an inevitable near-term social collapse due

to climate change. [Anticipate] inevitable near-term collapse in society."

Hmmm. "…inevitable near-term collapse in society." For God's sake, don't we have bylaws here prohibiting that sort of thing? Okay, maybe not in outlaw Langford, where "mega" and "ultra" stalk the subdivisions, but at least in Oak Bay, still the home of Canada's largest in-ground reserve of good manners.

I have been suggesting to all I know that the Victoria region, if it has any instincts for survival, needs to direct its intelligence and planning skills toward critical assessments—what-ifs—of looming climate impacts and to prepare, much in the same way any of us and our jurisdictions would prepare, for cataclysmic meteorological prospects like hurricanes and blizzards, or for pending social turmoil.

The likely impacts and social consequences of global warming are not that hard to fathom: ever-intensifying degradation of the physical environment resulting in ever-diminishing habitability, triggering productivity, supply, distribution and social service breakdowns which will, with amplifying speed and great force, precipitate general social chaos accompanied by panicked behaviour and survival-driven population movement, most familiar to us from end-of-the-world movies…as the world itself turns into an end-of-the-world movie. Not here in Victoria, of course—we'll just meet such a future with professionally facilitated multi-stakeholder workshops.

Almost all of us alive now have lived our entire lives inside the frame of social stability, free of major crisis or threat, and sufficiently elastic to deal with minor social frictions and perturbations. Social upheaval—the turning upside-down of entire populations, catastrophic loss of life, complete social collapse and the ruin of homes and cities—has to-date shown the decency to take place elsewhere, to be news from afar, near-fictions in the media that happen to other people "over there."

Understandably, most of the challenge around preparation rests with the psychological and cultural groundwork, sensibility-shifting, the learning and believing, the normalcy-abandoning: "You mean this wonderful life of pleasure, plenty, peace and well-being that has made us utterly soft and rendered us children incapable of anticipating and responding to ever-mounting risk and adversity, is not going to continue forever? You mean something bad could happen, soon, for which we are utterly unprepared culturally, psychologically or functionally? You mean, the grounds for relaxedness can be withdrawn?"

In movies, when the going gets tough, when social or physical catastrophe threatens or arrives, the previously un-self-aware hero discovers his/her purpose, puts on a grim, determined face (which signals an instantaneous transformation to emotional maturity and responsibility-taking), neutralizes or defeats the threat, and leads the community to safety. This is one of our cornerstone cultural myths, limitedly installed in our real-world behaviour. It explains Trump and much else. We are children and the skies are darkening. There are too many of us, we've developed some bad habits, and we're destroying the environment, the one (the only) cushion we might otherwise fall back on.

"Serious" is fun-free and requires emotional gravity and a grim sense of purpose. "Grim" is almost impossible when an entire culture has been smoking weed for 60 years. Makes it hard to strap on. Now the planet is circulating a new memo: intervene massively and abusively in natural systems—and pay the price.

Jem Bendell, cited earlier in this column, writes in the preface to his 2018 Initiative For Leadership and Sustainability paper, *Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy*, that he believes his is "one of the first papers in the sustainability management field to conclude that climate-induced societal collapse is now inevitable in the near term." He goes on to ask and then answer this terrifying question: "Can professionals in sustainability management, policy and research—myself included—continue to work with the assumption or hope that we can slow down climate change, or respond to it sufficiently to sustain our civilization? This was the question I could no longer ignore, and therefore took a couple of months to analyze the latest climate science. I concluded that we can no longer work with that assumption or hope."

THIS PAST OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, McDonald's was doing its "Coast-to-Coast Monopoly" thing. There, on beverage containers, in big, bright letters, was the message: "1 In 5 Chances To Win!"

What, I wonder, held it back from announcing "4 In 5 Chances To Lose?"

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

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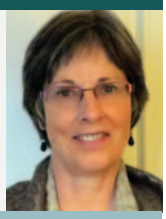

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Drawing from the well: Bill Goers' inspiration

MALEEA ACKER

A Fernwood well brings history lessons, community, and precious water together.

PHOTO: TONY BOUNSALL

Bill Goers

After a Capital Region summer of near-normal precipitation and one of the wettest Octobers on record (though one of the driest Novembers), it's easy to forget the troubles much of the world has with limited water supplies. California's groundwater supply is dwindling; Cape Town is running dry; even Tofino has run out in the past. Climate change promises to bring water insecurity to much of the world. So when a water source is dedicated by the Hudson's Bay Company to the people of Victoria for all eternity—a source that produces from a fractured rock spring in the middle of a growing city—it's best to count your blessings, and perhaps even take a sip.

Bill Goers was talking over the fence to a neighbour not long after moving to Fernwood in 1979 when he heard that Fernwood had once been the main water source for Victoria. "This was interesting to me," he says when we talk at his store, Common Sense Orthotics on Fort Street. The water came from several springs on Fernwood's Spring Ridge—from which Spring Street takes its name. Flowing from gravel deposits left from the last ice age, the water was collected and delivered first by bucket, and then by wooden pipe until the 1870s.

"People have been meeting at wells forever," Goers muses, "It's very old stuff." Less controversial than saving trees or protecting grizzly bears, water is basic. It draws people together and highlights commonalities. The springs in Fernwood—and the wells that were built over them—were a gathering place for 1800s settlers.

During a Fernwood Community Association radio interview, Joanne Murray, Goers' wife and vice president of the Fernwood Community Association, recounts the story of Englishman George Hunter Carey, a settler who attempted to privatize the springs. In 1861, Carey bought land that included a popular Fernwood spring. He fenced it off and tried to charge for water. Locals were outraged and burned the fence down. He was excoriated in Victoria newspapers. Carey had the protesters arrested, but the courts sided against him.

Over 20 years after first hearing the story of the Fernwood springs, a friend of Goers was doing research in the UVic Law Library and found evidence of an 1866 land conveyance as part of the *Act of Union*. It dated back to pre-confederation, when the Hudson's Bay Company passed ownership of Vancouver Island to the Crown. As part of the union, a well on Spring Ridge was set aside and dedicated, forever, to the people of Victoria. The dedication of the well by HBC was likely a result of the public outcry against Carey's attempt to privatize a public water source.

In the 1870s, when the city began drawing its water from Elk Lake, the Fernwood well ceased to be used; its location was eventually forgotten. Much of Spring Ridge itself was turned into a quarry.

But Goers' interest was piqued. He continued his research. Historical maps placed the well just north of William Stevenson Park, near the Fernwood Community Centre. Telling me the story, his enthusiasm spills out, fingers raking his hair until it stands on end. Goers relates how he gathered together local dowser Ron Welch and a few members of the Fernwood community to start planning. Welch dowsed the entire Fernwood neighbourhood, and eventually found water in a corner of Stevenson Park. The Fernwood Community Well project was born, ushering in the return of an old, old practice of gathering around the well.

The group won a $3500 neighbourhood matching grant in 2005 and worked with Victoria's parks department and gained permission to drill a shallow well of 25 feet. They hit water immediately, which explains why even in the heat of summer, you can walk through Fernwood and hear a trickling of streams under manhole covers. The area, says Goers, is one of Victoria's only dependable water sources.

In 2008, Goers was prodded by the City of Victoria to spend the rest of their grant money. He worked with Tri-K Drilling to drill a deeper well of 150 feet. Goers won the fourth annual World Water Day Award for his work in 2008. Yet the well still didn't have a pump.

Spring water, or well water, is still the primary source of water for most who live outside of the Capital Region's urban areas. I used to live in a house in Willis Point that had one. Iron and calcium turned the linens yellow and scaled the inside of the toilet. It was worth it, though, for the minerals it infused into my garden and for the taste. But for those of us who don't have our own free source, water remains an uncertain resource in the event of a catastrophic earthquake. Are

> "OFFICIALLY, IT'S NOT FOR DRINKING. But it belongs to all of us; no one can take this away from us."
>
> —*Bill Goers*

we prepared to supply water in an emergency in the Capital Region, Goers asked the Emergency Preparedness team in the region? "Not really," they admitted.

Goers had been negotiating with the CRD, VIHA and the City for permission to drill the well, slowly gaining their trust. He finally convinced officials to let him build and fit the well with a pump by appealing to the need for an emergency source of water. At the end of 2008, Goers and the Community Association won funding to install a pump and cement footing. The CRD has stipulated that the pump can't remain operational, for liability reasons. They tried locking it, but people kept cutting the lock off. So when it's not in use, Goers keeps the handle at his house.

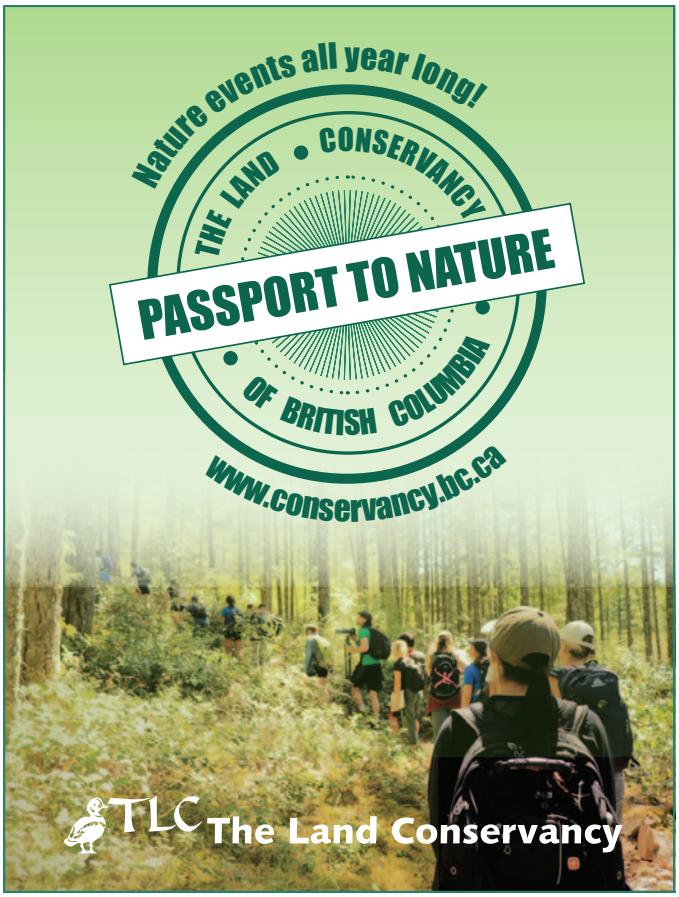
A well dedication celebration took place in October 2008. Goers was joined by MP Denise Savoie and MLA Rob Fleming, Songhees Chief Ron Sam and Lieutenant Governor of BC Steven Point. "Water is a public resource," Savoie said, "It just flows through, it can't be owned." As a crowd observed, the well was blessed in Christian, Buddhist, Jewish and Wiccan ceremonies. Ceremonial cups were drunk by many, including Point and Sam. Goers, who is incredibly modest, watched from the background.

"Officially, it's not for drinking," Goers tells me, "But it belongs to all of us; no one can take this away from us." Goers thinks of the well as a 150-year project, and the community as its steward. Eventually, he'd like to see the well earn a series of good testing reports so that officials consent to keeping the well unlocked and available as a dependable drinking source. It could offer what so many towns in Europe offer: drinkable spring water as part of public infrastructure.

In the meantime, Goers is out at 9am every third Saturday of the month, rain or shine, to reattach the well handle and pump for anyone who wants some water. You can join him. Many swear their tomatoes grow larger from the mineral content, and bring buckets. Though the water is not officially sanctioned as potable, some stock up, filling glass containers for an iron-rich drink. Some use it for the making of essential oils, which need chlorine-free water for distillation. I've joined him a couple of times this fall, and a varied assortment of people always show up. Kids like hanging off the pump while getting the water flowing. "People light up to the idea of what we have," says Goers. "I'm always pleased to go, because every time, I meet someone I haven't met before." The five gallons I bring home tastes of rock and pine and minerals. It's more thirst-quenching than water out of the tap. I fill my glass every day.

Visit Bill Goers in Stevenson Park, below the Fernwood Community Centre, on Pembroke Street. He's there on the third Saturday of every month at 9am. Bring a container.

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 the social sciences and poetry.



Shrinking fashion's carbon footprint

TRUDY DUIVENVOORDEN MITIC

Used clothing is no longer solely the domain of the poor, and for good reason.

One day many years ago, I stood as a meek and awkward adolescent in front of an older girl's burgeoning closet. Her mother was pressing me to pick out some clothes for myself. Her mother had also been my grade five teacher a few years earlier, and was one of the more outspoken voices in the community. I cringed as if I was back in her class.

She must think we're really poor, I thought, as I tentatively slid the hangered shirts and dresses along the rod. Anxiety tightened my throat. To please her, I'd have to wear her daughter's clothes in public and deal with that fallout. But if I went home empty-handed, I'd be rejecting her charity and maybe invoking annoyance, a risk I didn't feel brave enough to take.

In the end, I chose a pair of black tights, blurted out my thanks and dashed for home.

Those were the days when you faced palpable shame for wearing other people's castoffs. You could accept a pie or pickles or freshly knit slippers, but someone else's old clothes—that was too personal, too stigmatizing. It was the distinction that consigned you to the have-not corral and then used your new-found status to keep you there.

Fast-forward to 2020, and everything has changed. The used-apparel industry has become a darling, a feel-good shopping option that's trendy, thrilling, and much easier on the budget and the planet.

In the US, it will grow to $51 billion by 2023, more than double its worth in 2018. In truth, it's beginning to leave the retail market in the dust. According to a 2019 Resale Report by thredUP, a San Francisco-based, online, used-clothing marketplace now accessible to Canadians, the resale market has grown 21 times faster than retail over the last three years.

That's not surprising, given that resale shopping options now include efficient, fashion-savvy online markets, some of which allow you to return clothes for credit when you're finished with them. Also—and this is a key driver—everyone has become a potential client. No longer is "used" the domain of the poor. According to Kijiji, 35 percent of Canadians who shop the overall used market have an annual income exceeding $80,000.

High-profile shout-outs haven't hurt either: The *Los Angeles Times* recently declared buying second hand to be one of the hottest trends of the year. Fashion designer Stella McCartney has declared, "the future of fashion is circular; it will be restorative and regenerative by design and the clothes we love [will] never end up as waste."

Anna Wintour, fashion diva and editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, recently urged consumers to become more mindful in their shopping choices. It's about "valuing the clothes that you own and wearing them again and again" before finally passing them on to someone else, she told global news service Reuters last November.

All this helps to begin pushing back at the ugly and destructive side of the fashion industry—that the planet has $40 billion worth of clothing languishing and burning in landfills, 95 percent of which could have been reused; that the industry's carbon footprint is estimated to be larger than that of the shipping and airline industries combined; that most clothing is produced in Third-World factories where conditions and wages are deplorable, and is sold here by retail staff whose earnings are among the lowest in our work force; and that no mass-produced fabric can really be called sustainable.

The resale market has grown 21 times faster than retail over the last 3 years

Even natural fabrics require copious amounts of water and other resources in the course of manufacturing, tailoring and shipping, resources that are wasted when they end up in the landfill. But if you donate it instead—let's say your t-shirt—and someone else buys and wears it, now its carbon footprint is reduced by 82 percent, according to research firm Green Story Inc. (The same can be said for almost anything that's repurposed.)

Locally we're fortunate to have a vibrant used market. Each year we collectively support it with untold thousands of donated clothes, thereby advancing a circular economy or, as Kijiji calls it, community commerce. As long as the clothes continue to change hands, they continue to make money. The revenue stays local; some of it goes to charity. Jobs are created and budgets aren't broken. The stores are clean and organized. Nothing smells like mothballs.

In 2020, shopping for used clothing is trendy and forward-thinking. I no longer tremble when facing the hangers. I love the hunt, and the fact that I'm being a "radical" for the environment. We know we're going to have to start treading more lightly to avert a crisis. Used clothing is an easy way to make a difference.

Trudy wishes everyone a Happy New Year and happy new adventures in community commerce. Once you go there, you'll never look back.

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