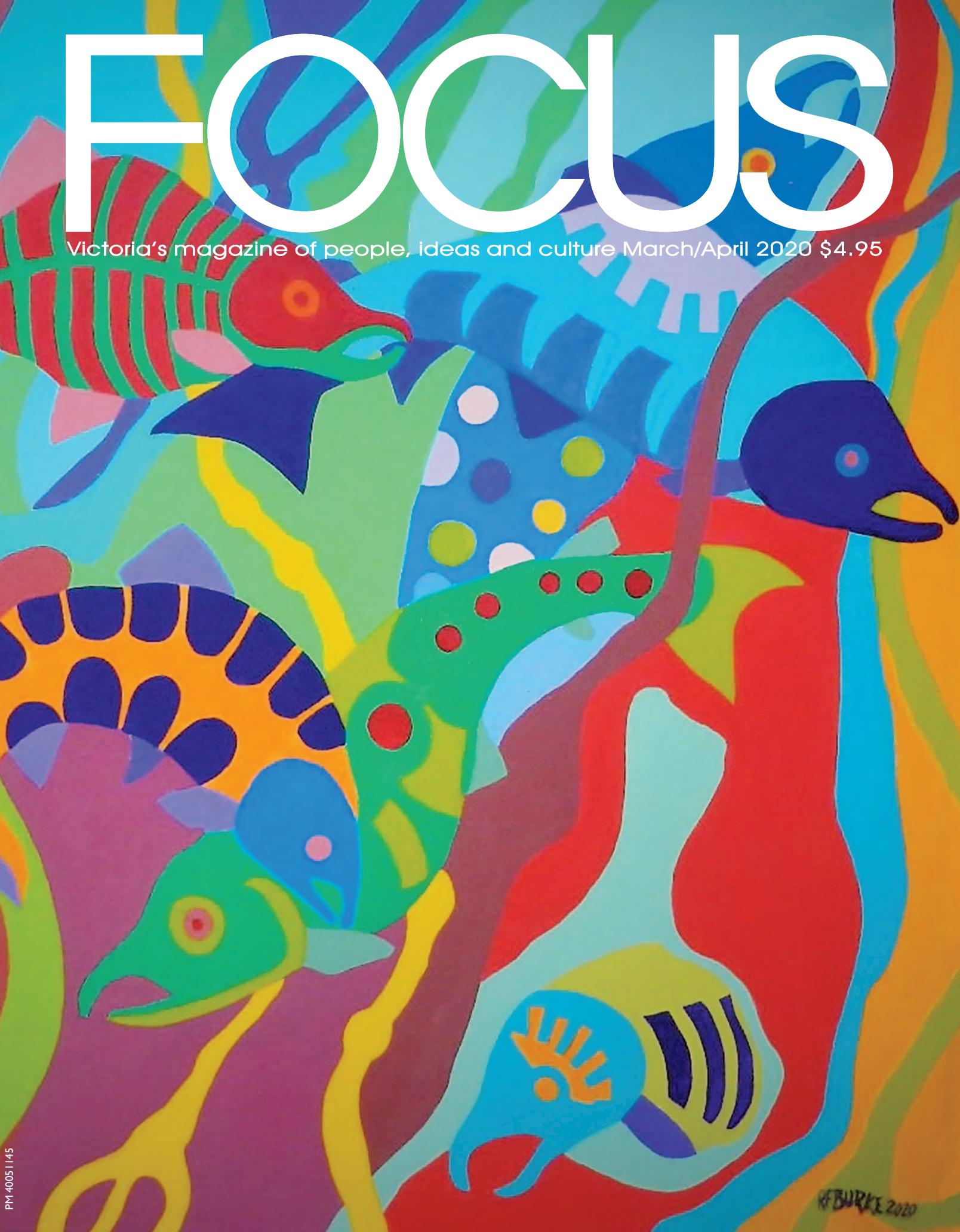
FOCUS

Victoria's magazine of people, ideas and culture March/April 2020 $4.95



PM 40051145

Radiant Health Sauna

With CarbonFlow™ heating, the latest far-infrared technology from Japan at a price lower than most competitors. Lifetime warranty.

Low monthly payments OAC

TRIANGLE Healing Products

www.trianglehealing.com
770 Spruce Avenue • 250-370-1818

properties in victoria professionals™

"It is not the easy or convenient life for which we search...
But rather LIFE lived
to the edge of all our possibilities.

Sharen Warde

sharen@propertiesinvictoria.com
propertiesinvictoria.com
250.592.4422

ROYAL LEPAGE Coast Capital Realty

MARY MUNRO MA, MC

REGISTERED CLINICAL COUNSELLOR

I can help

anxiety, depression, grief, anger, relationships, communication, confidence, resilience

Supportive, confidential, effective

250-589-4172
mary@marymunro.ca
www.marymunro.ca

WING'S

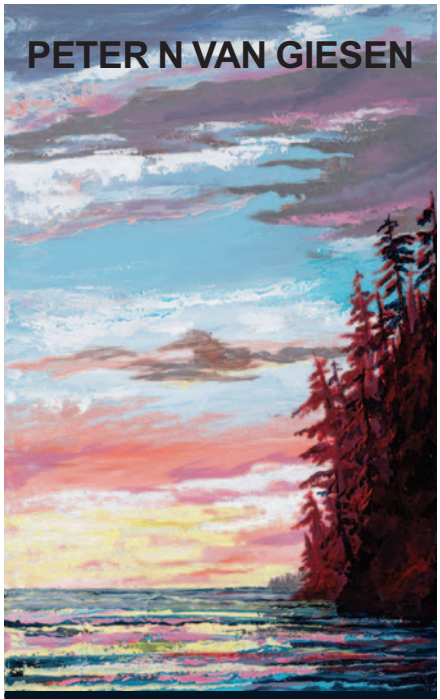
RESTAURANT

Known for delicious Oriental Cuisine at reasonable prices.

Lunch Buffet
Dinner Buffet

Fully licensed • Take out
FREE delivery after 4:30pm
90 Gorge Rd W • 250-385-5564

PETER N VAN GIESEN



peternvangiesen.com
peter@peternvangiesen.com

Central Art Studio & Gallery at The Bay Centre

www.centralartstudiogallery.com

Be Healthy Naturally

with **Dr. Fei Yang,** Dr. TCM, Reg; Ac

- Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Acupuncture
- Natural Healing Process
- Over 34 years experience

250.888.6633
www.drfeiyang.ca

contents

March/April 2020 VOL. 32 NO. 2

4 THREE THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AHEAD OF THE BY-ELECTION
A growing budget, a lack of transparency, and a boundary-challenged City Council all merit voters' attention.
Leslie Campbell

10 THE FOREST-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX'S MOLOTOV CLEARCUTS
Wildfires in BC are getting bigger. Much bigger. The forest-industrial complex blames too much fire suppression. We're not so sure.
David Broadland

18 ALL TOGETHER NOW?
The April 4 by-election puts the City of Victoria's youthful electoral organization to the test.
Ross Crockford

22 FARMLAND—AND FOOD SECURITY—IN A HOT REAL ESTATE MARKET
Innovative programs are being put in place to help farmers address the high cost of farmland—but are they enough?
Judith Lavoie

24 UVIC'S ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTRE, 24 YEARS STRONG
The clinic attracts Canada's best aspiring public-interest environmental lawyers to work on cases for community groups.
Stephen Hume

28 WHO IS REALLY BREAKING THE LAW
Recent protests in support of the Wet'suwet'en could be a teachable moment, if only we study history and listen.
Briony Penn

32 THE ACCELERATING RISK OF INVESTING IN FOSSIL FUELS
Pensions of BC teachers, public servants, and municipal workers include huge fossilized investments.
Russ Francis

34 "YOU'RE A TICKING TIME BOMB"
Thoughts around overdiagnosis after a visit to a medical specialist.
Alan Cassels

36 COLOURING A DARK CHAPTER
Robert Burke's creative paintings tell the multi-hued story of his difficult childhood.
Kate Cino

48 ALL THESE THINGS IN CONSTELLATION
Victoria band West My Friend provides a welcome balm for our world-weary souls.
Mollie Kaye

52 POLITICS IN THEATRE, BOTH ON STAGE AND OFF
Good political theatre can unsettle audiences towards making a better world.
Monica Prendergast

54 OUR GLASS PARADISE REVISITED
Exploring notions of place and human relationships to nature, Neil McClelland's tondos intrigue, inspire and alarm.
Kate Cino

58 GIMME SHELTER
Scenes of homelessness challenge any illusion that our city is well-ordered—and call for a new blueprint for community.
Gene Miller

60 NURDLE MEN ON BEACH PATROL
Two UVic librarians volunteering for Surfrider are leading the battle against industrial plastic on our beaches.
Maleea Acker

62 VEGETARIANISM—A RESPECTFUL APPROACH TO EATING
A plant-based diet came simply and gradually—and with many rewards.
Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic

editor's letter 4
readers' views 6
talk of the town 10
palette 36
arts highlights 40
vibe 48
curtain call 52
urbanities 58
natural city 60
finding balance 62

ON THE COVER
"Gathering of Seniors" by Robert Burke, acrylic on canvas, 31x35 inches. See story on page 36.

STERLING STANFORD
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

Kim Sterling, FCPA, FCGA Ashley Stanford, CPA, CGA

Accounting and Income Tax
for Individuals and Small Businesses

307 – 1625 Oak Bay Avenue
250-480-0558
SterlingStanford.ca

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

Wellspring

Saturday May 2, 2020 7:30 pm
First Met, 932 Balmoral Rd, Victoria

Saturday May 9, 2020 7:30 pm
St. Mary's, 1973 Cultra Ave, Saanichton

Tickets: $25 in advance | $30 at the door | $15 student | under 13 free
brownpapertickets.com, Ivy's Bookshop, Long & McQuade

ENSEMBLE LAUDE Choral Society
www.ensemblelaude.org

Three things to think about ahead of the City of Victoria by-election

LESLIE CAMPBELL

A growing budget, a lack of transparency, and a boundary-challenged City Council all merit voters' attention.

In this edition of *Focus*, Ross Crockford interviews candidates running in the April 4 City of Victoria by-election. Who voters choose will provide the current council with some feedback on its direction thus far, so it's a good time to reflect on recent governance issues and talk to candidates about them.

One area of concern is the growth of the City budget and residents' tax burden. This is central, especially in the face of a climate crisis. Keeping spending in check is both highly practical and a matter of planetary survival. Growth costs us in earthly resources and climate stability. Reducing our collective footprint is the best way to ensure future generations have a place to live.

The City can't be a climate leader without figuring out how to make government more efficient and less demanding of more and more resources, in the form of tax dollars or otherwise. Ultimately, it's nature that pays for it all.

The City's budget for 2020 will be finalized at the end of April after property assessments are finalized. Land values have gone up in recent years due, at least in part, to City policies around development.

The City's new budget, with its proposed $265 million for operating expenses and $43 million for capital expenses, will require an approximate hike in property taxes and utilities of 3.32 percent. The mayor has boasted about adding new programs and services, while keeping tax increases to the rate of inflation plus one percent.

For an average residential home ($805,000 assessment), the proposed total municipal property taxes and utility user fees will be approximately $3,605, an increase of $116 over 2019 (on top of a similar increase last year). Property taxes ($140 million) and utilities (about $40 million) comprise the lion's share of the revenue side of the budget, with parking fees, grants and other revenue providing the rest.

In 2019, the "New Property Tax Revenue from New Development" provided an extra $3.7 million and was used to fund such things as more mayor's office support ($114k), the urban forest management plan ($858k), an Indigenous artist in residence ($72k), a disability coordinator ($128.5k), a climate outreach specialist ($106k), and a climate grant writer ($117k). The draft 2020 budget notes that it is only in recent years—since 2015—that council has used this revenue to fund services. It used to be used solely to reduce taxes and help fund reserves.

In a survey about the budget, residents were asked how the City should allocate new tax revenues from development: 55 percent of the 5,100 respondents said "reduce the tax increase." Half of respondents also said "save for future infrastructure investment." Only 16 percent responded "invest in new initiatives," yet that appears to be what the City has done since Mayor Helps was elected in 2014.

That same survey showed over half of respondents wanted service levels cut in order to maintain or reduce taxes. An exception in terms of increasing the budget was made for VicPD, where 67 percent judged current spending too low. Council has resisted the Police Board's requests for additional funds in the past, forcing the Province to step in and order increased funding. This year, it looks like VicPD will get its requested four extra officers.

Every new initiative has costs—even if you get a grant from the Feds or Province, and especially if it's from new development which increases the need for—and maintenance of—all sorts of public infrastructure, from libraries and schools to roads, parks and sewage treatment, as well as services like policing. The new revenue from development is a pittance when considered against all the costs.

Reducing our footprint cannot be achieved with continual growth in spending, whether on an individual consumer level, or by government. Climate leadership, then, involves showing how we can do more with less. And sometimes do without.

TRANSPARENCY IS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT of an accountable government, and another issue worthy of consideration on voting day. The City of Victoria likes to think of itself as transparent and communicative, but a recent example shows it needs to do some work.

In looking into the City's climate action plan last December, and finding that its greenhouse gas inventory had been done by Stantec, we wondered how much that had cost. The City's Statement of Financial Information (SOFI) for 2017 and 2018 noted Stantec had been paid $249,629.95 and $211,874.53, respectively.

Municipal governments are required by the Province to produce a SOFI annually. It's supposed to provide a basic level of accountability. Our inquiry was about one line on a long list of outside suppliers who, in 2018, charged the City a total of $110 million. That amounted to 42 percent of the City's operating budget. The SOFI names the vendors and puts a dollar figure beside each name. But how can the public know how its money is being spent without a little more detail? Could we find out what work Stantec did for the City that cost taxpayers nearly a quarter of a million a year?

Focus asked the City's "engagement" office what services Stantec provided for those sums. It seemed a simple request to the office that responds to simple requests for information from media. But our simple request for information was directed to the City's information access and privacy analyst. In a number of lengthy, confusing emails, the analyst noted the "complications" in answering *Focus*' question: Two days of work would be required due to, among other things, the accounting system, the multiple departments that might have used Stantec, the 7 different vendor record types for Stantec (with 37 invoices, for example, for just one); and the fact that 2017 records were stored offsite. The official concluded with: "Therefore, under section 6 (Duty to Assist) the City is not required to provide the information you are seeking as it would 'unreasonably interfere with the operations' of the City."

We persisted, and eventually we asked a question simple enough that the City could answer. In February, we received a one-page record (see website) from the City's FOI office showing City ledger entries for Stantec in 2017 and 2018. Among other things, it showed a 2017 charge for over $83,000 for climate action consulting, and another $924 in 2018. (Which was interesting because we had been told earlier that Stantec was paid $17,587 for the emissions inventory —which, as shown in *Focus'* last edition, the City manipulated in such a way as to be unrecognizable.)

We found the Kafkaesque response to our simple inquiry revealing. No one at City Hall could easily tell us where nearly $500,000

REDUCING OUR FOOTPRINT cannot be achieved with continual growth in spending, whether on an individual consumer level, or by government. Climate leadership, then, involves showing how we can do more with less. And sometimes do without.

was spent. The City is meeting its *legal* requirement to produce an annual Statement of Financial Information. But its ability to provide even a slightly deeper level of detail is very limited. There's no true transparency.

Supplier payments, by the way, have increased a whopping 40 percent since 2015 when Mayor Helps took office. It wouldn't be so bad if, say, staff costs had gone down, but they have increased 10 percent over her mayoralty, with more coming. In 2020, the number of employees will rise another 20-plus to 882.

A THIRD, CENTRAL QUESTION to consider on by-election day is: What is the role of City Council, anyway? This has become important to answer because Victoria councillors have pushed the boundaries about what a councillor should spend time on—from the removal of Sir John A's statue through proclamations on subjects that civic governments have no authority over. Is council wasting precious time and resources? It has been argued that council's amorphous mandate is not just wasteful, but is causing unnecessary divides in our community as councillors move from overseeing City operations to more ideological stands.

Questions about council's role peaked when Councillor Ben Isitt lobbied for a 50 percent raise for council members to a base salary of over $70,000. In the survey of 5,100 mentioned above, 86 percent said, in effect, *fugget about it!*

Some councillors—Isitt included—already make close to $70k with CRD board and committee activities (Mayor Helps about double that). They also get full dental and extended health benefits, and their pay is indexed to the cost of living. They do have to prepare for and attend a lot of meetings. Maybe a $45-70k salary is not enough, but in what kind of fantasyland does one imagine a *50 percent* raise? Should it be viewed as a full-time professional-level job? Or modestly-compensated community service, representing City residents on policies? I am looking forward to hearing the views of by-election candidates on such matters.

One thing the City Council and those 5,000 citizens agreed on was that priority number one is "Good Governance." And surely that includes being careful, frugal even, with resources.

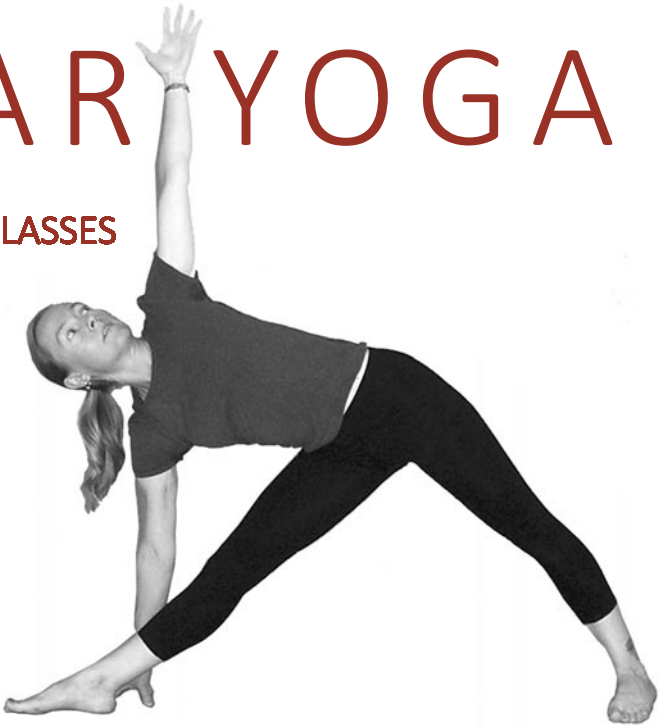
On the eve of both the by-election and the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, Leslie Campbell reminds readers that a healthy, climate-stable environment needs citizens who don't forget to vote. She also gives thanks to the candidates for sticking their necks out.

IYENGAR YOGA

ENJOY 50% OFF SELECT BEGINNER CLASSES

Register Now for March 2 - May 3

Mon 5-6pm	$50	9 classes
Tue 7-8:15pm	$59	9 classes
Wed 5-6pm	$50	9 classes
Thu 4:15-5:15pm	$17	3 bike rider classes (Apr 9, 16, 23)
Fri 5:30-6:30pm	$39	7 classes
Sat 9:30-10:30am	$44	8 classes



IYENGAR YOGA CENTRE OF VICTORIA

202-919 Fort St. 250.386.9642

www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

Whither the Citizen's Council? Whither democracy?

Here, in this reader's assessment, is a near-perfect teachable example of how and why democracy is failing:

In 2014, under considerable pressure from the electorate, media, almost all sources, a question about amalgamation was included on the municipal election ballot. Over 70 percent of the population of 13 municipalities indicated they wanted the issue examined. What did our elected politicians do about this clear mandate? Almost nothing and, we suspect, absolutely nothing would have been the result if not for pressure from outside municipal offices. Then, in 2018, the question is asked again, in a different way and, again, over 70 percent of the population voted for action on this important topic.

Anyone who watched and listened to Fred Haynes, Mayor of Saanich, at the Fall 2019 Victoria Chamber annual AGM, knew he would "slow-walk" this project to a whimpering death if he could—he might succeed yet. His behaviour, his words, were an affront to democracy and he's proven himself consistent when one compares the confident statements about change he made to get elected, with his action since. Two years to set the terms of reference? We appreciate the urgency…

The symptoms appear to describe a political class that has decided it is elite. "Elite" is defined in the Oxford English dictionary as "a select group that is superior in terms of ability or qualities to the rest of a group or society."

I hope the word offends folks like Mayors Helps and Haynes because it should. The behaviour is deeply offensive to the electorate, the political offices of Mayor and Councillor, and to our system of democracy.

You are not elite. You are us, and of us, and we want better.

When politicians make decisions like hiring the daughter of the provincial finance minister right out of university for $130,000, removing a controversial statue in a way guaranteed to sow anger and frustration, refusing to answer valid questions, wasting taxpayers' money and engagement so they can advance a career in provincial politics, skipping 30 percent of council meetings because they're finishing a PhD, arguing about the results of surveys they created, giving themselves a raise and justifying it with their own work decisions, and ignoring the will of the electorate, they prove they either don't understand ethical decision-making (a.k.a. good governance) or don't care. Which is worse? Either way, we are throwing our hands up in the air.

FOCUS Magazine
Editor: Leslie Campbell Publisher: David Broadland
Arts Editor: Mollie Kaye
Sales: Bonnie Light, Rosalinde Compton
ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTIONS
250-388-7231 focuspublish@shaw.ca
EDITORIAL INQUIRIES and letters to the editor: focusedit@shaw.ca
WEBSITE: www.focusonvictoria.ca **MAIL:** Box 5310, Victoria, V8R 6S4
Subscriptions (tax included): $21/year (6 editions); $42/2 years (12 editions)

Copyright © 2020. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the publisher of *Focus Magazine*.

Canadian Publications Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 40051145

At cocktail parties and other social gatherings, we hear a consistent refrain, supported by lots of polling research: Canadians are increasingly disengaged and detached from politics, politicians and the decisions they make. Canadians feel they have little influence, and that bleeds into a pervasive despair.

Municipal elections track 30-40 percent participation, which is not only tragic, but creates an environment easy to manipulate by the incumbents, making the disengagement worse. Throw into this mixture the failing economics of local news and therefore less or no accountability for decisions. Accountability helps us be our best selves and, instead, we have this toxic cycle of worsening behaviour.

Dear politicians (starting locally), please, do you not see your contribution to this failure? Every small, unethical decision is a grain of sand—on top of so many grains of sand—in our hearts and we can't take the weight any more. Blaming the media, the disengagement, the other party, the party/person that had your job before you, none of this is helpful and makes you look hopeless, makes us feel hopeless. Do better!

This Titanic turns only in the most difficult, and least likely, ways, in my estimation: it turns on every small decision to serve oneself, or serve the community. It turns on a robust discussion about where the ends do and do *not* justify the means. It turns on a new commitment to reverse the course of political elitism, rejecting hubris, removing money and any lobby influence from either the right or left. It turns on intellectual honesty, humility and service.

I wish I were more hopeful. The next Donald Trump/Doug Ford/Erdogan is going to learn from the last ones and make fewer mistakes. Donald Trump has offended the army countless times because he is a fool and his own worst enemy. If he had the military's unqualified support, why would it matter what the Supreme Court says about his 3rd, 4th, 5th terms? Do you think I'm being overly dramatic? When our community becomes angry enough about this behaviour, we will be vulnerable to anyone who is eloquent, manipulative, self-serving… an effective populist. I'm saying that this outcome is a direct result of the unethical decision-making we see here in our community today.

Stephen Ison

Transformation wanted

In the spirit of a new year and a new decade, Leslie Campbell's ("The 2020s: time for transformation") reference to UK scholar Joe Herbert's advocating for strengthening the role of co-operatives, is likely the simplest (and dare I say, more effective?) way of addressing the increasingly tenuous connection everyday people have with the "machinery" that puts things on the shelves for us to buy.

Co-operatives can be peopled by users/producers, concentrating more on local markets. The shareholders can be more than someone "from away" who simply writes cheques for shares, then cashes them in, more than likely on the advice of some computer program that tells them when to buy and sell—without even knowing (or caring) what product/service is being produced.

Good advice, Leslie!

Rick Weatherill

Insurance policy against failure of climate action plans

I found David Broadland's article on local climate change issues in the November/December, 2019 issue of *Focus* very interesting, as it exposes how hard it is to make a serious dent in reducing greenhouse gasses (GHG).

Auréa
FASHION BOUTIQUE &
ESSENTIAL LUXURIES

614 Johnson Street
250.381.6260
www.aureagems.com

I was particularly intrigued by his description of an alternative emissions accounting concept on consumption of goods and services. One does not know how much GHGs it takes to produce an iPhone or fly to London. Should this be a consideration when we are buying apples from BC or avocados from Mexico? How might one tax carbon on consumption?

I disagree with Broadland that we should set aside second-growth forest as reserves to sequester carbon. Wood is a very good and versatile building material, and our building codes are now being revised to allow up to a 10-storey building with very low GHG emissions. Lumber used in buildings is effectively sequestered for the life of the building.

Compare this to concrete. The cement required to make a cubic metre of concrete will create between 150 and 300 kg CO_2 in manufacturing due to CO_2 driven off from the limestone raw materials, heat, and energy required. (The wide range of values depends on how much cement is used in making concrete.) Even assuming a lower 200 kg figure, a load in a large concrete mixer (10 cubic metres) will have created 2 tonnes of CO_2. Estimates of the contribution of the cement industry range between 5 and 10 percent of the world's GHGs. This is an elephant in the room.

Another area of interest to me is the waste of good wood that has been sequestered and all of the rubble that goes to landfill when homes are demolished. A significant environmental levy on demolition of existing homes and buildings should be applied and resulting funds used for good environmental purposes. It is a shame that so many structurally-sound homes are being bulldozed to be replaced with ostentatious mega-homes occupied by two people and a dog.

Bill Feyer

Defusing BC's big, bad carbon bomb

Kudos to David Broadland's excellent article on how BC is creating more carbon emissions than Alberta's oil sands. His article is a very simple and clear analysis of the whole forestry industry, from its effect on the environment and jobs to our future.

My daughter is a geologist working in the oil sands of Alberta—I'm proud of how her company is working responsibly to develop the energy that the world needs. They are always being cast in such an unfavourable light. To those naysayers: we still need oil.

This article is required reading for our politicians in Victoria who instead of pointing the finger at Alberta should look first in their own backyard.

Lori Pollock

City of Victoria cheats on emissions count

David Broadland's story "City of Victoria cheats on first emissions count" is very interesting, but it contains at least one major inaccuracy.

Overall, the story is disturbing, since the City has clearly misrepresented the data. Moreover, they have obviously wasted the money they paid Stantec to carry out this work using standardized methodologies. And some of the political motivations he attributes to the City are certainly plausible.

The assertion that the City's main source of industrial process emissions are the "concrete batch plants around Rock Bay" really got my attention. I live across the street from Ocean Concrete and I look down on their operations daily. To my knowledge, this plant, and the Butler plant further down Bay Street, are engaged only in mixing concrete and not manufacturing cement. There are no kilns for cement manufacture, and those are the main source of GHGs. As far as I know, the only cement plant in BC is Heidelberg Cement in Delta, so the large emissions associated with Victoria's building boom would be reported there.

I was a senior policy advisor for Canada's GHG Offset Systems agency before it was axed by the Harper government in 2006, and I know how emissions from cement manufacture are estimated, so this really surprised me.

Out of curiosity, I downloaded the reports (thanks for the links) and read them both (I'm semi-retired now and have time on my hands). It turns out that contrary to your assertion, the City does not emit any reportable industrial GHG emissions. See section 5.5.4: "There are no industrial GHG emissions occurring within the City's boundaries, and a 'Not Occurring' notation is used." The number reported for IPPU is from consumer use of products that emit SF6 and NF3 (refrigerants, aerosols etc.), which the report notes the City has "little influence" over. Moreover, these emissions are only crudely estimated in the Stantec report.

That's no reason to exclude them of course, and at the very least, the City's report should have explained their calculations. I have no doubt that this was a deliberate effort to deceive the public. But this error raises doubts about the accuracy of other elements of your report, so it might be worth correcting.

Thanks for this very interesting article and your effort in obtaining this data.

Ken Waldie

Generation squeeze

I live in Harris Green and I have attended two of the three public meetings that the Starlight developers organized. I was at the December 3 meeting that was mentioned in Ross Crockford's article. It was described inaccurately by an anonymous writer on the blog Vibrant Victoria as "90 percent senior citizens blathering." This is not only wrong but insulting. Why would you quote an anonymous insult?

The audience at the meeting was mostly middle-aged, some young couples, a minority of older people. I was surrounded by 30-somethings in the back row. From my vantage point, I could see the whole crowd of close to 100 people. The standing-room-only situation left many people leaning on the surrounding walls; these people were not seniors.

At the meeting we were given a great deal of information through slides and architects' talks. There were some impromptu questions from the audience, so by the time question period opened there wasn't much left out. I felt most questions I had were answered. I think that's why the audience reaction could be described as quiet.

However, the thought of the chaos of 10 years of demolition and construction of an entire city block beside my condo is overwhelming and indescribable.

Marilyn Welch

Ross Crockford responds: The reader's description of the meeting is correct, and I should have provided more detail about the composition of the audience. But I'm not sure the anonymous "victorian" quoted in my article was completely wrong, because there is wiggle room in phrases like "middle-aged" and "senior citizen." I'm 56, and while I like to think I'm middle-aged, I'm probably a senior citizen in the eyes of those in their 20s, so to them, "90 percent senior citizens" might've seemed accurate. I agree the comment by "victorian" was insulting, but I ultimately decided to include it because it illustrates the frustration young people have with the lack of affordable housing in Victoria, and where some of them place blame for it, however mistakenly.

Heritage at risk

An urgent situation has developed around Mount St Angela, the outstanding 1866

heritage building at 923 Burdett Ave. Designed by John Wright, the first architect in Victoria, Mount St Angela, with its spire is the outstanding example of High Gothic brick architecture in early Victoria. The original 1866 school still stands with an 1876 addition, a three-storey red brick hotel wing of 1912, and the attached Temple residence at 924 McClure Street.

Financial grants are only provided after heritage designation, which is supposed to ensure building preservation. In 1991 and 1992, all the parts received heritage designation and the British Columbia Heritage Branch gave grants for preservation. In total, taxpayers supplied $75,000 of the $120,000 expended on restoration (*Mount St Angela Conservation Plan*, 2010, p. 34). The Victoria Heritage Foundation also provided funds for stabilization of the 1866 chimneys.

During a series of redevelopment proposals for the entire large property, beginning in 2006, the designation of the 1912 hotel addition was removed.The latest proposal, coming up for a hearing, would see the original 1866 building retained and the 1912 section demolished. This includes parts restored, such as the bay windows' stucco, the side porch cedar roof, and front brick *porte cochere*.

The suitability of the proposed new structures (in all there will be 132 housing units) crowding in the old building is controversial. Despite my reminders since 2009, civic authorities did not acknowledge the taxpayer-funded grants. After recently checking with the Heritage Branch, civic authorities wrote that "significant private investment" to conserve and rehabilitate one section without government aid is enough compensation. Present policies do not consider past grants. Surely, the best solution is retention for housing, like the hotel's present use.

If this proposal is approved, it would set a bad precedent for heritage, especially in Old Town Victoria. Already the heritage-designated Duck Building is under threat of demolition (only the facade will be retained).

As much of Old Town has been preserved through taxpayer-funded grants and tax exemptions, the loss of public money would be substantial.

Mary E. Doody Jones
Diploma of Cultural Conservation,
UVic Heritage Advocate for 40 Years

LETTERS
Send to focusedit@shaw.ca

ADVERTISEMENT

Davines: sustainable beauty in Oak Bay Village

Long-time hair stylist Jane Bruton operates her own elegant boutique salon in the heart of Oak Bay Village. Its bay windows face the courtyard down the stairs at the corner of Monterey on Oak Bay Avenue. Graced with vintage white furnishings, a chandelier, and salon-dog Rex, a sweet miniature pinscher, it's a pleasant, peaceful oasis to consider a new cut or colour—and to be introduced to a superb line of environmentally-friendly hair products.

Jane's interest in creating a toxin-free environment for her clients and herself, along with doing what she can to save the planet, led her to the Davines line of hair care products. Founded by the Bollati Family in Parma, Italy in 1983, Davines has a commitment to 100 percent sustainability, including being carbon-neutral—without sacrificing effectiveness or beauty. It runs its plants on renewable energy and was one of the first Italian cosmetic brands to join the Zero Impact® project.

True to its roots as a research laboratory, Davines does extensive scientific research in developing its products. Sold only in salons, Jane Hair is Davines' exclusive supplier in Oak Bay—and soon will be a Certified Davines Salon.

"They are simply the best products I've ever used," attests Jane—who has used a lot of different products in her three decades as a stylist. Davines' products are free of silicone, sulphates, parabens, PEG (polyethylene glycol), and artificial colours. Its shampoos leave hair feeling soft and silky; clients have reported their once itchy scalps aren't irritated anymore. One shampoo helps with thinning hair and another softens wiry grey hair. Ask about the brand new "a single shampoo." A statement of sustainability, it has gentle cleansing, hydration and elasticizing action, and Jane says even the bottle is compostable. "I think it's the most environmental and healthy shampoo ever made."

Davines offers a number of colour lines with dozens of shades. All ammonia-free, "It's the best colour I've ever worked with—it doesn't fade and covers grey well," reports Jane, adding, "It also adds shine—the shine pigment has ground quartz in it. It's hydrating

Jane Bruton

too, and it lasts!" Her clients love it. Even people who in the past could not tolerate colour are finding it gentle enough to use, says Jane. The colour lightening system actually strengthens hair as it lightens, making it more elastic, soft and shiny.

The newer "Authentic" line of shampoo, cleanser and a replenishing butter, contains natural ingredients like sesame oil, jojoba oil, shea butter, while the "Naturaltech" line offers more medicinal ingredients (e.g. anti-oxidants) to help with problematic conditions of hair and scalp. Styling products feel light but work well too, from oils and foams to serums.

"The company really is genuine about sustainability," says Jane, who also appreciates that they are never tested on animals and that the ingredients are sourced from small-scale farms that aim at protecting biodiversity and traditional methods of production.

Though beauty is central to Davines' philosophy, its take on it is refreshingly unconventional: "By creating 'beauty' we want to encourage people to take care of themselves, of the environment in which they live and work, and of the things they love."

Ongoing training from Davines helps keep Jane passionate about her work. Being able to offer clients updated styles, along with ideal products to maintain them, means both stylist and her clientele are happy.

Drop in to check out for yourself the wide range of healthy, environmentally-friendly Davines products at Jane Hair.

Jane Hair
#106 - 2250 Oak Bay Avenue
Mon to Sat, 9am - 6pm (flexible)
250-588-7562

Ross Crockford 18 Judith Lavoie 22 Stephen Hume 24 Briony Penn 28 Russ Francis 32 Alan Cassels 34

The forest-industrial complex's Molotov clearcuts

DAVID BROADLAND

Wildfires in BC are getting bigger. Much bigger. The forest-industrial complex blames fire suppression. We're not so sure.

IMAGE: BC WILDFIRE SERVICE

Lightning is responsible for 85 percent of the loss of BC forests to fires. Clearcuts may be more susceptible to lightning ignition than mature forest.

A record compiled by BC government scientists since 1990 captures in cold, hard numbers the scale of the ecological apocalypse underway in BC's Interior forests. The record shows that since 1990, the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere by wildfires in BC has doubled every nine years.

For the nine years from 1990 to 1998, scientists estimated 52.3 million tonnes (megatonnes) of greenhouse gas emissions were released to the atmosphere by forest fires. From 1999 to 2007, that more than doubled to 120.9 megatonnes. Over the next 9-year period, ending with 2016, the total released doubled again, to 249.8 megatonnes.

In 2017, 1,353 fires burned 1.22 million hectares, including some very large fires, all in BC's Interior: the 191,865-hectare Elephant Hill Fire, the 545,151-hectare Chilcotin Plateau Fire—which was actually the merging of 20 separate fires—and the 241,160-hectare Hanceville Fire, another merging of smaller fires into a mega-fire.

BC scientists estimated 176.6 megatonnes of greenhouse gases were released into the atmosphere by those 2017 fires.

The next year was even worse: 2,117 fires burned 1.36-million hectares. Scientists haven't yet made public their estimate of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere for that year, but it will likely be close to 200 megatonnes.

Last year—2019—saw a cooler, wetter summer and a relief for wildfire fighters. Yet the first three years of the current 9-year interval have already released 75 percent of the 500 megatonnes needed to maintain the doubling of the carbon released every nine years.

All of the biggest fires, in both 2017 and 2018, occurred in areas where the impact of Mountain Pine Beetle infestation over the past 20 years has been most intense. The beetles have affected 16 million hectares of BC forests—an area more than five times that of Vancouver Island.

Large areas of the 2017 fires overlapped salvage clearcuts of beetle-killed trees. In a report on the impact of the 2017 fires, the Ministry of Forests noted that about 80 percent of the fires' area occurred in forests "significantly impacted" by Mountain Pine Beetle. The four largest fires of 2018 also burned in areas damaged by beetle infestation.

The magnitude of the release makes provincial and municipal plans for reducing carbon emissions in BC appear functionally pointless—like trying to drain the Fraser River with a garden hose.

Can anything be done to slow or reverse the trend toward bigger wildfires? That would depend on what's causing wildfires to be bigger and whether or not humans can reverse the cause.

Recently, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that two BC forestry scientists, Werner Kurz and Lori Daniels, are representing Canada in "a $1-million partnership between Canadian researchers and the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service to 'de-escalate the devastating forest wildfires that are increasingly occurring due to climate change.'"

The *Sun* reporter, Randy Shore, interviewed Daniels, a professor of forestry at UBC, who told him: "We are paying a huge cost in carbon today because we were so good at putting out fires in the past."

Daniels believes wildfires are getting bigger because of the build-up of fuel in forests, which Shore described as "fallen needles and

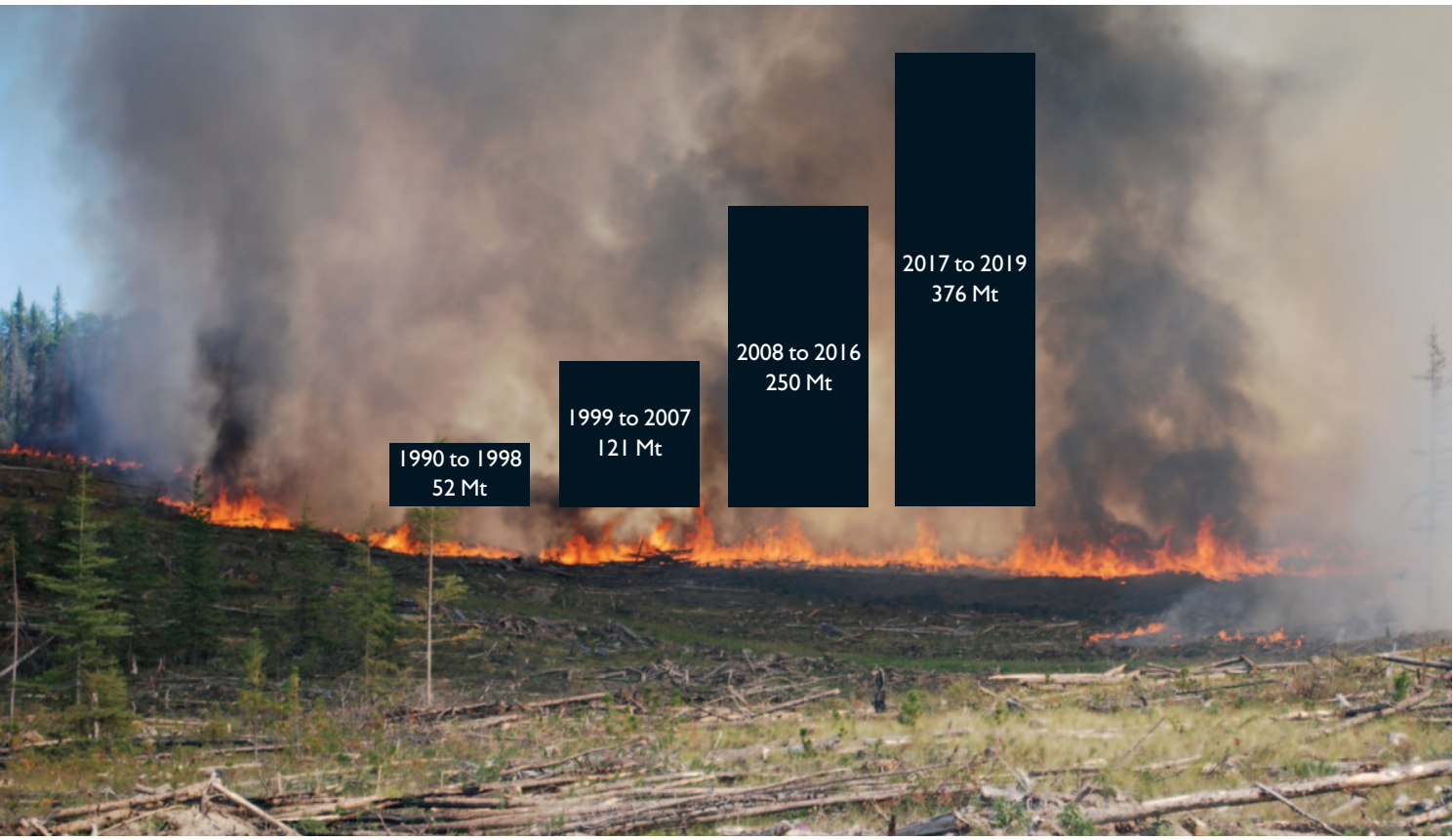


IMAGE: BC WILDFIRE SERVICE

Greenhouse gas emissions from wildfires in BC have doubled every nine years since 1990. The last 3 years suggest that rate of increase will continue.

dead branches." If fire hadn't been suppressed, those needles and dead branches would have been burned off by natural fire.

Daniels offered a solution: "What happens if we thin out the forest and reduce the stress on those trees competing for a limiting resource like soil moisture?...Will the trees left behind grow faster and sequester more carbon? There is lots of evidence that under some circumstances, that is the case."

For such thinning to be effective at reducing fuel in the forest it would have to be removed. Daniels suggested the possible development of a new biomass economy: "If it is going to be burned, we should do that at high efficiency and displace fossil fuel with a form of sustainable energy. Lots of small communities are still reliant on fossil fuels, so these are linkages that we can make."

The idea sounds eminently reasonable, doesn't it? But what if it's wrong? What if "fire suppression" is not at the heart of escalating wildfires? Do forest scientists ever get things wrong?

The forest-industrial complex—the forest-interested government agencies, industry, universities and media—that has led BC into the black-box carbon trap of exponentially-increasing emissions outlined above, is unable to hold itself accountable for the environmentally disastrous forestry practices it devised that have contributed disproportionately to a warmer climate. Its miscalculation of what was sustainable created giant clearcuts that shrivelled the forests' ability to sequester carbon. That played a significant role in making winters too warm to kill the Mountain Pine Beetle, and that change was followed by widespread Lodgepole pine mortality, immense areas of salvage clearcuts, and now giant wildfires roaring through those same clearcuts.

Now, it appears, the forest-industrial complex is diverting our attention away from what's actually happening on the ground. The accumulation of giant clearcuts has altered microclimates and left hundreds of millions of tonnes of fuel on the ground. And now it's burning, readily ignited by lightning, and affecting fire behaviour.

An August 2018 "incident update" by the BC Wildfire Service describes the "behaviour prediction" for a fire near the Baezaeko River west of Quesnel: "Fire activity will have the potential to challenge control lines; don't let your guard down. Be aware of gusty winds and the effect on fire behaviour, if only for a short time. The slash blocks have more fuel loading than the standard slash fuel type, expect higher intensity. This higher intensity can cause fire whirls to develop; this would cause rapid fire growth and increased spotting potential."

"Fire whirls" are like small tornados, formed by the rapid uplift of air in an intense fire. "Spotting" is the ability of fires to send out embers far ahead of a fire and start new fires. Wildfire Service incident updates commonly note the impact of logging slash in clearcuts that makes fires burn more intensely and dangerously.

Yet nowhere to be seen in the forest-industrial complex's description of what needs to happen now is an examination of the ways in which a landscape increasingly dominated by very large clearcuts has changed the behaviour of fire in BC's forests. Nowhere to be seen is the option

of reducing the volume of timber cut in BC to allow the provincial forests' carbon sequestration capacity to recover.

Unless you are delusionally optimistic, there's no reason to believe that feeding tree parts to industrial burners will reduce the acceleration in the thermal destruction of BC's forests. Once jobs are created to feed the burners, those bio-jobs will become the thing that must be protected at all costs. That way of thinking is what gave BC the beetle infestation in the first place.

The stated belief that the acceleration in wildfire emissions is due to past fire suppression appears destined to become one of the great, all-time dead-end ideas in BC's short but dramatic history of ecosystem disruption.

Unless there is some real change in the fundamental factor driving this acceleration—the loss of BC forests' carbon sequestration capacity—then between 2026 and 2034, the fifth nine-year interval in this exponential increase, BC forest fires will produce a total of 1,000 megatonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions, or an average of 110 megatonnes per year. The Mountain Pine Beetle infestation affected 16 million hectares of BC forests. Only a small fraction of these have burned, so there's a high risk of more and bigger fires in the coming years.

An aside to those folks who might think the scientists are purposely overestimating emissions from wildfires in order to justify amping up industrialization of forests: the estimate for 2017 works out to about 50 tonnes of forest carbon per hectare, which is less than what would be left on the ground after an Interior clearcut.

Let's put the magnitude of the wildfire emissions problem in perspective. BC's carbon emissions—from all sources *except* forest-related emissions—totalled 64 megatonnes in 2017. CleanBC, the provincial government's emissions reduction plan, has so far been able to identify, on paper, just 19 megatonnes of annual reductions it hopes will happen by 2030. LNG Canada at Kitimat will trigger 9 megatonnes. Teck Resources' Frontier oil sands project was going to produce 4 megatonnes. The City of Victoria is targetting about 0.390 megatonnes through its climate action plan.

Compare those drops in the bucket to the 110 megatonnes of annual emissions from forest fires alone that now seem certain to be in our near future. Other net emissions—the loss of forest carbon sequestration capacity and the premature decay of forest carbon initiated by harvesting—caused by BC's forest industry and tallied in *Defusing BC's big, bad carbon bomb* in our last edition—are upwards of 190 megatonnes each year.

It's the Province's official position that it can't do anything about any of these forest-industry-caused emissions. Although the exponential growth in emissions from wildfires outlined above appears in the *British Columbia Provincial Greenhouse Gas Inventory*, as do other emissions related to BC's forest industry, they are not counted in BC like your car's tailpipe emissions. Is that because they don't impact climate stability? No, it's because the Province claims nothing can be done about these net emissions.

In the Province's *Methodology Book for the British Columbia Provincial Greenhouse Gas Inventory*, the authors state that emissions from forest fires "are more volatile and subject to natural factors outside of direct human control and so are not reported as part of BC GHG emissions totals…"

Yet it has become an article of faith of the forest-industrial complex that historical fire suppression by humans is the primary cause of big fires, and big fires mean higher emissions. This official confusion is disconcerting and demands a ground-truthing expedition.

FOLLOWING THE FIRES OF 2017, which included the 191,865-hectare Elephant Hill Fire, the Ministry of Forests' Pat Byrne, district manager of the 100-Mile House Natural Resource District, told the *100-Mile Free Press* in July 2018: "Much of the area that was burned by both the Gustafsen and Elephant Hill fires, they burned over fire-dependent ecosystems…These ecosystems rely on fires as much as the soil and the air and the water they get. It's how they evolve… The forest relies on a 10 to 15 year fire cycle to thin out the vegetation and create a more open forest…Removing fire from the landscape resulted in a dense forest and created conditions where fire could burn hotter and more aggressively than a natural setting would have ever allowed."

Byrne told the *Free Press*: "You've got a fire-dependent ecosystem and you exclude fire from it. What do you expect is going to happen?"

The usual refutation of the "fire suppression causes big fires" belief is that "The Big Burn" of 1910 in Idaho, Montana, Washington and BC, occurred before the era of fire suppression had begun. The Big Burn, also known as "The Great Fire," "The Devil's Broom," and "The Big Blow-up," burned through 1.2 million hectares, which just happens to be about what was burned in BC in 2017.

The Ministry of Forests' own records show that four of the ten largest fires (in area) in BC's recorded history occurred before the era of fire suppression began.

If big, aggressive fires occurred before aircraft were able to bomb fires with water and fire retardant, how valid is the forest-industrial complex's claim that "fire suppression" is the main cause for today's big fires?

There's even more-convincing evidence that the fire-suppression-causes-big-fires narrative may be a big smoke screen blown into the talkosphere so the forest industry can cut more trees.

One of the tools that's available today that allows us to ground-truth the claims of the forest-industrial complex—to actually see what wildfires are burning—is satellite photography. We can compare aerial images taken before a fire with images taken afterward to see what was burned, and how completely it burned.

Satellite photography of the area burned by the Elephant Hill Fire north of Arrowrock Provincial Park shows that much of the area had been severely modified in the last 20 years (see page to right). At the time of the fire, it was mostly regrowth in clearcuts and unplanted clearcuts. In this area there was little "dense forest" left to burn. On Ministry of Forests maps of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation, this area is shown as having a 71 to 100 percent rate of "kill" of lodgepole pine, hence the widespread clearcuts left by salvage logging.

The area shown to the right is typical of the juxtaposition of giant fires and massive

88 square kilometres (8800 hectares) of the 2017 Elephant Hill Fire

This part of the Elephant Hill Fire, according to Ministry of Forests' mapping of the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation, had been heavily impacted by beetle kill. Earlier satellite images, taken after the salvage logging but before the fire, show some areas with regrowth and other areas with none. Only the oldest regrowth survived the 2017 fire. Many thousands of square kilometers of former lodgepole pine forest, killed by beetles and salvaged, were burned in 2017 and 2018. The beetle infestation has affected 16,000,000 hectares of BC forest, only a small fraction of which has been burned by 2020.

IMAGE: BING MAPS

The satellite image above and the image on the next page are of the same area. The image above was taken about 2010. It shows clearcuts that have been partially replanted. Note the light green regrowth, the unplanted areas and the extent of more mature trees (dark green). Note the large piles of slash piled close to the roads. After this image was taken, more logging took place before the Elephant Hill Fire burned this area in 2017.

clearcuts that are transforming BC's interior forests into a wasteland. The density of mature forest has been reduced to thin ribbons of dark green separating seemingly endless burned-over clearcuts. Only the roads and wetlands are fireproof.

The satellite photography also shows that areas where extensive mechanical thinning had taken place survived the fire in some places but were incinerated in others. Corridor thinning mimics, to some extent, natural fire's ability to open up a forest stand, but it's an interim stage that will lead to a clearcut in the not-too-distant future. An extensive east-west belt of such thinning running across the entire pathway of the Elephant Hill Fire north of Loon Lake did not prevent the fire from moving northwards.

The same mixed fire-survival performance of extensive thinning efforts can be found in satellite photography of the Hanceville Fire.

(The most current satellite photography can be found at inaturalist.org.)

The satellite photography shows that slash, left in logged-over areas, was an important factor in the eventual size of the Elephant Hill Fire. Equally evident from the satellite photography is that any plantation regrowth younger than about 20 years has been largely wiped out (see images at top of this and next page).

Satellite photography of the huge areas burned by the Hanceville and Plateau fires of 2017 shows the same general outcomes: vast areas of clearcuts burned clean with the small patches of adjacent, mature forest that had been left between clearcuts moderately to severely damaged.

The 16 million hectares of BC forest that have been impacted by the beetle infestation, combined with decades of extensive clearcutting

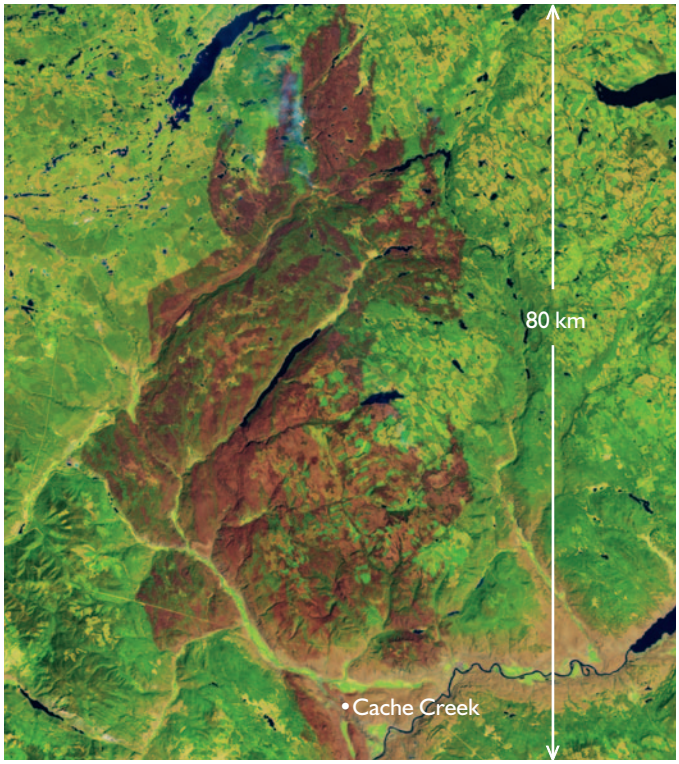


PHOTO: NASA EARTH OBSERVATORY

"False colour" satellite image of Elephant Hill Fire taken July 27, 2017

IMAGE: iNATURALIST.ORG

This satellite image was made in 2019, about two years after the Elephant Hill Fire. Note that most of the regrowth in the clearcut has been killed or damaged. Much of the unplanted area of the clearcut has burned (light gray areas). Some of the mature trees that were left around the clearcuts have survived while others were killed by the fire. The slash piles are now ash piles. These features are typical of BC's biggest wildfires in the Interior.

of live conifer forests, has created an apocalyptic landscape in BC's interior forests. Ministry of Forests' reports on the 2017 and 2018 fires show large areas of the Interior—entire forest districts—where the "cumulative percentage of merchantable forest volume killed since 1999" is "greater than 45 percent." This description, of course, doesn't include the loss before 1999.

The "killing" is the result of the logging of live trees, beetle infestation and wildfires. The result is a vast open area in the Interior that is littered with hundreds of millions of tonnes of tree parts in various stages of decay, all of it potential fuel for wildfires, just waiting for ignition. Although much of this area hasn't been replanted, that which has been is also, under the right conditions, potent fuel requiring only ignition.

IN BC, THE CAUSE OF IGNITION for every wildfire is determined and recorded by the BC Wildfire Service, and so is each fire's physical size. These records end up in the National Forestry Database. They show us that between 1990 and 1998, 59 percent of the *area* burned by wildfires in BC was attributed to fires ignited by lightning. Over the next nine-year period that rose to 81 percent. In the nine-year period ending with 2016, it rose to 85 percent. So lightning has become the overwhelming source of ignition of large wildfires in BC.

The records also show that while the total area burned as a result of lightning ignition has risen, the actual number of forest fires started by lightning has fallen. Between 1990 and 1998, there were 12,158 fires ignited by lightning. During the next 9-year interval, that fell to 8,837 fires. That was followed by 9,339 fires ignited by lightning in the 9-year interval ending with 2016.

The growth in the area burned by wildfires ignited by lightning *isn't* the result of more lightning strikes hitting the forest—a factor that would be beyond human control.

Now here's the most critically important point in this story: *Scientific research shows lightning is more likely to start a fire if it hits a harvested area than if it hits a forested area.*

Back in 2009, forest research scientists Meg Krawchuk and Steve Cumming published the results of an 8-year study of lightning ignition in 60,000 square kilometers of boreal forest in Alberta. They found that wildfires started by lightning ignition "increased in landscapes with more area harvested." Because of the physical nature of the fuel in a "harvested area"—its dryness, smaller size, etc—it is more readily ignited by lightning than the fuel in an undisturbed stand of trees.

Krawchuk and Cumming also noted: "In addition to the fine fuels and slash remaining after forest harvest, post-disturbance regeneration might also contribute to flammability."

The forest-industrial complex has, it would seem, created an immense area in the Interior of BC that is a crude incendiary device—like a Molotov cocktail—that only needs the right conditions of temperature, humidity and a bolt of lightning to burst into flames.

The satellite imagery of BC's recent big fires certainly confirms Krawchuk's and Cumming's speculation about the flammability of regrowth in clearcuts. In BC's dry Interior forests, those plantations act like kindling and, in areas where fires burned in 2017, there's

IMAGE: BC WILDFIRE SERVICE

Do clearcuts burn? In this photo taken by a spotter plane from the BC Wildfire Service, flames can be seen shooting outward on the left side of the photograph, fuelled by the biomass left after clearcut logging, which ranges from 40 to 60 percent of the original biomass before logging.

now little remaining of 20 to 25 years of a build-up of kindling—or, as the forest-industrial complex calls it: "The Forests for Tomorrow."

Let me summarize.

First, we know from National Forestry Database records that lightning strikes are igniting fewer fires, but the fires ignited by lightning are becoming larger.

Second, we know from Ministry of Forests records and satellite photography that the cumulative area of harvested forest in BC's Interior has grown very significantly in the last 20 years, and in many areas exceeds the amount of forested land.

Third, we know that the big fires in BC's Interior in 2017 all involved heavily harvested areas where either beetle-killed or live trees had been removed.

Last, scientists have found that the more a landscape is harvested, the more lighting ignition occurs, and that's because harvested areas have fuel on the ground that is more ignitable than standing forest.

These facts strongly suggest that it's the growing expanse of fuel-laden clearcuts that are producing larger fires.

Climate change is no doubt making the fuel drier and more ignitable, and perhaps adding a little strength to winds that fan the fires. But it's also possible that vast areas of clearcuts are creating those same effects all by themselves. Removal of the tree canopy allows the sun to heat the forest floor more readily, which reduces humidity and raises temperature. Removal of trees allows wind speed at forest-floor level to be higher in clearcuts than would be the case in an expanse of mature forest. Leaving 40 to 60 percent of the biomass of the forest in a clearcut creates a huge fuel load that is apparently readily ignitable by lightning and easily fanned by wind.

This little tree could grow for another 800 years

Focus has obtained numerous photographs taken from fire-spotter aircraft, including those used in this story, that depict fires that apparently started in clearcuts, or clearcuts engulfed in flames. So there's good evidence on the ground that this is happening. But this version of what's happening is definitely not the narrative that is coming from the scientists whose role it is to keep timber flowing from the forests to the mills.

The forest-industrial complex is pointing its collective finger at drier conditions created by climate change, and too dense fuel in the forest as a result of fire suppression. Its favoured solution appears to be to go into the forest and remove more trees.

It's possible that the forest-industrial complex is suffering from the cognitive bias known as the law of the instrument: Give a man a hammer, and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding.

CONSIDER THE MAGNITUDE of the problem: In 1997, BC's 60 million hectares of forests were able to sequester the equivalent of 103 megatonnes of carbon dioxide each year. Wildfires were emitting an average of 6 megatonnes each year.

Twenty-three years latter, BC still has 60 million hectares of potential forestland, but has lost those 103 megatonnes of sequestration capacity. Wildfires are now emitting, on average, 58 megatonnes per year.

Those two changes amount to a net increase of 155 megatonnes per year in emissions related to our provincial forests. That doesn't include the 88 megatonnes of emissions that we must attribute to the premature decay of wood that will result from harvesting trees for wood products each year.

The prognosis is bad. Going in the same direction, a further increase in the industrial use of forests by mining them for bio-energy will, if the past is any predictor of the future, just make things worse.

As I pointed out last edition, the lowest-hanging fruit for BC in mitigating the damage being done to climate stability by its forestry practices is to end the export of raw logs, most of which are cut from coastal forests. If the Province banned raw log exports and reduced the annual allowable cut by 6.5 million cubic metres, 11 megatonnes of annual carbon emissions would be eliminated.

We previously estimated that would impact 1,650 jobs. In a future low-carbon economy (assuming that's where we are going), there would be no possible justification for allowing 1,650 jobs to produce 11 megatonnes of net emissions. Instead, the forest-industrial complex needs to start redirecting resources to jobs that don't destroy forests. It needs to reinvent itself into an agency that can bring the forest back to its former health and capabilities.

As it ponders its future, perhaps the forest-industrial complex ought to take to heart the words of Aldo Leopold, the American author, philosopher, scientist, ecologist, forester, conservationist, and environmentalist: "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

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.

All together now?

ROSS CROCKFORD

The April 4 by-election puts the City of Victoria's youthful electoral organization to the test.

Like most Victorians, the residents of Avebury Avenue have issues. Bike lanes, poor transit service, affordability, property taxes, homelessness—I heard earfuls about all of them one recent Saturday afternoon, tagging along with Together Victoria candidate Stefanie Hardman as she knocked on doors in the Oaklands neighbourhood.

A middle-aged guy in wool-felt slippers told Hardman he had to put a down payment on the house he's in because he was exhausted by the instability of renting in Victoria. "There's a lot of wealth around here, and I'd like to see it squeezed to provide more services," he said.

"Yes, yes!" Hardman replied. A cat stretched in the window, and the guy noted that many Victoria landlords prohibit pets, an exclusion that's illegal in Ontario. Hardman gave him a brochure listing her campaign promises, including "End discrimination against renters with animals." (A vote-getter, considering that six in 10 Canadians have pets, but a matter of provincial jurisdiction.)

The guy liked what he heard. A Together canvasser asked for his email address and phone number, and marked him down as a "2" out of five—a likely supporter, certain to receive follow-up inquiries making sure he casts a ballot for Hardman in the City of Victoria's April 4 by-election.

It's likely "the most interesting by-election we'll see this year," said CBC Vancouver's municipal affairs newsletter *Metro Matters* recently. For one thing, the winner could hold the balance of power on Victoria's council. During 2019, Together's three first-time councillors Laurel Collins, Sharmarke Dubow and Sarah Potts sided with incumbents Ben Isitt and Jeremy Loveday to pass several controversial measures—voting 5-3 in April to limit increases to the police budget, for example, and 5-4 in June to require big condo developments to include 20 percent affordable rentals, despite warnings that the requirement would "kill" those projects. Now with Collins serving as Victoria's MP and her council seat up for grabs, the "Together+2" majority is in question.

Councillors in that majority have also famously annoyed the Province's NDP government. As the CBC noted, Ben Isitt's calls for free transit and regional police amalgamation, plus his public support for the February 11 anti-pipeline blockade of the legislature—which Stefanie Hardman endorsed online—have brought sharp rebukes from Premier John Horgan, indicating "an unease some on the centre-left have with the current incarnation of council."

"Given all the controversy over the past year," the CBC concluded, "if Hardman ends up facing no serious competition it's a clear sign that Victoria voters are reasonably happy with a council that has a more expansive notion of its jurisdiction than local government normally does."

IN PERSON, HARDMAN DOESN'T SEEM like a threat to municipal-provincial relations: she's clear-eyed and boundlessly cheerful. Raised in Toronto, where she studied urban planning, since 2014 she's worked for various Victoria agencies as a community-based researcher, interviewing people affected by specific issues, and turning their concerns into reports designed to influence government.

"So I have that background in community engagement, and then listening with an ear to shaping those experiences into policy, things that could happen at the municipality to improve people's lives," she says. Asked for an example of changes her research brought about, she cites one job as a "school travel planner," working with Victoria schools, City departments and parents to improve transportation options for kids, which resulted in a new signalled crosswalk, and a "walking school bus" of kids strolling together to classes.

The big issue for Hardman (and Together) is housing, which aligns with one of her recent jobs, preparing a report for the Community Social Planning Council on housing instability. Hardman says we need to dramatically increase the supply of low-income housing, and need to consider the elimination of residential, single-family zoning that may be coming in the City's "missing middle" housing policy. "I can appreciate that these types of changes can be challenging, but I do think there are ways to engage with neighbourhoods, and come together to talk about how we can create the future of the city that we want to live in."

A renter herself, like 61 percent of the City's residents, Hardman also wants the City to increasingly apply its new legal powers, granted by the Province in 2018, to prezone properties and areas exclusively for rentals. "That could help us to increase the supply of affordable rental housing, and rein in rents. I'd like to see that used." (The City is already phasing this in, starting with the oldest rental buildings most at risk of being torn down and replaced with condos.)

"I would like to look to strengthening the [City's] tenant-assistance policy, and reducing renovictions and displacement," she says. "I'd like to see stronger rent control, exploring the idea of rent control tied to the unit, rather than to tenancy agreements," she continues—but admits that will require lobbying the Province to change the *Residential Tenancy Act*.

That might not be easy, given Victoria's tendency to irritate the premier. But cities are seeing the worst effects of the housing crisis, she says, and they have to speak up. "I do think it is the responsibility of municipal government to let other levels of government know what those experiences are, what we're feeling here in our city, and what we think could help."

TOGETHER VICTORIA BEGAN TO FORM AFTER THE 2014 municipal election, in which various progressive candidates ran independent campaigns and failed to get elected. Their supporters figured that if they pooled their resources and volunteers and ran a limited slate of candidates, they would stand a better chance. Then they held a series of open houses to crowdsource their platform of an "affordable, inclusive and thriving city," to identify supporters, and to raise their profile.

It worked spectacularly well. Seemingly from nowhere, Together got all three of its candidates elected in 2018.

Now it stands as the dominant municipal electoral organization in the city.

During its recent nomination process, which Hardman won in January, Together's membership swelled from 200 to more than 800. (To witness its developments, I joined too.) And they're young, compared to the members of most political parties: mainly in their 20s and 30s, they raise funds and network at coffeeshop trivia nights, not $500-a-plate dinners.

Together has had challenges achieving the inclusivity it seeks, though. Its executive is almost entirely comprised of employees of the University of Victoria or various provincial ministries. Its membership doesn't include many businesspeople, or seniors. And it's only somewhat nonpartisan: former provincial Green candidate Kalen Harris is active in Together, for example, but the organization seems dominated by the federal NDP. One director has chaired the Victoria NDP's federal riding association, others have worked for NDP members of parliament, and to arrange an interview with Hardman, I had to go through one of Laurel Collins' constituency assistants. (Collins recently donated $1,199 to Hardman's election campaign.)

Together's recently enlarged membership is also fracturing. During the run-up to Together's nomination meeting, a group of frustrated renters signed up new members in the hope of electing a champion for the types of rights that tenants have recently won elsewhere in BC. (In Burnaby and New Westminster, for example, renovicted tenants have the right to return to a renovated building at the same rent they paid before.) But after Hardman won, Darren Alexander, one of the renter activists, blasted her and several Together principals in a 10,000-word online diatribe as the courtly members of a "professional managerial class," more concerned about maintaining their contacts and connections in nonprofit housing networks than in organizing renters to demand change. (Instead, Alexander says, members of those circles mobilized renters in 2018 mainly to get Together candidates elected—a story recently covered by the online news site *The Capital*.)

Karmen McNamara, a triathlete who ran unsuccessfully for the Together nomination, also says she's "lost confidence" in the organization. "What we need at City Council right now is action and problem-solving, not more talking," she tells me. McNamara says she signed up 219 new members for Together, but she doesn't know who they're voting for now. "Everybody needs to make their own decision."

CONTINUING STUDIES@UVIC

Illuminate fresh perspectives

Choose from over 200 courses each term, including:

- Forensic Anthropology of the Human Skeleton
- Monasteries and Manuscripts II – An Austrian Odyssey
- The String Quartets of Beethoven
- Songwriting: An Introduction

BROWSE OUR WIDE ASSORTMENT OF COURSES
continuingstudies.uvic.ca/focus

University of Victoria

Stephen Andrew

Jeremy Caradonna

Stephanie Hardman

IN MCNAMARA'S CASE, she's now actively campaigning for Rachael Montgomery, a nurse, environmental activist, and mother who says she'll bring more collaboration to City Hall.

"When a patient comes in," Montgomery says, "I don't ask them what political leanings they have, I ask, 'What do you need right now?' And I work with a team of experts to solve that problem."

Montgomery worked in the Royal Jubilee Hospital's oncology ward, and eventually assumed management of the eighth floor of the hospital, supervising some 200 staff. Currently she's on leave from the corporate department of Island Health for her election campaign—and now she's applying her medical evaluation skills to the City's issues.

To deal with the acute problem of housing, for example, she prescribes simplifying the process for homeowners to add suites or units to their properties, "so neighbourhoods can gently densify the way they want, rather than how they're being told to." She admits that won't be enough to cure the problem, so she's been meeting with developers, and withholds judgement on the council's requirement to include 20 percent affordable rentals in big condo projects: "I want to make sure we're actually seeing those outcomes," she says.

During her campaign, Montgomery has also gone on a ridealong with VicPD, and spent time with Victoria's Assertive Community Treatment teams, which are comprised of health-care workers and police officers to address mental-health emergencies. "If I come with any bias, it's as a frontline worker," says Montgomery, who is dismayed that some Victoria councillors hold an "ideological" opposition to the police. So would she simply give the police the budget increases they demand? "Of course not. I'm a manager, I know how to manage a budget."

Montgomery started campaigning in December, and since then she's spoken to hundreds of residents on the doorstep. No single issue dominates those conversations, she says. "What people want is some good, commonsense, practical decision-making that they feel a part of."

Jeremy Caradonna, another independent candidate, has been at it even longer, campaigning since November. He's had over 1,000 conversations with residents, and says many are telling him that local politics has become "too divisive" and that they're opposed to municipal parties. "They see it as a slippery slope, into the hyperpartisan politics we see in Vancouver."

Caradonna is an experienced communicator: he holds a PhD in history from Johns Hopkins, wrote *Sustainability: A History* (Oxford University Press, 2014), and quit a tenured professorship at the University of Alberta to get his hands dirty running Share Organics, a Victoria business with 12 employees. ("I know how to calculate operational costs, unlike many of the current councillors," he says.) He currently works as a policy analyst in the Province's Climate Action Secretariat, but still teaches a course at UVic on the local organics industry, and grows vegetables that he sells from a farm stand in front of his house in Fernwood.

Like other candidates, Caradonna says affordable housing is one of the big issues he will tackle on council. "We lack supply. Here we didn't build housing for 30 years, and now that our population is growing, the problem is coming home to roost. So it's about making it easier for people to have secondary suites, it's about building the 'missing middle'—those three- to five-storey buildings close to urban villages. The overwhelming majority of Victorians don't want skyscrapers, they want densification in scale with neighbourhoods."

Caradonna's other main issue is climate action. He fully supports the construction of bike lanes, but says the City needs to thoroughly improve its bus service, and get on board with rail transit. Half of our greenhouse gases come from aging buildings, so he wants a City program helping residents switch from oil tanks and natural gas to heat pumps, cutting our emissions dramatically. "My vision for Victoria is that this is the leading progressive jurisdiction in the country, and that we push the envelope."

Policy-wise, there might appear to be little daylight between him and Together—in fact, Caradonna says many people on his campaign team are also Together members, but they're backing him instead. "I think it's going to be a close race, and it all depends on who gets out their electorate."

JUST BEFORE *FOCUS* WENT TO PRESS, a few more candidates announced themselves, including UVic lab instructor Alexander Schmid, building contractor Peter Forbes, and former broadcaster Stephen Andrew. "I'll bring a balance, a certain level of professionalism that I don't think exists in some members at the council table," Andrew says. "We've been the laughing stock not just of the region, but the whole country. That's simply unacceptable to me. We're a compassionate city. We have tremendous opportunities. And that's what we should be talking about."

In the 2018 civic election, Andrew finished in ninth place, just shy of a Council seat, as part of the NewCouncil slate fronted by

Rachael Montgomery

Stephen Hammond, who led the "Mad as Hell" opposition to Downtown's 2016 tent city. Almost immediately after announcing his run this time, Andrew faced online attacks that he "hates" the homeless, a claim that saddens him.

"I've been homeless twice in my life. I've lived that experience. Anybody who criticizes me should walk a mile in my shoes before they do that." As he points out, he's won awards from Our Place and the BC Public Health Association for his reporting on homelessness. "My concern is that we build housing but do not staff it sufficiently, because many of these people need support."

Andrew believes several current councillors "have no clue" about many issues they comment upon, whether that's the difficulties of parking Downtown, the economics of condominium development, or the pressures faced by VicPD. "You have [councillors] who are standing in the middle of these protests, who are the same people saying we have to reduce the police budget," Andrews says. "I'm not saying don't protest, but they have no idea how much it costs."

Andrew admits he's starting later than others in the race, but promises he will run a significant campaign online—and he already enjoys greater name recognition than most of the other candidates.

Victoria's by-election will likely be even more interesting than originally predicted.

Ross Crockford tips his hat to anyone who takes on the complex, difficult job of a municipal councillor.

ADVERTISEMENT

Focus presents: Division of Continuing Studies at UVic

Helping you expand your health and mind

Learn, do, know" is a phrase often associated with healthy lifestyle and healthy choices. At the University of Victoria's Division of Continuing Studies you can find a wide-variety of courses for both the general public as well as for health professionals seeking the most current research and how best to apply it to their practice.

Laura Vizina, Director of the Health Sciences and Public Relations Programs in Continuing Studies at UVic, says "Every year we provide community courses that relate to the social, emotional, spiritual, environmental, occupational, intellectual, and physical health." *The Beneficial Role of Intestinal Bacteria*, for instance, is a popular course led by clinical gastroenterologist Dr. Denis Petrunia, who presents the most recent medical advances demonstrating the important role of bacteria on our immune system (March 4). *Understanding and Coping with Persistent and Chronic Pain* is offered on March 11 and later in March *Healthy Aging and the Anti-Inflammatory Diet* is offered by researcher and naturopath Maureen Williams.

Living Consciously is a weekend workshop where community members can learn about the value of mindful practice (March 28-29). The ever popular Jason Cressey returns annually to offer *Nonverbal Communication: Understand the Power of Body Language* (May 9-10). "These are just a few healthy offerings," says Laura, "and we always try to tie our community health courses to the good learning associated with our relevant professional development courses."

Indeed, health professionals can find a wide range of programs to enhance their skills and practices through Continuing Studies at UVic. These courses relate theory to practice and are led by professionals who are experts in their field of study. Recently, notes Laura, "we hosted, in partnership with British Columbia Association for Living Mindfully (BCALM), the inaugural *BC Mindfulness Summit*, which was a weekend event for health and helping professionals to develop and enrich their personal and professional mindfulness practice. The weekend was full of opportunity to learn, do, and know more about mindfulness practice and provided the tools and resources to facilitate mindfulness in a professional setting."

Laura also proudly points to a recently developed relationship with Victoria Hospice to create a course in *Palliative Care Pharmacy*. This accredited online course is designed for pharmacists who need to acquire specialized knowledge to support palliative care patients, family, health and community care nurses and general practitioners (May 8-June 19).

Dr. Vicky Scott, a leader in the research of falls and the prevention of falls, has designed her *Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum* online course for those working with older adults in long-term, acute and home care who want to apply an evidence-based approach to the prevention of falls and fall-related injuries (May 8-June 12).

Laura Vizina

Another rapidly growing area in health care today is wound care. For the past ten years Continuing Studies at UVic has been offering *Wound Management for Health Professionals* at two distinct levels. Newly revised in early 2020, Level I is offered exclusively online and aligns with new wound care standards and provides health professionals across the country an understanding of wound prevention, assessment and care planning, in addition to wound healing, pain management, and patient-professional collaboration. Level II is delivered in a blended format with eight weeks online followed by a mandatory one-day on-campus workshop which focuses on advanced wound care (April 3-June 13).

As the University of Victoria continues to enhance the quality and raise the profile of health-related research, notes Laura, "our role in Continuing Studies at UVic is to ensure knowledge transfer of a variety of health research is disseminated to both community and professional audiences."

Check out the many fascinating and useful courses offered by Continuing Studies at UVic on the website. And for more information about health-related courses and programs within Continuing Studies, please contact:

Laura Vizina, Director
Health Sciences and Public Relations Programs
Division of Continuing Studies
University of Victoria
hsprdirector@uvic.ca
continuingstudies.uvic.ca/health

Farmland—and food security—in a hot real estate market

JUDITH LAVOIE

Innovative programs are being put in place to help farmers address the high cost of farmland—but are they enough?

Farmland being farmed, a relatively rare sight in the Victoria area

Linda Geggie

Lana Popham

It's an easy equation in most households—if more people turn up for dinner, it means producing more food. But in the Capital Regional District, where the population is expected to increase 27 percent by 2038, only half of the region's 16,000 hectares of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is growing food.

In other words, as climate change makes food security and buying local increasingly important, much of southern Vancouver Island's rich agricultural land is being developed for non-agricultural uses or simply under-utilized.

ALR land represents seven percent of the CRD, with additional rural land not included in the ALR. Farm Credit Canada's 2018/2019 report says that out of more than 700 farms in the capital region, less than half are growing food.

Another report, the Foodlands Access Program feasibility study, produced by Upland Agricultural Consulting Ltd for the regional district, states: "The underutilization of farmland, both now and in the future, is a lost regional opportunity. With over 50 percent of the region's farmers retiring in the next 10 years, there is concern that new farmers will not be able to afford to enter the sector to replace them." The study noted, "The high cost of land is a barrier, not only to new farmers, but also to those wishing to expand their business. This is due, in part, to agricultural lands being purchased by non-farmers and held with low risk for speculative purposes."

As the southern Vancouver Island population grows, farmland is appealing to those who want to put down roots in a rural setting and are willing to pay between $100,000 and $200,000 an acre. While the cost of farmland across BC increased by 6.7 percent in 2018, on Vancouver Island it jumped by 21.7 percent, the highest regional increase in the country, according to Farm Credit Canada's *Farmland Values Report*.

Saanich Councillor Nathalie Chambers, who farms Madrona Farm in the Blenkinsop Valley with her husband David, has fought against development and dumping of fill in the soil-rich Blenkinsop Valley. Chambers believes the price of farmland and non-permitted activities, which degrade the soil and pollute watersheds, are the largest obstacles to saving farmland. And, she adds, "Mega-mansion carbuncles are totally contagious."

Linda Geggie, executive director of the Capital Region Food and Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR), agrees mega-homes are a problem. "A lot of people say that on most of the land on the Peninsula, the biggest crop is large estate homes," said Geggie, who believes urban containment zones are a valuable weapon against development on rural land, especially when combined with stricter enforcement of zoning restrictions.

"We need to contain sprawl, but the challenge is that there's so much competition for that land, and there's a lot of non-farm use now for those farmlands because we have a low stock of industrial land and we are in a housing crisis," explained Geddie.

Surprisingly, given the breakneck pace of development in areas such as West Shore, only 45.6 (of 16,000) hectares of ALR land in the region has been removed during the last decade. However, that does not mean the remaining land is being farmed. And even if it is farmed, the extent of the crop is often only enough to graze the limits of the farm credit, giving a significant tax break to owners. A few fields of hay or a couple of pigs can reach the $2,500 production figure that gains a farm tax credit on smaller properties. A November 2016 *Globe & Mail* investigation into farmland in the lower mainland noted, "Effectively, wealthy investors and speculators are receiving millions in tax breaks not meant for them."

> "WE NEED TO CONTAIN SPRAWL, but the challenge is that there's so much competition for that land, and there's a lot of non-farm use now for those farmlands because we have a low stock of industrial land and we are in a housing crisis."—*Linda Geggie, Capital Region Food and Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR)*

Yet upping the sales limit for farm status could have unforeseen consequences, say advocates such as Geggie. "It really depends what you're producing, because if you're producing carrots, that's a heck of a lot of carrots…You also have some farms that are just starting out—developmental farms—and it's hard in your first couple of years to make a lot of income," Geggie said. Still, she believes there could be more nuanced categories in the farm tax credit regime.

The Province has struggled to control mega-mansions on ALR land. Agriculture Minister Lana Popham told *Focus* that, after tweaking an initial proposal, she believes proposed new rules that would allow secondary homes of 1,000 square feet and restrict primary residences to 5,400 square feet provide the correct balance.

But if land is in the ALR, why are the owners not required to farm it?

Not possible, responded Popham. "There are quite strict rules about what is allowable activity and what isn't, but actually forcing people to farm is not something we can legislate," she said. "What we can do is make farming more viable so that it's an option they will choose," she said.

A series of initiatives to encourage farming, at provincial and regional levels, are making a difference, Popham said. "It's like turning a giant cruise ship around. You've got to connect all the dots and get everything in place and then as soon as it starts to move, it really starts to move, and I really feel that is starting to happen," she said.

Part of that dot-connecting is a series of food-processing hubs around the province that make it possible for farmers to create value-added goods—such as baked goods, beverages, condiments, and broth. Three are already in operation, and more are planned.

"They are really going to be places where people who wanted to start an entrepreneur business were stuck in a small space or home kitchen. Now they can move to a commercial area where all the boxes are ticked off…so they can get those products out," Popham said.

Creating markets for farmers is one of the keys, said Popham, and a recent game-changer has been getting BC products into the health care system. Health authorities spend vast portions of their budgets on food, and the Province is encouraging them to buy BC-grown food, such as berries, eggs, vegetables and frozen meals, Popham said. "It's really working. There are all these new business opportunities that are popping up," she said.

THE AVERAGE AGE OF FARMERS IN THE CAPITAL REGION IS 57, with more than half planning to retire over the next decade. Many members of the next generation are not interested in taking over the family farm, so protecting the land base and persuading others to farm the land are key challenges in the quest for regional food security.

The regional district is working on an agricultural land use inventory. It is also in the final throes of creating a foodlands trust, which will see participating municipalities put municipally-owned land into the trust, to be protected as agricultural land. (And perhaps down the road, purchase farmland for that purpose.)

The aim is for the regional district to then work with a non-profit land manager, such as CRFAIR, to lease the lands to farmers or community organizations.

Community farms already exist in the region, including Haliburton Farm, Newman Farm, Lohbrunner Farm, Burgoyne Farm, and the Sandown Racetrack lands, Geggie pointed out. "There's an interest, and the foodlands trust is a framework for moving that forward," she said. "It's a pretty exciting thing, because people really do value local food now…It's such an important thing for sustainability in our region," she said.

The idea of a foodlands trust has been controversial because of fears it would give some farmers an unfair advantage. But Geddie noted the land would be leased at market rates, and tenant farmers would have long term leases, giving them security to make investments such as irrigation systems or greenhouses. It is one way to address the exorbitant value placed on any land in a hot real-estate market.

"It's not going to solve the whole problem, but it is a strategy—a tool," said Geggie, who wants to see the amount of locally-produced food consumed in the area grow from less than 10 percent to 25 percent by 2025. (So far, eight of the region's municipalities have indicated their support, though Esquimalt, Langford, Colwood and Oak Bay do not support it.)

Along with protecting the land, there is a need to look at the types of food that can be grown in the era of climate change, Geggie said. "The diet that we are eating now is not the diet we will be eating in 10 years," she said.

Some of the more innovative crops are coming through the Young Agrarians land matching program, supported by the provincial government, which matches young farmers to landowners who no longer want to farm their land, or who want to lease part of their land.

Young Agrarians in BC now have almost 290 hectares in production through 65 matches. In addition to the land matches, the organization provides education and support for new farmers, said Darcy Smith, Young Agrarians BC land program manager.

"We have worked with everything from small-scale market gardens, to mushroom production to goats to a buffalo dairy," Smith said. "People are turning back to farming as a career and lifestyle choice. They love working with the soil and looking after animals," she said.

Programs such as Young Agrarians and a foodlands trust are positive, but there is no magic solution to the local food production problem, especially when land costs are so high. Smith feels the first step is for people to be aware of where their food originates, and the importance of farming. Then, positive incentives, rather than new rules and regulations, are the best way to encourage people to continue farming or to consider it as a career, she said.

"We all have to understand that this farmland is something that we, as a community, need to value," Smith said.

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

UVic's Environmental Law Centre, 24 years strong

STEPHEN HUME

The clinic attracts Canada's best aspiring public-interest environmental lawyers to work on cases for community groups.

Should you want to track down one of British Columbia's most important shapers of public policy regarding environmental protection, better have your GPS handy.

There's no glitzy storefront to brand the Environmental Law Centre at the University of Victoria. No swanky offices with plush carpet, oak panelling, and some elegantly-tailored watchdog receptionist. In keeping with its humble origins as a student initiative launched almost 25 years ago, it's tucked away in a rabbit warren of austere cubicles, a Zen-like reminder that in the world of ideas, it's the ideas, and not the trappings, that are the important currency.

And the ideas for statutory and regulatory reform that emerge from this small, scholarly clinic have profoundly altered the legal and political landscape for generations of British Columbians yet to come. That's quite a legacy for undergraduate law students with only their passion, brains, diligence and the judicious guidance of a few wise mentors behind them. As such, UVic's ELC offers a refreshing antidote for the next time some grumpy elder from my generation holds forth about the failings of young people.

On scales that range from the intensely local to the national arena, there's no doubt that students who have passed through the ELC have worked critically important transfigurations in the administrative fabric of Canada's environment. And they've gone on to work as federal litigators, to clerk with federal and provincial supreme courts, and to join leadingedge lawfirms working with environmental, civil rights, and First Nations' issues.

To find this quiet epicentre of change, visitors must navigate through the hushed expanse of the university's newly-renovated Diana M. Priestly law library, with its vast high-tech access to more than a hundred extensive legal databases, and past a series of glass-fronted study and seminar rooms. Then—an abrupt change in atmosphere—through unmarked, metal crash doors and up a nondescript back stairwell graced with handrails of utilitarian steel pipe. Beyond the library's upstairs book stacks with their 180,000 volumes, past the students lounging in a pair of moulded designer chairs and taking an introspective break with their AirPods, and down a drab corridor adorned with hand-scrawled directions, is the beating heart of environmental law reform in the province.

Presiding over this unassuming heavyweight is a triumvirate.

There is executive director Deborah Curran, a scarily well-informed expert in land and water law who is also an associate professor in both the law faculty and the university's school of environmental studies. Curran does vital work in the centre's background on governance, fundraising, liaison with the university, and program development.

But in the foreground, Curran is also one of the centre's big hitters. She has earned a reputation for a steely analysis of how those with environmental concerns can use something as simple as their own municipal bylaws to trigger powerful and effective protection for local ecosystems, particularly in terms of employing already existing regulatory tools to modify development so that it sustains and conserves healthy watersheds and clean water. She supervised one ELC study of urban storm water management that's credited with transforming policy regarding urban rainfall runoff in Greater Victoria.

PHOTO: PROVIDED BY ELC

ELC's Calvin Sanborn, Deborah Curran and Holly Pattison

Holly Pattison, a former UVic student herself, directs the ELC's day-to-day operations and conducts financial oversight. But Pattison, who graduated from the university's fine arts faculty, also multi-tasks as a writer, photographer and documentary filmmaker, and manages the communications that are so critical to any public policy agency in these days of spin, greenwashing and fake news.

And last, but far from least, there's Calvin Sandborn, whose formidable legal intellect on subjects as diverse as drilling regulations, the ethical duties of mining engineers, and the obligations of politicians to close statutory loopholes exploited at the expense of the environment, combines with a genial, avuncular style. He'll bring his guitar to a legal seminar and deliver a not-bad rendition of some 60s protest song, invites human rights and environmental activists into his classes, and has pizza delivered to workshops on dry subjects like corporate media.

Sandborn might be a poster-boy for effective environmental activism. He's certainly a metaphor for the perils of environmental inaction. Born in Alaska, he moved to California as a young child and grew up at the centre of what became the 2018 wildfire inferno that erased whole towns—one of them the community of his childhood, Paradise, where 85 people died.

"My entire childhood, turned to ash," he muses.

That which hadn't already been drowned. He says his heightened awareness of the importance of environmental integrity coalesced around the fate of the Feather River, in whose canyons he spent one of those nostalgic Huckleberry Finn boyhoods. "I grew up swimming in the Feather River," he recalls, "then they built the dam and flooded my swimming holes!" To make things worse, a politician

THE IDEAS FOR STATUTORY and regulatory reform that emerge from this small, scholarly clinic have profoundly altered the legal and political landscape for generations of British Columbians yet to come.

came to town and scoffed there'd never been anything there before the damn dam anyway.

That memory was a motivator in the ELC's work to stop plans to log watersheds in the upper Skagit River Valley. Protecting the Skagit had been a joint Canadian and American environmental mission for an earlier generation of environmentalists, but then it came back for his students, some of whom hadn't been born for the first go round.

Student Caitlin Stockwell, he says, looked at the original agreement between BC and the City of Seattle. She found that BC, by approving logging in the "doughnut hole"—an unprotected patch of forest in the Upper Skagit set aside because of mineral claims and now surrounded by three state and provincial parks, a BC recreation area, and a US wilderness zone—was infringing upon Seattle's rights under the 30-year-old international agreement protecting wilderness, wildlife habitat, and recreational resource values."She finds that its provisions give the city of Seattle unilateral ability to take the BC government to court over the international treaty!"

In 2018, on the basis of the ELC report, the mayor of Seattle politely reminded Premier John Horgan of this fact. Last December, the Province abruptly banned further logging in the ecologically sensitive valley on the US border.

Sandborn, educated at a Jesuit university in San Francisco ("The Summer of Love was about to happen, and there I was in this place full of priests!"), cut his activist teeth on the civil-rights movement, anti-war protests, and efforts to organize California's agricultural workers.

He came to Canada to join his brother Tom, who had come north after ripping up his draft card and mailing it to President Lyndon B. Johnson. On arrival, Calvin promptly rolled up his sleeves and got involved helping organize farm workers in the Fraser Valley and setting up the now-iconic Downtown Eastside Resident's Association that has successfully worked to reconfigure cruel stereotypes about the Vancouver neighbourhood and its often marginalized, low-income citizens.

Curran, who was born in Kamloops and graduated from Trent University, had her environmental epiphany while working in Pacific Rim National Park when the Clayoquot Sound protests erupted. And Pattison, who came to Campbell River from Guelph as a teenager 43 years ago, was working in Victoria law offices when the flood of Clayoquot defences—the protest generated the largest mass trial in Canadian history—transfixed the legal community.

IF THESE THREE REPRESENT THE OFFICIAL FACE of the Environmental Law Centre, they are quick to point out that the real engine of environmental change is the ever-changing team of law students—about 30 a year—that cycles through its clinics, gaining experience in researching, writing, and advocating for the law reforms that have lasting community effects upon how we live and interact with our environment.

For example, there was the work done by law student Neal Parker, who in the summer of 2017 investigated and reported on the growing problem of private landholders encroaching upon public access to publicly-owned waterfront lands on the Gorge waterway.

Parker, under the guidance of Sandborn, found 11 public access points colonized as parking pads, misidentified with intimidating signage, developed as private recreation sites, incorporated into gardens, used as dumps for garden waste and construction debris, and blocked by structures, hedges, walls, car ports and private docks.

Half a dozen of these effectively preempted public rights-of-way from members of the Songhees Nation a few blocks to the south, whose Douglas Treaty rights guaranteed them unfettered access to traditional hunting and fishing grounds on the Gorge in perpetuity.

In Greater Victoria, Parker pointed out in a 77-page brief to both Saanich and Esquimalt municipal governments, that projected population growth of an estimated 100,000 people by 2040 means the inevitable loss of existing green space, at a time when it's becoming even more valuable and important for urban livability. It also represents an attack upon the core values in some of the most successful marketing strategies and economic revival plans of forward-thinking cities in the world. It's clear from what's happening in cities like Austin, Texas; Lyon, France and even Winnipeg, which is upending its dowdy grey image, that cities embracing public access to green space are more livable, and that cities deemed more livable will be the economic winners over the decades ahead. Cities that don't proactively develop public green space will have to reestablish it at great expense, if they are to compete with the Seattles, Portlands and Vancouvers.

As a result of Parker's work, those public access points have since been restored, Sandborn says.

THE NON-PROFIT ELC, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in the fall of 2021, started as a dream, took shape as a hope, and was realized when professor Chris Toleffson, a specialist in environmental law, agreed to work with half a dozen students who wanted to study in the field. He became the ELC's first executive director.

"There was no funding," Curran says. "It was run without funding until Calvin came on board as legal director [in 2004]."

Sandborn didn't even have an office to start. He was working from the students' computer lab. Then entrepreneur Eric Peterson, who had made his fortune developing and then selling medical imaging technology and whom, with his wife Christina Munck, had created the non-profit Tula Foundation,

ELC Clinic students on a field trip in 2015, with a client concerned about protecting karsts on Vancouver Island

provided the ELC with $1.1 million over a five-year period.

"We had 10 years of angel funding with very few strings attached," Sandborn says.

Now there's stable funding from BC's Law Foundation, which provides 48 percent of the centre's annual revenues, and from other philanthropic organizations, including the Oasis Foundation, Tides Canada, the Sitka Foundation, and the Vancouver Foundation. Small individual donors make up the rest.

What the ELC does with this funding is provide students with a hands-on opportunity to learn environmental law, while simultaneously using it to empower individuals, small community organizations, First Nations, environmental and other groups. The students offer—at no charge—the statutory research and advice that enables the public to use existing legal frameworks to hold private, corporate, and administrative agencies accountable for ensuring that environmental regulatory requirements are met. Or, in other cases, to help press for reforms to environmental laws, and their enforcement, so that they serve the public, and not private, interest.

Among their notable achievements, ELC students conducted research into the proximity of sour gas wells to schools, residences and other public buildings on behalf of the Peace Environment and Safety Trustees Society.

Sour gas contains hydrogen sulphide, a compound so toxic that it paralyzes olfactory nerves at concentrations as low as 100 parts per million. Respiratory failure begins at 300 ppm, and at 800 ppm, 50 percent of those exposed will die within five minutes. The ELC students discovered that during one leak at Pouce Coupe in 2009, sour gas was released for 27 consecutive minutes before emergency shutoff valves cut off the flow.

In 2013, ELC law student Jacqui McMorran, lawyer Tim Thielman, and Sandborn gathered information from DataBC and plotted it using Google Earth to locate active, suspended and abandoned wells capable of leaking sour gas.

They reported that 1,900 children at 9 schools in 2 northeastern school districts were at risk from sour gas wells that, under provincial law, could be located a scant 100 metres from schools or hospitals. Worse, there were no minimum setbacks at all for pipelines carrying sour gas—although in 2010 the Province said it planned to establish safety zones of 2,000 metres.

In some cases, provincial emergency plans for gas leaks were so primitive, they consisted of supplying classroom teachers with rolls of duct tape and instructions to seal cracks around doors and windows.

After this inconvenient political bombshell, the provincial government announced it would increase the safety buffer for sour gas wells adjacent to schools and other public buildings from 100 to 1,000 metres.

"Government seemed quite content to renege on their 2010 promise to extend the legislated safety buffer around schools—until we exposed the fact that the safety buffer had not been expanded," Sandborn said at the time.

"What about all the other issues that never get publicized? Day to day, who is looking after the public interest? Who is watchdogging the regulators to make sure that the Province doesn't weaken regulations?" he asked.

Luckily for the public, the ELC has been doing a first-rate job of watch-dogging. Among its most high-profile accomplishments:

The ELC's complaint to the federal government in 2013 regarding the muzzling of scientists on controversial issues like climate change. It triggered such a robust public response that government can no longer mute the voices of its own scientists just because their message is politically vexing.

More locally, a complaint about metals contamination leaching from an old copper mine on the Jordan River beyond Sooke—it hadn't even been checked for 20 years—prompted clean up efforts and a full scale remediation plan for later this year.

But that's just a start. In the aftermath of the Mount Polley mine disaster, in which

the failure of a tailings dam dumped the equivalent of 10,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools of contaminated waste into one of the biggest salmon rivers in the Fraser River watershed, the ELC produced a report calling for comprehensive mining reform. It found that BC taxpayers are liable for more than $1 billion in mine clean up costs, and called for the Province to begin fully checking and cleaning up 1,100 mines like the one that killed the lower Jordan River.

ELC students and lawyers also assisted local residents in the Interior, whose drinking water was being contaminated by nitrates leaching into an aquifer from agricultural applications of manure to fertilize fields. That work led to a new provincial code for agricultural waste management but, perhaps more important, it also earned a ruling from the Province's information and privacy commissioner that government must promptly and proactively release, without charge, all government records that are in the public interest.

Working with the World Wildlife Fund, ELC students supervised by Sandborn and Curran prepared a study last fall calling for remediation of beaches around the Salish Sea that were once critical spawning habitat for forage fish that serve as foundation species for the chinook, and other salmon, upon which threatened resident orcas depend.

The ELC recently called for regulation of single-use plastics, and recommendations for how to go about it. It follows a report two years ago outlining legal reforms necessary to address the growing problem of marine plastic pollution.

There isn't room in a short article like this to list all the work done on the public's behalf, or to name the students who have passed through the ELC's clinics and left their enduring mark upon the laws that frame our collective relationship with the world in which we live.

There is room to observe that for something that began with a handful of students, one professor who saw their potential and another willing to work from a computer lab to help them realize that potential, the ELC's 25th birthday party will represent an extraordinary milestone in the evolution of BC.

Stephen Hume spent half a century as a journalist writing about Western Canada, the Far North, BC and the Island.

Focus presents: Tom Watson, Odlum Brown Limited ADVERTISEMENT

Investing capital can lead to a better world

An avid environmentalist and Investment Advisor for 30 years, Tom Watson's personal environmental commitment is evident on any number of fronts, from the solar panels lining his home's roof to his daily commute by bicycle from his Langford home to his Odlum Brown office in downtown Victoria. On the few occasions he doesn't cycle, he drives an electric car. It's all about lowering his personal carbon footprint.

During his daily bike ride, Tom stops frequently to pick up discarded recyclables—plastic cups, drink cans and bottles—until both his panniers are full. He takes his accumulated finds (rinsed out adequately) to recycling depots on a weekly basis. He has done this for many years now—so many that the earnings from cans and bottles have allowed him to support charities, and even buy a telephoto lens for his camera (he's an avid photographer). More important though, Tom is motivated by his aim to realize a net-zero carbon footprint. "It takes a fair bit of carbon to produce plastic. . .and it takes less energy to recycle plastic than to create new plastic." Besides his weekday harvesting, he goes out cycling on weekends towards Sooke to collect recyclables.

"I live what I preach and I invest the same way—and find it actually works," says Tom, who 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."

In his role as a professional, 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, 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.

Walking the talk: Tom Watson collects discarded recyclables on his daily commute to work

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."

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
Odlum Brown Limited
Suite 410 – 737 Yates Street
(250) 952-7779
twatson@odlumbrown.com

The information contained herein is for general information purposes only and is not intended to provide financial, legal, accounting or tax advice to be relied on without an individual first consulting with their financial advisor to ensure the information is appropriate for their individual circumstances. Member-Canadian Investor Protection Fund.

Who is really breaking the law?

BRIONY PENN

Recent protests in support of the Wet'suwet'en could be a teachable moment, if only we study history and listen.

PHOTO: LESLIE CAMPBELL

Wet'suwet'en/Gitxsan First Nations at the BC Legislature in February

The recent protests and occupation of the BC Legislature by young members of the Wet'suwet'en/Gitxsan First Nations, other First Nations, and settler allies, continues a 140-year tradition of reasonable requests being met by unreasonable responses from government. It seems crucial to hear these reasoned requests, so here, for the record, we invited some young protesters to explain what's at stake and how they are upholding not only their own laws and rules of honour—but Canadian laws.

PHOTO: SHAYLYNN SAMPSON

"My name is Shaylynn Sampson. I grew up in the Wet'suwet'en community hearing about the *Delgamuukw* court case. It was before my time, but my great aunt was closely linked to the folks that were doing that. The court case is so closely related to what we are doing, which is continuing to defend this land. It isn't something new, defence of this land has been going on for a very long time—since settlers first came to our territories. My ancestors have been fighting for this for hundreds of years.

"There is a failure to understand the difference between the band council and hereditary leaders. The band councils were set up under the *Indian Act* to police people. It is helpful to recognize that the band council and that system was put in place specifically to undermine the hereditary chief, which continues still to this day. Traditional governance is all done in the feast hall and has witnesses and it is so much more. It is so important that an understanding of this is correct.

"Red dresses [hanging at protest sites] are there to symbolize missing and murdered indigenous women [MMIW]. [The hereditary chiefs] are filing a complaint against the government's Environmental Assessment Office permit process, for not taking into account the statement in the MMIW report that specifically links man camps [such as Coastal GasLink is building] to the violence. I grew up on Highway 16 so I know how serious that issue is. We can't think about the violence against the land and violence against ourselves as not intrinsically linked.

"What happens on Wet'suwet'en territory is integral because it can happen to any Indigenous Nation. We want to drive this idea forward. The state is willing to commit violence against us and where they have done it once, they can do it anywhere."

PHOTO: LAUREN SORTOME

"My name is Gina Mowatt. I'm Gitxsan, and my Nation is right beside the Wet'suwet'en Nation, we've been allies forever, and support each other and have been very close prior to colonization and beyond, and now we stand with each other in struggle against the violence against our land, our peoples. We have also worked together in court cases.

"This is a struggle that we've inherited as Indigenous people, so for me, being here is my responsibility and role as an Indigenous person who knows our laws. I know who I am as a Gitxsan person so I have to stand up for the land, I have to stand up against colonial violence against our people and the animals and the water to ensure that there will be a future for coming generations, so that's why I'm here.

"I live in Victoria and there are so many opportunities here to put pressure on the colonial government and to make sure that we do everything that we can here to take pressure off the folks up north who feel the brute force of the colonial violence…and we can't stand idly while 'our' government chooses over and over again to enact violence against people as if they're not human and they don't have human rights.

"Canada has implemented UNDRIP and the TRC and they go in and rip people off their homeland and throw them into jail cells; we cannot stand by and let that happen. My main reason for being here is to try and bring the front line of resistance to Victoria where it should be because this is where the problem resides.

"THERE IS A FAILURE to understand the difference between the band council and hereditary leaders. The band councils were set up under the *Indian Act* to police people."—*Shaylynn Sampson, Wet'suwet'en*

PHOTO: ANCIENT FOREST ALLIANCE

"My name is Hannah Carpendale; I am a settler ally. The suggestion that the only acceptable way to advocate for change is through lawful means, as suggested by BC Premier John Horgan, ignores the years of work spent by Wet'suwet'en land defenders opposing severe injustices through 'acceptable' channels that have proven ineffective. This position also shows an ignorance of the way in which many social changes from which we benefit have come about through the course of history—namely, through disruption of the status quo in ways that were not, at the time, considered acceptable.

"When considering the land defenders who have contributed so much to these efforts because it is the only clear, morally responsible path forward, the inconvenience of a missed appointment, an hour's wait at a highway blockade, or a missed train connection seems a small price to pay. In contrast, the inconvenience of colonization, cultural genocide, and Coastal GasLink's continued attempts to bulldoze their way over unceded Wet'suwet'en territories—damaging cultural sites, healing spaces and intact ecosystems—seems immeasurably greater."

PHOTO: LAUREN SORTOME

"My name is Kolin Sutherland-Wilson. I am Wet'suwet'en. We have to deconstruct this narrative Canada is creating regarding the elected band councils and Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. Even the English language is so problematic when applying to this—the leaders of the Wet'suwet'en are the Dinï ze' and Ts'akë ze'. [The term] 'hereditary chiefs' is a colonial imposition on Indigenous leadership—in no way are the Dinï ze' and Ts'akë ze' a form of monarchy, there is so much accountability and responsibility to the people.

"How would Canada feel if we infringed on its sacred spaces? This space here is on stolen land; it is the territory of the Lekwungen Nation. We are reclaiming this space and pointing out the real colonial origins of Canada. Canada acts as a colony using military force to invade nations, displace people, and extract wealth from their territories."

March & April Events

PROGRAMS IN EARTH LITERACIES

Earth Spirituality, a Metal-spiritual Journey Into the Sacredness of the Universe
with **Gertie Jocksch SC**
Four Tuesdays, March 3, 10, 17 & 31; 9:30 – 11:30 am
$75 or $20 drop in; First Met United, 932 Balmoral Road

Tribute to Spring in the Way of Council
with **Val Murray**
March 23; 9:30 – 11:30 am; free event; First Met United, 932 Balmoral Road

Exploring Systems Thinking through Joanna Macy's "The Work that Reconnects"
with **Ann Ronald**
Four Tuesdays, April 7, 14, 21 & 28; 9:30 – 11:30 am
$75 or $20 drop in; First Met United, 932 Balmoral Road, Rm 119

Fundraising Events for Friends of Bowker Creek
Sara Thomsen in Concert
April 17, 7:30 – 9 pm; $25, Cadboro Bay Gordon Head United Church 2625 Arbutus Rd
Songs Like Seeds – Planting Love Note by Note, Singing Playshop
with **Sara Thomsen**
Sat, April 18, 10am – 4pm; $75; please bring your lunch, refreshments served
Cadboro Bay Gordon Head United Church 2625 Arbutus Rd
Working together with Getting' Higher Choir & Wavelengths Community Choir

earthliteracies@gmail.com • 250-220-4601
www.earthliteracies.org

STORMTECH
PERFORMANCE
MARCH SPECIAL
WATERFORD JACKET
Sleek and highly functional, street smart shell features H2XTREME® technology for superior waterproof protection with a soft hand finish, two-way, full length external storm flap with chin saver, cargo pockets, and a removable waterproof hood. Interactive layering compatible style NL-1 Summit Thermal Jacket.

$199.90
CLEARANCE SALE NOW ON!
Treck Wear
1015 Broad Street, Victoria, BC V8W 2A1
250-385-0127
www.treckwear.ca

KOLIN SUTHERLAND-WILSON's words echo an 1884 declaration by Gitwangak chiefs reacting to the imposition of the reserve system. The declaration included a question: "[W]e would ask you, would it be right for our Chiefs to give licenses to members of the tribe to go to the district of Victoria to measure out, occupy, and build upon lands in that district now held by whitemen as grazing or pasture land? Would the whitemen now in possession permit it, even if we told them that, as we were going to make a more profitable use of the land, they had no right to interfere? Would the government permit it? Would they not at once interfere and drive us out? If it would not be right for us so to act, how can it be right for the whiteman to act so to us?"

As the century turned, those questions remained unanswered and leaders from many Nations continued to petition governments for meetings, but it wasn't until the McKenna/McBride Commission in 1915 that those requests were granted. In 1915, the Commissioners arrived at a reserve near Hazleton for the afternoon and asked leader Edward Souk/Spoukw why he was there, to which he responded: "We want to get our own land back, that is all." The commissioners stated that he was wasting their time and left shortly after.

By 1926, Indigenous leaders had formed the Allied Tribes of BC, taking their petitions to governments in Victoria, Ottawa, and London. When that alliance was undermined, the Native Brotherhood of BC formed in the 1930s to continue the cause, sending more delegations to the three centres of government, all unsuccessful.

The BC Union of Indian Chiefs took up the banner in 1969 to continue the land question and Wet'suwet'en leader Misilos/Victor Jim became a key leader of the Gitksan-Carrier Tribal Council to advance legal action stating that their "hereditary lands" be set out in a map.

Two years after neighbouring Nisgaa leader Frank Calder had successfully sued BC—seeking a declaration that aboriginal title had not been extinguished—the federal government agreed to negotiate comprehensive land claims over territory outside the reserve system, and the Wet'suwet'en began a process of mapping their boundaries to accompany their claim. Neil Sterritt, Gitxsan member, writes in his book *Mapping My Way Home* about the subsequent 14-year process of mapping the Gitsxan/Wet'suwet'en territories. Thirty-four elders born between 1890 and 1920 travelled throughout their territory while Sterritt and others helped record the place names and history. One of the Wet'suwet'en elders was Gisday Wa/Alfred Joseph, who played a major role. Another was Albert Tait from Kispiox—Delgamuukw himself. As Sterritt describes it, "they had grown up on the land and knew their histories, territories and laws. Their memories reached back to and beyond the time first Europeans started to settle our lands. We recognized that within a few short years, the legacy of those witnesses would be lost."

Originally, the maps were to provide the key evidence for their comprehensive land claim, but that eventually turned into a lawsuit out of frustration with the delays and the continued industrial encroachments on their territory. In 1984, while blockading CP Rail lines to try and stop the clearcutting of their territories, the Nations decided to pursue a lawsuit. It took three more years to get into court and then they had 318 days to put forward their maps and testimony. Peter Grant was their lawyer.

The elders were subjected to humiliating and exhausting cross-examination by Provincial Justice Allan McEachern who infamously dismissed these extraordinary oral witnesses as "vagrants" whose lives were "nasty, brutish and short." According to Grant, McEachern "did not have the capability of understanding or hearing what was being said."

It took another six years before the Supreme Court of Canada overturned most of McEachern's opinions in its 1997 ruling on *Delgamuukw*. During that time many of the elders like Delgamuukw had died. The appeal court unanimously ruled that the Province had no jurisdiction over their territory without consent from the government of the First Nation. It was established that the Indigenous Nation had a system of law that predates the days of elected band councils enacted under Canada's *Indian Act*. The elected band councils' authority is limited to decisions about reserve lands. Under traditional Wet'suwet'en law, hereditary chiefs are responsible for decisions regarding ancestral lands. And as Wet'suwet'en Dinï ze' Frank Alec/Woos stated in a CBC interview on February 12, 2020: "We have always maintained our stance on this. The hereditary chiefs are just saying no to all the pipelines on the territorial lands."

As lawyer Grant stated in a February CBC interview (in response to the media framing of the issue as one of complexity, internal division, and inconvenience): "It is not complex. The Supreme Court of Appeal and subsequent court cases recognized that the legal title carriers are the hereditary chiefs—when we are speaking of the Wet'suwet'en—and that is in *Delgamuukw*. There is no question that the proper title holders recognized now, and later in a 2014 decision, were the hereditary chiefs. The BC Supreme Court in the recent Canfor decision recognized that the system of government includes the feast hall, as chief Woos told you, and that the feast system is tied to territory."

In that same CBC interview, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Scott Fraser was asked how he justified only listening to elected leadership given *Delgamuukw*. He stated: "The court didn't go quite as far enough in my opinion to clarify that…There is no question that it confirmed that there is aboriginal title, it just didn't say who and what. I guess it was going to require subsequent court action that did not occur…The courts are one way of dealing with it, but they have been telling us it is not the right place. They have been asking government to get on with legislation."

BC's Select Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs has not met since 2001 despite calls for two decades from the Wet'suwet'en, and many others, to follow up, given continued industrial intrusions into their territory. Fraser and Premier Horgan refused to meet and speak with these young people, educated in both legal traditions, who brought the concerns of their community one more time to the steps of the Legislature—and were snubbed yet again. Minister Fraser has since announced that for the first time since *Delgamuukw*, a committee will meet with the leadership.

We have been given yet another chance to hear from a governance system that is based on accountability and responsibility to future generations, with a foundation that doesn't distinguish human health from the health of land and water. This time the stakes are so high that we fail to listen at our peril.

For a timeline of the history of the Gitxsan/Wet'suwet'en territories, see www.gitxsan.com/culture/culture-history/gitxsan-history-of-resistance/ and a good "explainer" on legal issues can be found at www.firstpeopleslaw.com.

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).*

ADVERTISEMENT

Unplug and unwind at Discovery Islands Lodge

Red sea urchins in the nearby marine park

Discovery Islands Lodge on Quadra Island

Local holidays are one way to be climate-responsible, and Victoria is close to awesome possibilities! Travel just a few hours up-Island, take a short ferry to Quadra, and drive a beautiful forested road to Discovery Islands Lodge. There, perched at the water's edge, you'll find dramatic island-mountain vistas, expansive night skies, and real quiet. It's a world away from the city and an affordable escape for everyone with adventurous spirit!

Perfectly situated between three provincial parks, Discovery Islands Lodge is close to swimming lakes, hiking trails, and a paddling paradise out front. Surge Narrows Marine Park provides a colourful drama of marine life and islets that are idyllic by kayak. Guide Albert Keller explains how tidal currents carry nutrients that support the incredible intertidal biodiversity. Shorelines are coated in urchins and sea stars, and kelp beds hide fish; abundant food attracts birds and seals, as well as transient dolphins, sea lions, and whales.

Discovery Islands Lodge offers guided kayak daytrips as an easy way for paddlers of all ages and abilities to experience the beauty of Surge Narrows. The currents are predictable, and with local knowledge, there are easy, safe routes through the Marine Park. Daytrips with experienced certified guides include a comprehensive skills and safety lesson, high quality kayaking equipment, and a tasty homemade lunch.

With quiet simplicity, the lodge is a natural recharge. Casual and friendly atmosphere is shared in the upstairs dining area where healthy, delicious breakfasts are served—and the kitchen is then available for guests to self-prepare other meals. Connect with family and friends in the spacious common room, or enjoy the decks, all with heavenly views.

It used to seem like a deficit that there's no wifi and cell service is limited, but now, owner Ralph Keller laughs as he recalls the guest who said, "Thank goodness, no screens! It's the first time in ages I've talked and played games with my kids!" Families reconnect and friendships are formed; it's a model that's proven popular, and many guests become friends who return year after year.

Discovery Islands Lodge's cosy common room

Your carbon-friendly holiday is more real because the lodge operates completely off-grid with solar and micro-hydro systems. A special feature is the wood-fired sauna built right on the dock—where if you stay up past dark, you can plunge into the ocean and come out sparkling with bioluminescence.

Lannie Keller emphasizes a light environmental footprint. "In this remote location we're hyper-aware of what we haul in and take out. We really strive to walk the talk!" The Kellers live on nearby Read Island, also off-grid. They have a long record of environmental advocacy in the Discovery Islands, aiming for less and better logging, and other local priorities. Most recently, they spearheaded a community project to purchase and protect an old-growth forest. "The Discovery Islands are a super matrix of biodiversity and incredible beauty. Being here just naturally makes protecting it our priority."

The Keller family also own and operate Coast Mountain Expeditions, one of BC's first kayak touring companies. Departing from their Homestead Lodge on Read Island, Coast Mountain's multi-day kayak tours explore various routes in the Discovery Islands and BC's mainland inlets.

Check out the website for more information, and book your summer vacation soon.

Coast Mountain Expeditions
& Discovery Islands Lodge
Surge Narrows, BC
250-285-2823
www.CoastMountainExpeditions.com

The accelerating risk of investing in fossil fuels

RUSS FRANCIS

Pensions of BC teachers, public servants, and municipal workers include huge fossilized investments.

In the Bad Old Days, those wanting to earn a reasonable return in the stock market might have been well-advised to look for what amounted to climate-hostile companies. Sure, there were "ethical investors" who may have had little more than feelings of moral superiority to show for putting their money into the likes of renewable energy producers or makers of vegan bicycles. But many investors were reliably collecting vast payouts from big frackers, tar sands developers, and pipeline companies. That's where the money was.

That was then. These days, financial heavyweights ranging from outgoing Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Union have a warning: firms that do not properly account for and reduce their GHG emissions are headed for financial trouble.

The IMF is by definition a conservative organization: its primary mission is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system. But its last World Economic Outlook update, issued in January 2020—the hottest January on record—warned of financial risks posed by the climate crisis, as a result of greater frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters like tropical storms, floods, heatwaves, and wildfires. "Climate change…already endangers health and economic outcomes, and not only in the directly affected areas," says the report. "It could pose challenges to other areas that may not yet feel the direct effects, including by contributing to cross-border migration or financial stress (for instance, in the insurance sector)."

Among internationally recognized financial experts, few have stronger establishment pedigrees than Carney. A 13-year veteran of Goldman Sachs—one of the world's largest investment bankers—in 2008 he began a five-year stint as governor of the Bank of Canada. Currently, Carney is playing the same role at the Bank of England until March 15, when he becomes the United Nations special envoy on climate change. "[A]ll financial decisions need to take into account the risks from climate change and the opportunities from the transition to a net zero economy," he said in a January Bank of England statement.

Carney warns that it's not just the fossil fuel industry itself that will be hit hard by the climate crisis: those investing in them should also prepare for losses. Calling the climate crisis a "tragedy on the horizon" in a December 30, 2019 BBC interview, Carney warned pension funds that their fossil investments could eventually become worthless.

CARNEY'S ADMONITIONS—which he has been espousing since 2015—may be prescient. The Boston Consulting Group reported this past December that from 2014 through 2018, the oil and gas sector had the worst total return of all 33 industries it tracks. (Total return is the sum of capital gains and dividends.)

Despite this, British Columbia Investment Management Corporation (BCI) retains significant investments in fossil fuels.

BCI manages the pensions of 598,000 British Columbians, including school and college teachers, BC public servants, municipal staff, and some BC Hydro employees. With managed assets worth $153.4 billion, BCI is one of Canada's largest institutional investors. (All figures refer to March 31, 2019.) Of those assets, 40.5 percent are in the stock market.

The corporation does not break down its share holdings by industry; however, a quick glance at its investment inventory shows that BCI does not discriminate against fossil fuel companies. According to an October 2019 report by the Colorado-based Climate Accountability Institute, 20 fossil fuel companies were responsible for 480 billion tonnes of CO2-equivalent emissions in the modern period of 1965 to 2017. This amounts to 35 percent of total global emissions in that time. Of the 20 companies, 8 are investor-owned and traded on stock markets. (The other 12 are owned by various governments.) BCI has investments totalling $690.14 million in 7 of those 8 investor-owned fossil fuel firms.

As another example of its do-not-discriminate-on-the-grounds-of-emissions policy, BCI is invested in all five LNG Canada partners: Royal Dutch Shell ($219.17 million), Mitsubishi ($59.57 million), Petronas ($5.97 million), PetroChina ($34.31 million) and Korea Gas ($0.68 million). It also holds shares in the two companies that are building LNG Canada's Kitimat facility, Fluor ($6.51 million) and JGC ($0.56 million.)

Asked about the fossil-fuel investments, BCI spokesperson Ben O'Hara-Byrne said in an email that the corporation is part of the Climate Action 100+ plan, which works with more than 450 other investors to convince companies to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. "BCI invests in companies and sectors that generate reliable returns—this includes the oil and gas industry, a significant part of the Canadian and global economy," O'Hara-Byrne said. Divestment is the wrong approach, he added: "We believe divestment eliminates our rights as a shareholder to engage with management and raise awareness of long-term risks and encourage change of practices."

In the last few days of that hottest-ever January, UVic's board of governors voted to adopt a similar approach for its $225 million short-term investment fund. The university's investments will move slowly away from fossil fuels, even withdrawing from some, but will not eliminate them, according to a January 28 statement. Instead it will engage with those companies to "encourage" a reduction in carbon emissions of 45 percent by 2030.

James Rowe, who teaches in UVic's environmental studies department, calls this attitude a copout. In an email, Rowe said that oil, gas and coal are high-risk investments. "As energy generation shifts away from fossil fuels, investors who do not respond could be left with stranded assets—investments that are no longer profitable," Rowe said. "Shareholder engagement with fossil fuel companies in the context of a climate emergency is our Neville Chamberlain moment; it's a form of appeasement that makes us feel like we've addressed the problem, while the threat only grows more severe." (On September 30, 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain boasted that he had signed an agreement with Hitler for "peace in our time." Eleven months later, the Nazis invaded Poland, leading to the Second World War.)

Rowe added that for non-fuel industries, engaging companies might help reduce emissions, but for fossil fuel firms, that approach will not work if we are to keep global heating below 1.5 degrees Celsius, as required under the Paris Agreement. "To avoid blowing past our carbon budget, fossil fuel companies need to keep significant amounts of their reserves in the ground, and no company will willingly strand their own assets."

In December, the UVic faculty association voted to support the university withdrawing entirely from fossil fuel stocks. In doing so, it joined a worldwide trend. A growing number of central banks, investment companies, and governments are casting a skeptical eye at fossil fuel investments, often due in part to outside pressure. But their financial risks are also an accelerating worry.

In June 2019, Norway's parliament voted unanimously to order its $1.5 trillion sovereign wealth fund—ironically consisting of income from petroleum—to sell off its $10.6 billion investment in 134 oil and gas exploration firms, though it will retain its holdings in companies such as BP and Shell, which have renewable energy divisions.

Last November, Riksbank, Sweden's central bank, said it had sold off its Alberta government bonds because that province's GHG emissions were too high. The same month, the European Union's financing department, the European Investment Bank, said it would stop funding oil, gas, and coal projects by the end of 2021.

In December 2019, Carney's alma mater, Goldman Sachs, announced it would not finance new oil projects in the Arctic. And in January this year, the world's largest asset manager took its first steps towards decarbonizing the $2.4 trillion it holds in actively-managed portfolios. BlackRock chairman Larry Fink told chief executive officers in a letter that climate change is now a defining factor in companies' long-term prospects. "[W]e are on the edge of a fundamental reshaping of finance," Fink said in the letter. To begin, BlackRock will divest all its holdings in thermal coal, due to its high sustainability-related risk.

Despite Fink's inspiring words, the change may not have been entirely altruistic. According to an August 2019 report by the Ohio-based Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, BlackRock lost an estimated $120 billion over the previous decade, most of it resulting from its investments in just four companies: Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron.

To be sure, there may be some fossil fuel stocks continuing to provide strong returns in the short term. But these days, it is a lot easier to be ethical about where to invest and still make good returns.

In always-reliable hindsight, there is a way one could have made money from LNG. On October 1, 2018, when LNG Canada awarded Texas-based multinational Fluor Corp the contract to build its Kitimat plant (along with its Japanese partner JGC), its shares traded at $77.95, when converted to 2020 Canadian dollars. A little over a year later, on December 9, 2019, they closed at $21.41—a 73 percent drop. In early February, the stock rebounded slightly, trading in the $25 to $27 range.

This hints at how the BC government might have been able to recoup its $6 billion-and-counting donation to LNG Canada: by short-selling, say, $9 billion worth of Fluor; even after borrowing and transaction costs, the government could have picked up enough to cover its multi-billion LNG giveaway gamble.

Short-sellers could have made even more money had they waited till February 18, 2020, when the company announced that the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is investigating Fluor's past accounting and reporting. By late morning Victoria time, Fluor's shares were trading heavily at $19.31. This amounts to a 75 percent drop from October 1, 2018.

Who says you can't make money from fossil fuels?

Russ Francis is increasingly convinced that there is more wisdom in the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs than in all the BC Liberal and NDP MLAs put together.

ADVERTISEMENT

Focus presents: Triangle Healing

How to feel younger as we get older

Start with *pure* water. Triangle reports that a water distiller is the most economical and effective health product to help you feel younger as you get older!

Distilled water is sterilized water that condenses from steam that collects when the water boils, leaving impurities such as inorganic mineral deposits behind.

The Natural Action structuring unit energizes the water through movement, replicating water that has fallen over a 20-foot waterfall, restoring it to its natural state. Triangle offers a package deal on the MegaHome water distiller and Natural Action portable water structuring unit.

Diane Regan, owner of Triangle Healing, has collected many water testimonials over the years. The photo of hummingbirds sharing a feeder came from a client that used the water from their MegaHome water distiller and structuring unit to make the hummingbird nectar. Rather than attracting the usual two or three hummingbirds, the feeder suddenly had eight birds all vying for the nectar. Another client reported that her dog didn't touch his tap-water filled water dish while she was out for five hours, but once she returned home and filled the dish with distilled water, he happily lapped it up. Plants in both your home and garden will flourish, even when the sun hasn't come out in days. You can't claim a placebo affect with plants and animals!

Hummingbirds at feeder

Exercise is also key to healthy aging. But as we age, high impact activities can become more detrimental than beneficial to our health. The solution is the effective low-impact bounce of the German-made bellicon® Rebounder. The bellicon® is a superior quality mini-trampoline that offers effective low-impact cardiovascular exercise.

Bouncing on the bellicon® engages all 638 muscles in your body, maintains your bone density, strengthens your core, and activates your lymphatic system to flush toxins, bacteria and waste. You will feel energized after a workout, plus it's fun and easy to use!

Humans were made to walk barefoot. Wearing Barefoot Science insoles replicates that natural state, unlike orthotics, which keep the foot in one place, not allowing for relief or improvement. Barefoot Science insoles use a progressive strengthening insert system that rehabilitates your feet to help foot, knee, and back pain. Barefoot Science Insoles also help to correct hammer toes, bunions, and plantar fasciitis.

Over 12 years ago, a naturopath/chiropractor introduced Triangle to the Barefoot Science insoles. "Years later," says Diane, "we have sold thousands, and these insoles continue to change lives and make happy feet."

Come into Triangle Healing Products today and taste the purest water on the planet, bounce on our bellicon®, or try a pair of Barefoot Science insoles in your shoes while you shop. Take your first step toward feeling younger as you get older!

Triangle Healing Products
770 Spruce Avenue, Victoria, BC
250-370-1818 • www.trianglehealing.com

Triangle Healing Products, its owner, and its employees do not provide medical advice or treatment. They provide information and products that you may choose after evaluating your health needs and in consultation with health professionals of your choosing.

"You're a ticking time bomb"

ALAN CASSELS

Thoughts around overdiagnosis after a visit to a medical specialist.

A fascinating study was published last month in Australia. It may not have got much press here in Victoria, but confirmed a lot of what the world is learning about overdiagnosis.

That study, carried out by Paul Glasziou and colleagues, compared the year 1982 to 2012, analyzing changes in lifetime risks for prostate, breast, renal, thyroid cancers and melanoma. They concluded that 18 percent of all cancers diagnosed in Australian women (11,000 diagnoses each year), and 24 percent of those in men (18,000 each year) are overdiagnosed cancers. Screening programs (for cancers and other things) look for signs of disease detected in healthy people. Often those signs are just "prediseases," benign signs which never go on to be lethal. Predisease is what might be diagnosed when a screening result isn't quite normal, but is below the threshold of true disease. It is considered a *potential* precursor to a disease which may or may not be worrisome.

The seriousness of "false positives" is also gaining worldwide attention, as this Australian study demonstrated.

I wrote about the problems of overdiagnosis in my 2012 book *Seeking Sickness* and made the same case, where in condition after condition which involves some kind of medical screening, there is always overdiagnosis. There's both benefits and harm in screening healthy people. It's worthwhile if it finds signs of potential disease that will stop you getting a more serious disease. It can, however, lead to anxiety and often substantial medical activity, including biopsies, more screening, more procedures, surgery, radiation, and prescription drugs. Often all this anxiety and medical activity never actually extends the quality or quantity of your life.

Here's a scene that happened when I was partway through writing that book: I am in the chair at the optometrist, as he was about to blow a puff of air into my eyeball, checking for eyeball pressure. It dawned on me: "This is a screening test!" This is how I described it:

"Things look different when you're sitting in the chair, playing the role of the trusting patient. It was like I had two angels sitting on my shoulders. One was whispering in one ear: 'What's the big deal? It was just a puff of air to the eyes. C'mon." On the other shoulder, the naysayer angel, armed with a pitchfork, was jabbing me in the ear: "Are you nuts? Do you have any idea what this screening test will lead to? False positives. False negatives. Overdiagnosis. Downstream effects. Worry. Anxiety. Depression. Say no!'"

I was being overdramatic, yet I wrote that I learned a vital lesson: if you are about to face a health professional offering you a screening test, you need to have already done your research. Doing it afterward is getting things backward. The air-puff test showed normal eye pressure, but what if it didn't? Thankfully, I didn't find out.

That experience became my operating axiom of why people need to go into medical screening test with their "eyes wide open."

Fast-forward eight years, and it was time for another trip to the optometrist. To get my eyes checked, maybe see if I needed a new eyeglass prescription. But darned if this didn't turn out to be another "teachable moment," this time with a much more potentially serious intervention.

My optometrist said he saw something unusual in one of my eyes. He said I had a suspected case of narrow-angle glaucoma, a condition that could lead to an acute eye emergency and the potential loss of sight.

That opened my eyes.

He referred me to an ophthalmologist. The first trip to the ophthalmologist was just for a few tests and pictures of my eyes, collecting data. I was invited to watch a video of the doctor explaining the procedure he would offer, a quick operation called a laser peripheral iridotomy (LPI). Perfectly safe, right? But…

Let's be clear. I am a healthy patient, normal eyeball pressure, and a normal optic nerve. No history of eye disease and no family history either. I was what the literature called a PACS, which stands for "primary angle closure *suspect*." I don't have disease—I have the younger sister, predisease.

I found an excellent paper by Dr H. George Tanaka, an ophthalmologist in Arkansas whose 2018 *Review of Ophthalmology* study gives considerable detail about the pros and cons of such a procedure. I learned quickly this was no slam-dunk, and I was right to be cautious.

I tracked him down and arranged a phone interview. The main thing I learned is that for people without symptoms or family history of other types of eye diseases, there is no way to know how many PACS patients go on to have an "acute episode" that involves losing your eyesight. Is it one in ten, or one in ten thousand? We don't know. He admitted that "unfortunately, we don't have any good evidence for how to manage a PACS patient, and that we don't know how many PACS patients go on to develop more serious eye problems."

For the sake of everyone in Victoria who (at a certain age) may well be diagnosed with suspected angle-closure glaucoma, there are a few things to know about the LPI surgery being offered. Angle-closure glaucoma can be an aggressive disease, probably the leading cause of glaucoma blindness in the world, and it is one of the few emergencies in ophthalmology. But as Dr Tanaka wrote: "We don't actually know how many future angle-closure attacks we're preventing by performing LPIs. That's why we can't say to a patient with narrow angles, 'Mrs Smith, your risk of going blind is X percent (or your risk of getting glaucoma is Y percent), but the odds will improve by this much if I perform this procedure.' We don't have the numbers to support that." It's the conclusion that bothers me: "so we just treat everybody." Clearly, this is textbook overdiagnosis: finding "predisease" in normal people, who are then given the impression they are now living under a dark cloud.

The research suggests the LPI may delay or prevent primary-angle glaucoma. Luckily, the LPI is fairly benign. This operation used to

IF YOU ARE ABOUT TO FACE a health professional offering you a screening test, you need to have already done your research. Doing it afterward is getting things backward.

be major surgery, but now is a couple of minutes in the clinic, with minimal risks of infection or bleeding.

As for the cons, sometimes things go sideways. Sometimes patients get extra spots of light in their vision—dysphotopsias—which won't go away. And believe it or not, some research says the LPI can accelerate cataract development, as well as make you more predisposed to getting a condition called posterior synechiae, making future cataract surgery more difficult.

For me, saying no to the procedure was a no-brainer. If I had higher risks, a personal or family history of eye disease, high eyeball pressure, or if I was going to be hiking in the outback for months at a time where getting emergency medical care was difficult, my decision might have been different. But the doc was not impressed.

I really liked the ophthalmologist. He was a very nice gentleman. He explained things well, but at the same time, I could tell he was taken aback when I refused the procedure. Perhaps he's not used to patients doing a deep dive into the literature on the potential benefits and harms of surgical procedures. He pressed me, eventually turning up his hands and saying: "Oh well, I just want to tell you the risks, but you're on your own," later adding, "well, you're the ticking time bomb."

Luckily I have a thick skin, though if you had taken my blood pressure at the time it, would have been through the roof. Not only does his comment not reflect the real research, it's the height of insensitivity to call a patient a "ticking time bomb."

No one deserves to be intentionally frightened into getting an elective procedure, especially one with many unknowns and potential harms. As an aside, if the average person knew how much these doctors make by five minutes of lasering your eyes, they would be astounded (all in, close to $400 per eye—$116.76 for the actual few minutes of surgery, $35 for the office visit, $96 for the consultation, $60.42 for "orthooptic evaluation," with likely extra charges for the photography of the eyes, etc.). I found in the MSP bluebook that this ophthalmologist billed MSP $749,000 last year.

Later, when I calmed down, I reflected on the "ticking time bomb" comment. Listen, dear reader. Like everyone on the planet, you could live another five minutes or another fifty years. We are all ticking time bombs, more or less. We are all "prediseased" and suffering from "predeath." Being called a "ticking time bomb" made me angry but also sad for all the patients who are worried, who crave the trusted advice of a health professional, but then get bullied into procedures (or drugs) that they would rather not have.

When I was in the navy, we had a principle: if you don't know where you are, stop the ship. All signs of disease have uncertainties, and all surgeries and drugs have potential harms and potential benefits. Any honest health professional will tell you those uncertainties. When you don't know where you are, don't keep sailing.

Alan Cassels studies pharmaceutical policy and works at UBC. His book *Seeking Sickness: Medical Screening and the Misguided Hunt for Diseases* is available from bookstores and libraries. You can follow him on twitter @akecassels.

THE PAPERY

Fountain Pens
Journals • Stationery
Greeting Cards • Gifts & Gift Wrap
Quilling Supplies
Puzzles

669 Fort Street, Victoria BC
250.382.1669 • papery@shaw.ca

Dr Deanna Geddo DDS
general dentist with a HOLISTIC approach
FREE CONSULTATIONS in March & April
404 - 645 Fort St (across from Victoria's Bay Centre)
doctor_dg@shaw.ca • 250-389-0669
www.integrateddentalstudio.ca

palette 36 arts highlights 40 vibe 48 curtain call 52 palette too 54

Colouring a dark chapter

KATE CINO

Robert Burke's creative paintings tell the multi-hued story of his difficult childhood.

"They Never Came Back" 2012, from the "Silent Breed" series, triptych is 54 x 90 inches, acrylic on canvas

Robert Burke's studio is north of Duncan, nestled in rolling farmland. The studio is spacious, with large windows and an oversized garage door. Inside are many boldly-coloured canvases stacked up against the walls. Other canvas paintings are rolled up on a large table, waiting to be transported and then re-mounted on location. Burke is happy to talk about his long and varied career, and his March show at Winchester Galleries.

"I use vivid, eye-catching colours to brighten up sombre memories," he says. Burke is referring to his mixed-race background and turbulent childhood. The artist was born in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories in 1944. His mother was Metis, of Dene descent. His father was one of nearly 4,000 conscripted black soldiers from the southern United States. These segregated soldiers were part of the Coloured Engineer Regiments enlisted to build the Alaska Highway during World War II. The black recruits worked from the north, in frigid temperatures and difficult terrain, building corduroy roads from fallen timber. The white recruits worked from the south on the 2,400-kilometre route. Eight months later, the two regiments met on October 25, 1942. Their joint success was an achievement for engineering and race relations.

But Burke never knew his father. Until age four, he was cared for by various community members, as his mother was unable to support him. He was then taken to a residential school in Fort Resolution, on the shores of Great Slave Lake, almost 100 miles away. "In residential school I learned you had to fight to survive," he says. In all, he was in residential schools for 10 years.

With his black heritage, he became one of the "silent breed" ostracized at school. His paintings tell the multi-hued story of his perplexing childhood: "My silent voice is found among the colours," he says. In an essay published a few years ago, Burke wrote: "I believe that it is my right to express myself as an Aboriginal, while still recognizing my black ancestry." As he noted, "my grandmother was Aboriginal, but without entitlement, because her father had accepted government 'scrip' in exchange for allowing his Aboriginal status to be revoked, back when governments of the day were trying to extinguish Aboriginal land titles."

"They Never Came Back" is a triptych measuring 54 by 90 inches. The painting was part of the "Silent Breed" exhibition held in Fort Smith in 2012. "Silent Breed" received funding from the Canada

Robert Burke

Council for the Arts. In this triptych, the composition flows from panel to panel with a harmonious progression of images. Like prominent puzzle pieces, the motifs repeat and fit together. For example, the neck of a dark blue bird becomes a dark hill in the adjacent panel. There is balance and a sense of cohesion that leads the eye through the varied iconography.

The shapes have symbolic meaning for the artist, and can be read in various ways by the viewer. The blue buffalo head, in ceremonial garb with a human torso, points to buffalo territory, the artist's ancestral home. Three colourful ravens, prominent, add a jaunty energy to the piece. "I am very fond of ravens," says the artist. "I admire their intelligence, shiny blackness, and mythological status in West Coast storytelling."

A figure in a hard hat suggests a soldier at work. Another male in dress uniform and peaked hat says "officer." "I believe my father was a sergeant in the army," he says. The insignia of a sergeant is a three-bar chevron worn point down. Top right is the moon and several disappearing male figures. The faces of the figures have complicated patterning, making them difficult to read and decipher.

From the AGGV Collection: Carl Hofer, Das Nest (The Nest), lithograph, 33.8 x 24.9 cm, Anonymous Gift, 1967.212.001.

RFBURKE 2019

Left: "Moon Gathering" 2019, 38 x 32 inches, acrylic on canvas

The faces appear startling and impenetrable, a reference to the tenuous nature of emotional connection for this isolated, mixed-race child.

How did the artist learn to make these remarkable paintings? "I have always been an artist," says Burke, "drawing and painting as a child, I created my own worlds." Later on, he learned about technique and style from books. Then, after a long and successful career in the logging industry, he enrolled at the Victoria College of Art at age 53. He graduated in 2000 and stayed on an extra year. At this time, his art career was given a boost by the National Aboriginal Foundation. The foundation collected two of his triptychs, part of a larger series called "Aboriginal Immersion: Obscuring the Lines." This series showed at the Nanaimo Art Gallery in 2008.

Another series, "My Residential School Experience," received funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. Jim Logan is an Aboriginal artist who worked for 16 years as a Program Officer for the Canada Council. He recalls how jury members saw something unique in Burke's hard-edged interlocking shapes and patterns. "Burke shows great control in his brushwork and imagery," Logan says. "There's lots of emotion, but it's carefully laid out and precisely detailed." His mural-like diptychs require careful reading, Logan notes, unfolding from left to right like a series of hieroglyphs. Logan finds it fascinating that the artist draws from both sides of his cultural background, without fully identifying with either one.

The artist's vibrant palette reminds Logan of Fauvist artists like Matisse, who used colour for emotional impact. African tribal influences appear in some of Burke's facial masks.

Logan admires Burke for dealing with his past in such a creative way. "Robert has his own perspective," he says, "and positive ways of managing personal experiences."

Burke is a prolific artist who can paint a canvas in about a week. On an easel in his studio, there is a large sheaf of drawing paper. On the paper he sketches out free-flowing designs with charcoal. Some fish shapes, sketched in charcoal, have re-emerged in "Gathering of Seniors." This 2020 artwork (see the front cover) shows mature salmon returning to spawn. The joyful palette of green, red and blue overrides any gloomy thoughts of final days. These are dancing salmon, resplendent with stripes, polka dots and linear patterning.

Burke, too, is in a peaceful place in his life. He's been married to Debra for 46 years and their family is close, with three sons and a daughter. And yet. "I know my time is running out," he says, "and it's time to simplify things." Still, I imagine a few more paintings will emerge before this talented painter hangs up his brush.

A solo exhibit of Robert Burke's work runs at the Winchester Galleries March 25-April 16, with an opening reception on March 28, 2-4pm. 2260 Oak Bay Ave, www.winchestergalleriesltd.com.

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.

The Passion of Joan of Arc • March 29

Making choral music relevant to people who might not be seeking it out has become job one for the leaders of many of our local choirs. While opera features costumes, sets, and plot lines to entice folks, choral music is not typically heavy on visuals. In a stroke of brilliance, Brian Wismath, artistic director for Victoria's Vox Humana Chamber Choir (VHCC), is staging a wonderfully unique and visual choral music experience in late March: a screening of the celebrated 1928 silent film classic *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, accompanied live by the film score ("Voices of Light" by Richard Einhorn), performed by Wismath's impeccable 28-voice choir, soloists, and members of the Victoria Symphony.

Renee Falconetti as Joan

Wismath says Einhorn's score is "considered so seminal that it's included with the film's Criterion Collection release (there have been dozens of soundtracks created for the silent classic)." Directed by Carl Dreyer, the film is heralded as one of the most influential ever made, serving as inspiration for generations of film directors such as Bergman, Fellini and Hitchcock. The heart-rending close-ups of actress Renee Falconetti's subtle, natural expressions humanize the complex range of emotions required in her role as Joan of Arc, who was burned at the stake in 1431. Yet, says Wismath, "The music has a playful character to it… it's not all serious all the time." It includes 15th century chant and even recordings of the bells from the actual church where Joan prayed.

The challenge, of course, is technical. Wismath says there are "scenes in which a particular look happens, and the music has to synch up with that look perfectly." His reverence for Dryer's masterpiece is palpable. "I'll be making sure that the music perfectly complements the film as much as possible; the music is secondary to the film," he says, which "stands alone perfectly. It's almost that you shouldn't even notice the music; it should function in the background and complement what the audience sees on the stage."

Vox Humana Chamber Choir presents The Passion of Joan of Arc, *March 29, 7:30pm, Farquhar Auditorium, University of Victoria, tickets $40, $25 (25 years old and under), available in person at Farquhar Auditorium or online at tickets.uvic.ca—Mollie Kaye*

"ABOVE MORAINE LAKE" BRENT LYNCH, 60 X 40 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

Throughout March & April

BRENT LYNCH

The Avenue Gallery

Artist Brent Lynch believes that "a landscape painting is not just a recording but should be much more. Nature calls to us endlessly. The natural environment that supplies us with our next breath is a powerful reminder of our place in this universe. The idea of the physical world as a reflection of the 'unseen' or 'spirit' is as old as the hills and a sentiment that rings true with me. I love being outside but there's more to it. As for myself, through the drama of land and light…'signs', we are directed into a greater reality." 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184 www.theavenuegallery.com.

"Form 1" painted sheet metal

March 7 – 22

Richard Young

"What Comes to Mind"

Opening reception: **Friday March 6, 7-9pm**

"Gringo at the beach" oil on board

April 14 – 19

Margaret Hantiuk

"Snowbirds: Strangers in Paradise"

Opening reception: **Friday April 3, 7-9pm**

Xchanges Gallery
6E-2333 Government Street
250.382.0442
www.xchangesgallery.org
Open Saturdays & Sundays, 11-4

Xchanges Gallery gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the CRD

"FRED" BRONZE SCULPTURE, 15.5 X 7 X 7, "GINGER" BRONZE SCULPTURE, 16 X 7 X 6, BY NICOLA PRINSEN

Throughout March & April

NICOLA PRINSEN: BRONZE SCULPTURES

The Avenue Gallery

Fred and Ginger never had so much fun! From bears to cows, rabbits to crows, Nicola Prinsen's deep understanding of these animals allows her to pay tribute while injecting her own sense of humour. The end result is a fusion of personality and simplicity. Sculpting for over 25 years, Prinsen first studied ceramics, then figurative and portrait sculpture. For the past five years, her subject matter has been based on her surroundings at her home on Saltspring Island. 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

"CASTLES IN THE AIR" TATJANA DARLING

April 25–May 7

SOOKE ARTS COUNCIL: SPRING ECLECTIC

South Shore Gallery

The Sooke Arts Council Spring Eclectic art show encompasses emerging and established artists working in a wide range of media, including photography, oils, acrylics, watercolour, mixed media, jewellery, printmaking, pottery, wood carving, fabric art and sculpture. Shown here is work by Tatjana Darling, a Sooke-based writer and painter. Opening reception with artists in attendance, Saturday April 25, 1-3pm. 2406 Otter Point Road, www.southshoregallery.ca, 250-642-2058.

"FOLIAGE" PAUL PAQUETTE, 24 X 36 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

April 25–May 7

PAUL PAQUETTE: WEST COAST SCENES

West End Gallery

Paul Paquette studied as a graphic artist before committing to painting professionally in 2003. Painting landscapes from around BC, Canada and the Mediterranean, Paul's unique style is recognizable and distinct. Collectors from around the world continue to be enthralled by his work and eagerly await his premiere exhibition at the West End Gallery. "My easel is like a laboratory and I feel compelled to try new things all the time—this is what keeps painting challenging and exciting." 1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

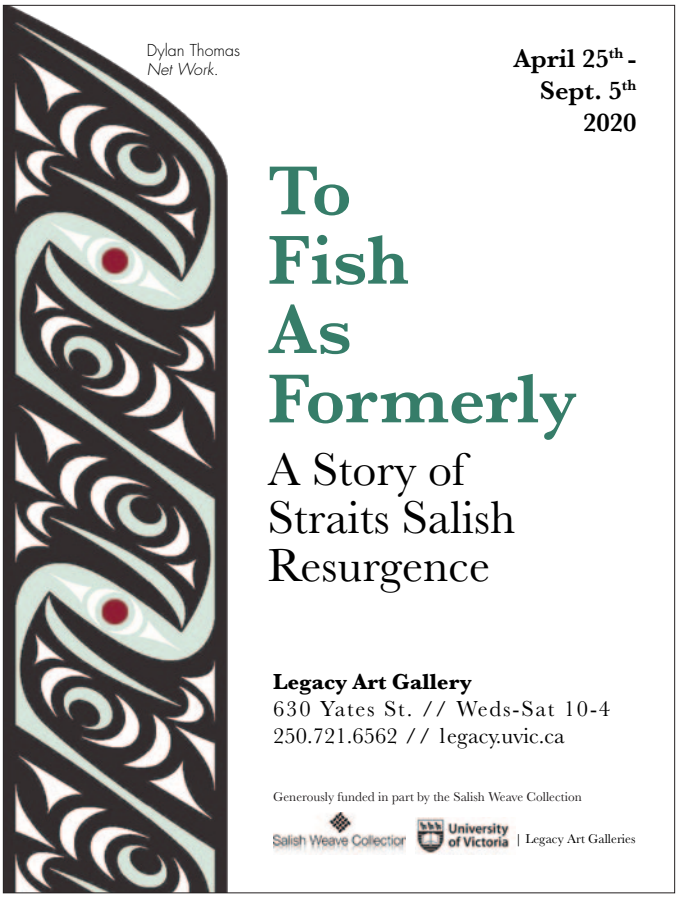
"FEELING GOOD" DEBORAH LEIGH, ACRYLIC ON PAPER

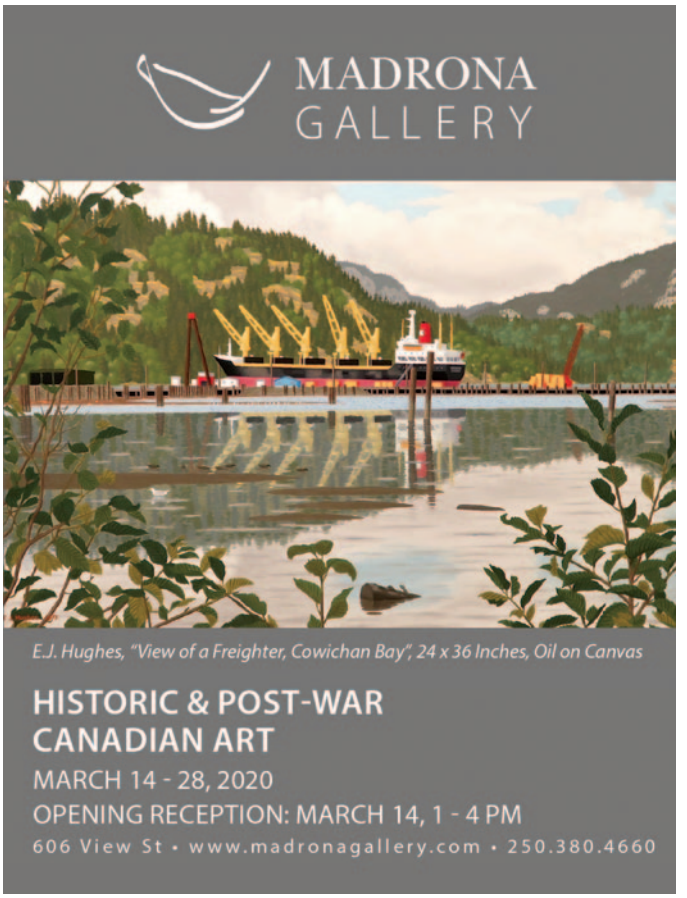
April 14–May 2

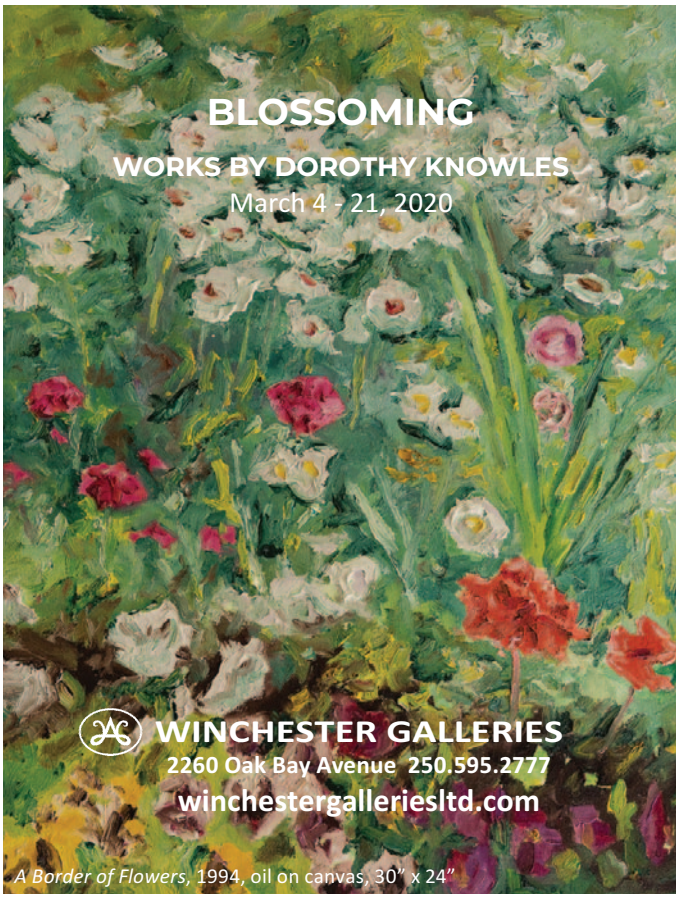
INSIDE OUT

Gage Gallery

In a series of new paintings and sculptures, three women artists—Deborah Leigh, Tanya Bub and Gabriela Hirt—explore what fearless self-expression means to them. The exhibit also includes sketchbook journals for a candid behind-the-scenes look into the creative process. Everyone is invited to come and doodle or post online to #gageinsideout. A book will be compiled telling the visual story of what is meaningful to the community. Opening April 16, 6-9 pm. Jazz night with Femke & Friends April 24, 7pm. Artist talk April 26, 11am-1pm. 2031 Oak Bay Ave, 250-592-2760, www.gagegallery.ca.


Dylan Thomas
Net Work.
April 25th - Sept. 5th 2020
To Fish As Formerly
A Story of Straits Salish Resurgence
Legacy Art Gallery
630 Yates St. // Weds-Sat 10-4
250.721.6562 // legacy.uvic.ca
Generously funded in part by the Salish Weave Collection
Salish Weave Collection
University of Victoria | Legacy Art Galleries


MADRONA GALLERY
E.J. Hughes, "View of a Freighter, Cowichan Bay", 24 x 36 Inches, Oil on Canvas
HISTORIC & POST-WAR CANADIAN ART
MARCH 14 - 28, 2020
OPENING RECEPTION: MARCH 14, 1 - 4 PM
606 View St • www.madronagallery.com • 250.380.4660


BLOSSOMING
WORKS BY DOROTHY KNOWLES
March 4 - 21, 2020
WINCHESTER GALLERIES
2260 Oak Bay Avenue 250.595.2777
winchestergalleriesltd.com
A Border of Flowers, 1994, oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

SHADOWS of DOUBT
GARY WOODS
UNITED KINGDOM
February 24 - April 25
2449-1 Beacon Ave
Sidney by the Sea
newphotographersgallery.com
new photographers GALLERY

GALERIE

Life in the Sacrifice Zone • April 6–19

Dr Janet Ray is a physician who works exclusively in mental health and substance use at an acute medical detox unit in Victoria for VIHA. She doesn't have an art background, and she's stretching herself to take on the role of organizer for a unique and discussion-provoking Victoria art exhibit curated by Melissa Lem, physician and board member of Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE).

Green Party MP Elizabeth May will be the keynote speaker at the opening of "Life in the Sacrifice Zone" on April 6; Lem will also speak about why CAPE physicians are alarmed about fracking, the process by which natural gas is being extracted from the "Sacrifice Zone" in northeastern BC. Fifth-generation farmer and artist Karl Mattson will be present, and his three functional Life Pod sculptures are the focal point of the exhibition. Fashioned of salvaged materials from oil-and-gas-industry scrapyards and farmyards, they are designed to serve as self-contained breathing apparatuses in the event of a lethal sour gas leak or rupture of the pipelines that surround his family farm in Rolla, BC. Large-scale colour photographs of subjects near fracking sites, and written essays about their stories will also be featured, along with film and video.

Life Pod–Executive

"This is a pretty overwhelming topic, to tell the truth," Ray acknowledges. "It's like an ambulance in the rearview mirror; you don't really want to pull over—'Maybe I don't have to stop what I'm doing, it might turn the other way.'"

The UN Intergovernmental Panel Report from 2018 was Ray's ambulance. "As a physician…I should know what to do in an emergency. If something's hemorrhaging, you gotta stop it." She says the first thing CAPE wants to do is inform people. The second "is to create a venue where you can give and receive support for the climate crisis issue—a meeting spot where you can turn that awareness and support into action." A list of MLAs and MPs, along with letter-writing paper and envelopes, will be on hand at the exhibit so people can "write to their representatives and let them know how they feel about fracking in Northeast BC."

"Life in the Sacrifice Zone," Arts Centre at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Rd, April 6–19 daily. Opening night April 6 at 7pm, tickets at eventbrite.ca.

"MARCHÉ AUX FLEURES" ROBERT SAVIGNAC, 36 X 24 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

March 7–19

HANGING GARDEN GROUP EXHIBITION

West End Gallery

A new collection of paintings honours the season of gardens and gardeners. Painters from across the country have captured brilliant bouquets and wild flowers bringing a welcome riot of colour inside for this eclectic group show. Shown here is one example—Robert Savignac's depiction of lush abundance and chaotic splendour of an urban garden. Other artists include: Claudette Castonguay, Joanne Gauthier, Elena Henderson, Josée Lord, Annabelle Marquis, Gerda Marschall, and Elka Nowicka. Open Tues-Sun. 1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

"FAMILY" LUCY TASSEOR, 8 X 8 X 8 INCHES, BASALT, C. 1970

April 18–May 2

THE MILLER COLLECTION

Madrona Gallery

Madrona Gallery is pleased to present this prominent collection of Inuit carvings from the collection of the Miller family of Vancouver. These carvings were collected over the span of 30 years and feature work from acclaimed carvers including Pauta Saila, Lucy Tasseor (shown here), Lacholassie Akesuk, George Tattener, and many others. Opening reception Saturday, April 18, 1-4pm. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

"THETIS" GABRIELA HIRT, 36 X 24 INCHES, MIXED MEDIA ON WOOD PANEL

April 25 & 26

SAANICH PENINSULA ARTS & CRAFTS: SPRING SHOW

Mary Winspear Centre

Since 1953 the Saanich Peninsula Arts & Crafts Society (SPAC) has offered promotion, support, education, marketing and socializing for artists. Now over 300 members strong, the organization includes painters, sculptors, potters, jewellers, and fine craft artisans living on the Saanich Peninsula, Sidney and the Gulf Islands. SPAC's Spring Show is recognized Island-wide as a superior exhibition and sale of original paintings, sculpture and fine crafts. April 25, 10am-8:30pm; April 26, 10am-4:30pm at Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney. www.spacsociety.com.

K.P. DENNIS PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT BY BLAKE LITTLE, 2019

Continuing to April 4

FLUID

Legacy Downtown

For those who identify as trans, gender fluid, non-binary, Two Spirit, and other diverse gender identities, representing oneself can be a brave act of defiance. FLUID, a new photographic portrait series by Los Angeles-based artist Blake Little, sets out to collaborate with diverse local, national and international trans and gender fluid people to capture and reflect some of the concerns and potentials. Thurs March 5 at 7pm film screening and artist talk, *Framing Agnes* (2019) with trans culture writer and filmmaker Chase Joynt. 630 Yates St. 250-721-6562, legacy.uvic.ca.

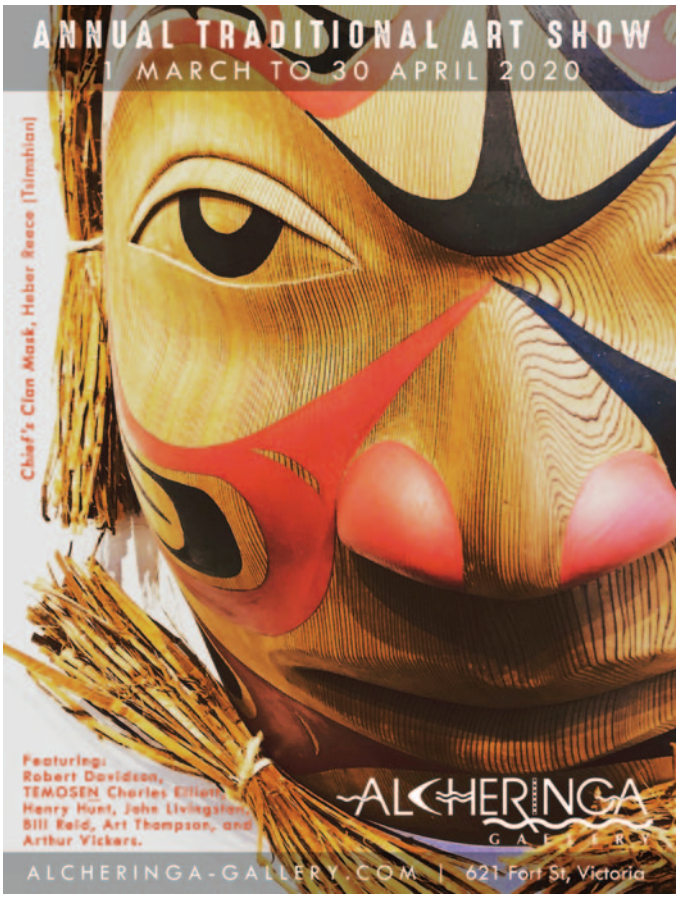
"STATION LVI" HEATHER KEENAN, 10 X 8 INCHES, OIL PIGMENT STICK ON WOOD CRADLE

May 2 & 3

2020 FAIRFIELD ARTISTS STUDIO TOUR

Fairfield, Rockland, Gonzales

This annual self-guided studio tour provides art-lovers an opportunity to meet local artists, tour their studios and view their work—paintings, fibre art, sculpture, clay works, jewellery, etc—while exploring the beautiful neighbourhoods of Fairfield, Rockland and Gonzales. This year's 23 artists include Amy Frank, Judy Lightwater, Joyce Bantock, Katharine Geddes, Heather Keenan, Janis Blyth, Ian Baker, Waine Ryzak, Nancy Dolan, David Good, Wendy Oppelt, Arden Rose. May 2 & 3, 11am-4pm. Map, links to individual artists at https://www.fairfieldartistsstudiotour.com.

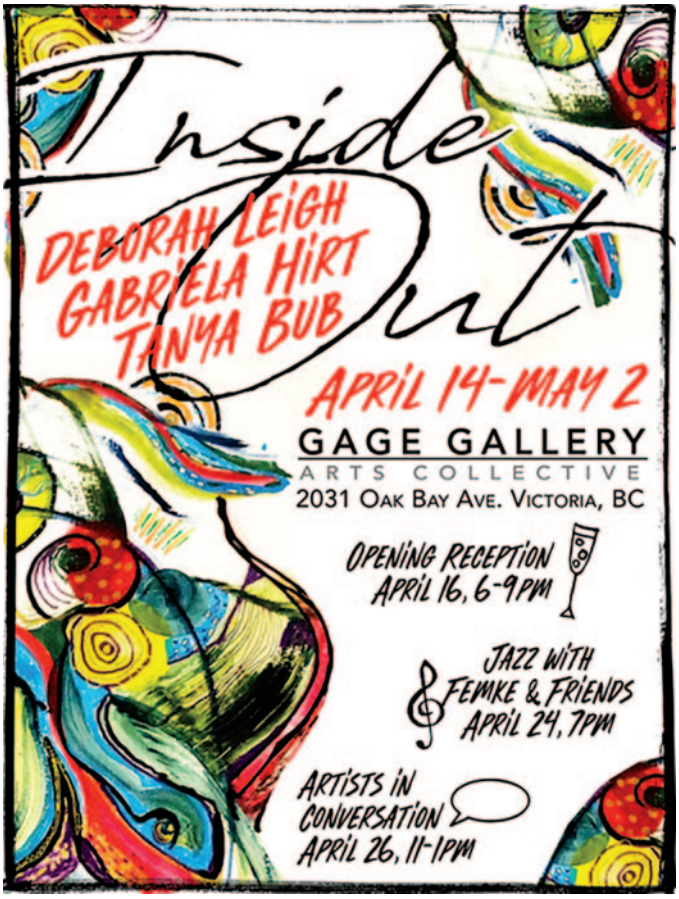


THE AVENUE GALLERY

Sunset 30 x 48 acrylic on canvas

Featured Artist
Becky Holuk

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



Fancy Nights Series #1 48 x 48" Acrylic on Canvas by Elena Henderson

Hanging Garden Group Exhibition
March 7 - 19, 2020

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

All these things in constellation

MOLLIE KAYE

Victoria band West My Friend provides a welcome balm for our world-weary souls.

"Guileless" is defined as "honest, innocent; not able to deceive." As an American ex-pat who keeps up with all the news down south, guilelessness is a balm for my soul. The three musicians who form Victoria's fanciful folk band West My Friend seem to embody that word, and their lyrics telegraph it as well. For me, these musicians are ideal examples of top-notch, Canadian-grown youth: intelligent, talented, creative, hard-working—successful and savvy, but without guile.

West My Friend (WMF) recently created one of the most ambitious, unusual albums I've heard within the well-populated genre of singer-songwriter bands trading in clever, plain-spoken lyrics set against acoustic melodies. Their 2019 CD, *In Constellation*, plumps those melodies into expansive lushness. In collaboration with local composer and arranger Adrian Dolan of The Bills, they've created a collection of inspiring, unexpected orchestral works that flower in fecund elegance from the seeds and soil of the band's humble, sweet tunes. It's a mashup of folksy innocence and edgy musical sophistication that leaves me smiling wryly, with my heart a little fuller. Listening to "Build a Bed," their poignant and powerful song about love, I'm choking up.

Jeff Poynter plays piano and accordion, and contributes vocals; Alex Rempel is on mandolin, and offers a versatile baritone voice. Eden Oliver plays guitar, and her lead vocals pour out with effortless clarity and spot-on accuracy, while the band's multi-instrumental weavings create a velvet box for her jewel-like soprano. Whether she's enveloped by Dolan's majestic arrangements or simply flanked by Poynter and Rempel in someone's living room, Oliver's pipes don't disappoint.

As primary songwriter and lyricist for the group, Oliver lays out profound, stripped-down truisms that resonate like snatches of conversations about life with a good friend over tea. "Old Song" is her Gershwin-esque composition that Dolan works some whimsical magic on. "An Education" sparkles to life with Rempel's harp-like mandolin solo behind Oliver's voice, climaxing in a cornucopia of brass and tympani, and comes to rest again with the mandolin sighing sweetly among the strings. "Salt Water" begins with an ominous roll on the tympani, then contemplatively wallows in a guitar-and-vocal chant, Poynter's accordion droning a minor chord, then builds into a spinning calliope of grandness with strings and horns, punctuated by cymbal crashes. "All These Things" juxtaposes a list of Grandma's best recipes with a soaring symphonic score, lifting up the simplest acts of caring and connection to a height somewhere in the heavenly stratosphere. Dolan's brilliant aural textures evoke surges of emotion, and serve as a reminder to me that the simple stuff of everyday life deserves our attention and reverence.

PHOTO: MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY

West My Friend (l-r): Jeff Poynter, Eden Oliver and Alex Rempel

The sophistication of *In Constellation* reveals that these "folk" musicians have some serious chops and background. All three earned music degrees from UVic, where they formed WMF ten years (and nearly 700 shows) ago. The instruments they play in the band are not the ones they honed in university (saxophone for Poynter, double bass for Rempel, flute for Oliver). The many instruments they've picked up since serve them well, and they contribute their classical skills to the orchestra tracks on their ambitious fourth album. "The people who like it really do like it," Rempel says. "It's not getting mainstream radio play…but we're getting lots of college radio in the US and UK, sneakily taking over the world with esoteric, symphonic indie folk," he chuckles.

In the past, WMF has been nominated for a Vancouver Island Music Award and a Canadian Folk Music award; the current awards cycle wasn't in full gear when I interviewed them this winter, but *In Constellation* seems likely to get some nods in 2020.

With all of this talent and versatility, West My Friend surely could make plenty of strong recordings as a trio (and they have), so my first question for them as we sit down in Poynter and Oliver's charming Fernwood living room is how in the world did they conjure the chutzpah to record an album with full orchestra, and produce a one-off concert with over 50 paid musicians at Alix Goolden Hall last September? The logistics, financing, and audacious gamble of it all boggle my mind, especially when they're working full-time and touring internationally, playing an average of 65 shows a year.

"We had to have a lot of people in the audience," Poynter says, with his characteristic directness. He handles all of the bookings for the band, and has a proven track record of building alliances and networks. "We got a couple of grants as well. UVic alumni association provided some funds. It was a *very* expensive concert, and required a ton of organization; that's why we don't do it all the time." The gamble paid off: lots of people did come to the show, but live concerts on that scale aren't in the works again "unless an orchestra hired us—which is the goal," he says.

In the meantime, WMF has invited a choir to perform at their April 26 show at Alix Goolden Hall—and it's not just any choir. Oliver has a K-12 education degree, and much of what WMF does when not

performing involves workshops in schools, focused on guided listening and songwriting with students. The Voices in Motion Choir (VIMC) dovetails easily with the band's mission of building community through music; it is comprised of Alzheimers and dementia patients, their caregivers, friends, and local students aged eight to 25, all rehearsing with a professional director and performing a schedule of public concerts.

Launched in 2018, the choir is an inter-departmental research project involving sociology, psychology, and nursing PhDs at UVic, identifying and quantifying the mental and physical health benefits of choral singing, especially for those suffering from dementia, who are "highly susceptible to negative health outcomes brought on by social isolation and a lack of meaningful contribution," Dr Debra Sheets, a professor at UVic's School of Nursing, explains. She is a huge WMF fan, and is delighted about the collaborative concert. Erica Phare-Bergh, VIMC's artistic director, serves as conductor, and says, "What started as one local choir has blossomed into three, and the VIMC model is now being replicated in cities throughout Canada." Both women say having shared goals between young and old, patient and caregiver—like the upcoming West My Friend concert—enhances health and relationships.

When I ask Oliver about WMF and *their* shared goals, she says the band is still recovering from the enormous effort required by *In Constellation*, but they will be working on new material in 2020, and intend to create a new recording. "It's like a twinkle in our eye," she muses, and the three musicians all smile at this, unified in their determination and vision as they embark on their second decade as a guileless—yet savvy—Canadian band.

"A Sunday Afternoon to Remember: Voices in Motion in concert with West My Friend," Sun, April 26, 4:30pm. Tickets, $25 or $20 student / senior, alixgooldenhall.com or 250-386-5311. Alix Goolden Hall at the Victoria Conservatory of Music, 907 Pandora Ave.

Mollie Kaye writes and performs parodies of 40s and 50s songs, sometimes with Jeff Poynter backing her up on keyboards. You might also encounter her wearing comment-worthy vintage outfits and talking to strangers on "Turned-out Tuesdays" (see www.theyearofdressup.com).

Make your life better
Make ART

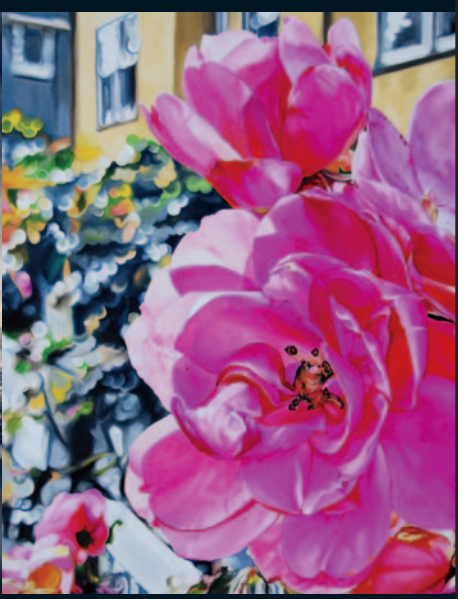
The Vancouver Island School of Art is pleased to offer a 10% discount to all members or employees of the following organizations:

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
Victoria Arts Council
City of Victoria
Capital Regional District (CRD)
Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA)
Government of British Columbia
Vancity

Register by phone or in person to receive discount.
250.380.3500 or 950 Kings Road
Applicable towards workshops or courses. Spread the word!
www.vancouverislandschoolart.com

THE GALLERY
AT MATTICK'S FARM

"Left Coast Blues" 36 x 36
Deana Brown
February 24-March 29
Opening reception Sunday March 1, 1-4pm



"Bright Hope" 24 x 36
Janet Anderson
March 30-April 26
Opening reception Sunday April 5, 1-4pm

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

Victoria Visual Arts Legacy Society Awards • April 7

If you're looking for an excuse to rock your style, get a little fancy, drink some good wine, and enjoy the company of some of Victoria's most exciting and respected visual artists, plan to attend the Victoria Visual Arts Legacy Society (VVALS)'s annual awards event.

Mary-ellen Threadkell, vice president of VVALS, says it's an annual celebration of both the legacy artists that make up Victoria's past and present landscape, and those five hand-picked art students who are emerging as community-builders and exceptional artists at five local colleges. VVALS awards a $1000 bursary each year to one student of Camosun College, UVic Arts in Education, UVic Fine Arts, Victoria College of Art, and Vancouver Island School of Art.

"In most cases, when a student receives a bursary, they get a cheque in the mail and a nice letter," Threadkell says. "This event is pretty extraordinary, because the student is meeting the legacy artists, fêted at a very elegant affair hosted at the Legacy Art Gallery… with blow-your-socks-off, fabulous food."

Pat Martin Bates

In addition to the elegant buffet of hors d'ouvres and good wines, there's also an open bar. This year's gala event is on Tuesday, April 7 and begins at 6:30 pm.

There's only one way to be among the 85 lucky guests: support the legacy program by helping with the student awards. "People can get an invitation to the event by donating to VVALS at a level beginning at $100," says Threadkell. The long-term goal is to raise the bursary funding up to a higher level, since $1000 doesn't go quite as far as it used to—especially in Victoria.

Local legacy artists are those "who have reached international stature," and each bursary recipient is matched with a legacy artist in their medium, says Threadkell. These include both living artists like Carole Sabiston and Pat Martin Bates (current president of VVALS), and those who have passed, such as Richard Ciccimarra, Karl Spreitz, James Gordaneer, Elza Mayhew, and others. Sabiston is a fibre artist and a new addition to the list who will be present at the April event.

"This year we are thrilled because Senator Patricia Bovey will be giving the keynote address," Threadkell adds. "She's written wonderful books on Carole Sabiston and Pat Martin Bates, and is writing another book about western Canadian women artists. She's coming to talk to the audience about what she's doing as a senator for the arts in Canada."

Tickets are available through VVALS fund at the Victoria Foundation, or online at canadahelps.org. VVALS is a certified not-for-profit organization; www.victoriavisualartslegacy.ca—MK

"GRAM GLOVER'S DREAM" DAVID BLACKWOOD, 31.75 X 19.75 INCHES, ETCHING & AQUATINT, 1969

March 14–28

HISTORIC & POST-WAR CANADIAN ART EXHIBITION

Madrona Gallery

Madrona Gallery is pleased to present its annual exhibition of historic and post-war Canadian art. Artists featured in the show include members of the Group of Seven, E.J. Hughes, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Takao Tanabe, Gordon Smith, W.J. Phillips, Alexander Colville, Ted Harrison, and many others. Shown here is a work by internationally renowned David Blackwood, one of Canada's most respected visual story-tellers. Opening reception: Saturday, March 14, 1-4 p.m. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

April 21 – May 17, 2020

A sharp comedy about backroom politics.

1979

by Michael Healey

"genuinely moving, sincerely funny – and fun."
—GLOBE & MAIL

Belfry Theatre

TICKETS
250 385 6815
BELFRY.BC.CA

PRODUCTION SPONSORS: Broadmead hearing clinic, Used.ca, CFAX 1070

SEASON SPONSORS: HeliJet, Times Colonist

PUBLIC FUNDERS: Canada Council for the Arts / Conseil des arts du Canada, British Columbia Arts Council, British Columbia, CRD Making a difference...together, The City of Victoria

Politics in theatre, both on stage and off

MONICA PRENDERGAST

Good political theatre can unsettle audiences towards making a better world.

When I began writing this *Focus* column in January 2014, I quoted American playwright Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* definition of theatre as a blend of "poetry, politics and popcorn." I believe that all theatre is political, as it either works to reinforce or undermine the societal status quo. Plays and productions that support the status quo are comforting to audiences, requiring little or no critical thinking. These are popcorn experiences, perhaps with a dash of poetry if you are lucky.

Performances that aim to undermine the status quo are another thing altogether. These more political plays can unsettle an audience, creating a sense of tension or even disruption. These are theatrical experiences that can be difficult to walk away from, that linger in the conscience asking, "What are you doing to make a better world?"

Victoria audiences do not get to see the latter kind of play often enough, in my view. I have to travel off the Island to see more political theatre productions in New York, Vancouver, Toronto or London. However, this spring we have the chance to see two plays (and to *not* see one more) that take political positions at Langham Court and the Belfry Theatre. I'll return to those later on. For now, I want to turn my attention to politics itself, and some recent events that highlight the theatrical nature of political actions by both politicians fighting for survival and protesters advocating for change.

As I write this, the memory of US Senate Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi ripping up her copy of President Trump's State of the Union address is fresh in my mind. This was a brilliant piece of political theatre, carried out literally behind the President's back, and enacting a kind of ritualized rejection of Trump and his corrupt regime.

Performance has played a major role in the protests against Trump since his inauguration; think of the pink pussy-hats worn in the women's marches, or of the use of costumes, giant puppets, and masks in gay rights marches or marches for action on climate change. The so-called "rabble" has always well understood the power of performance.

One example of this power sticks in my mind. During the Walk for Our Lives in March

of 2018, led by the young students from Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, one of the student leaders carried out a highly performative political action. Emma González, at the age of 18, stood before a massive crowd in the Washington Mall and remained silent with her eyes closed for the exact amount of time it took for the student gunman in her school to erase 17 lives. Six long minutes. Silence can speak volumes, as it did in this terribly moving moment, in the face of the ongoing horrors of gun violence in America.

And what about political theatre closer to home? Can we talk about Justin Trudeau's past penchant for blackface and brownface makeup and costume for a moment? When this story broke at the beginning of our last election, I thought he was done for, *kaput*. But you can never underestimate the white majority's tolerance of performed racism. Trudeau's weak apologetics and the surfacing of even more photos documenting his noxious partying practice did not sway the voters much at all. What this says about the Canadian public requires more reflection than I can do here. But it has left a shameful mark on all who made excuses then held their noses and voted Liberal.

Now let's return to the two plays scheduled for this March and April that promise some attention to political matters.

First up is American playwright Lauren Gunderson's 2015 play *Silent Sky* at Langham Court Theatre (April 15 to May 2), directed by Zelda Dean. Gunderson is touted on her Wikipedia page as the most-produced living playwright in America. At the age of 38 she has written two dozen plays, so is clearly very prolific as well as popular. *Silent Sky* reflects some of Gunderson's interests in women and women's issues. The play tells the story of Henrietta Swan Leavitt, an astronomer at Harvard in the late 19th and early 20th century who was denied the right to use the telescope in the laboratory. However, she persisted in the "women's work" of examining photos taken by the telescope. This work led to her important discovery around measuring distance in space called period-luminosity relation, or "Leavitt's law." *Silent Sky* is not the most political of Gunderson's many plays, two of which have tackled gun violence (most recently, *Natural Shocks*) and the contemporary political landscape in the Age of Trump (*The Taming*). But she is interested in the larger feminist reclamation project that is attempting to honour women's historical contributions to science and society. In an online interview, Gunderson comments, "What is true about theatre is true about politics: it's all personal."

At the Belfry Theatre, we will see Canadian playwright Michael Healey's political comedy about the quick rise and fall of Prime Minister Joe Clark in *1979*. Healey's previous political play *Proud* was seen at the Belfry in 2014, and was a satirical comedy about PM Stephen Harper. This time Healey chooses to look back further, to the evening before Clark's minority government was voted down. In the play, Clark is visited by political figures such as John Crosbie, Flora MacDonald, Pierre Trudeau, his wife Maureen McTeer, and even a young Stephen Harper. All of these figures, on both sides of the political divide, try to influence Clark, who is trying to stick to his principles in the face of almost certain defeat. Director Glynis Leyshon (who also directed *Proud*) is sure to pull out the full comic potential of this play, especially as two of the three actors in the cast play multiple roles. The show runs from April 21 to May 17.

I'm going to end this column with a few thoughts on an event that happened at Langham Court Theatre over two years ago that has had a political fallout leading to the cancellation of one of Langham's productions this spring.

CAN WE TALK ABOUT Justin Trudeau's past penchant for blackface and brownface makeup and costume for a moment?

Before rehearsals began for a production of Michel Tremblay's *Les Belles Soeurs* in the fall of 2017, an African-Canadian woman actor was discouraged from auditioning for the show by the play's director who envisioned the play as an all-white one. There is currently a BC Human Rights Tribunal case on this matter that has been covered in the press and has been very traumatic for Langham Court Theatre and its board of directors, who have been named in the case along with the director of the play. I was an actor in this production, and the fallout from this event, which was shared with the cast only on the night before the show opened, was and is very challenging.

In the wake of these events, which are still to be heard in full by the Human Rights Tribunal, a decision was made to cancel the scheduled production of *The Blue Light* by Canadian playwright Mieko Ouchi. This play is about the life of filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, who is best known for her collaboration with the Nazis, particularly in the 1935 documentary/propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*. Both Hitler and Goebbels are characters in the play. Riefenstahl was blacklisted for the remainder of her life, a long one, as she lived to be 101 and died in Germany in 2003.

The difficult decision to cancel this production was carried out in consultation with members of the Victoria theatre and Jewish communities, and is a decision I personally support, given the human rights case the theatre is facing. Langham Court has made admirable efforts in the wake of the 2017 event to reach out to minority communities in Victoria, and to invite minority actors to audition for its shows. These are laudable changes for a long-lived company that has perhaps been historically guilty of an unquestioning acceptance of endless all-white casts. But the challenging fact remains, a political fact, that a play by a woman of colour was withdrawn from the season. Like I have said, it's all political in theatre, any way you look at it.

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

March 12-21, 2020

This potent and politically charged pre-WWII drama about the power of words remains startlingly relevant today. Two life long friends and headmistresses of a prestigious all-girls boarding school face a devastating chain of consequences when a spiteful student whispers a rumour, compromising the two women's reputation.

Peter McGuire *Director*
Emily Friesen *Set Designer*
Brodie Needham *Costume Designer*
Zhe (Harry) Lin *Lighting Designer*
Aaron Smail *Sound Designer*
Cassie Holmes *Stage Manager*

250.721.8000
phoenixtheatres.ca

Season Production Resource Partner production canada YVR YYC YYZ

Our Glass Paradise Revisited

KATE CINO

Exploring notions of place and human relationships to nature, Neil McClelland's tondos intrigue, inspire and alarm.

Neil McClelland is a man of many talents. He can play saxophone, guitar and piano, in a variety of genres. He's an experienced school teacher—who favours grade four. For many years he taught high school band, taking teenagers on school trips to sharpen their skills. Now he teaches other artists at the Vancouver Island School of Art (VISA) and is a sessional instructor at the University of Victoria (UVic). McClelland is also a gifted writer, both creative and academic, penning catalogues and proposals with ease.

This versatile artist also knows how to cook. On a hot plate, in the cavernous space of his Chinatown studio, he prepares traditional gesso for his wooden panels. This mixture is as old as the history of oil painting. "Jan Van Ekye [1390-1441] probably used this method 600 years ago," says the artist. Into the double boiler go water, chalk dust, powdered white pigment and pre-soaked pellets of rabbit-skin glue. Cook carefully, stir often, don't boil the mixture. When as thick as single cream, strain through a nylon stocking. Apply several coats to a wooden panel or stretched canvas while still warm.

Why bother, I ask, when commercial gesso is readily available?

Traditional gesso absorbs the oil paint and quickens the drying time, he explains. The ground provides a workable surface and gives fluidity to his brushwork. The artist became familiar with this material in 2014 while completing his MFA at UVic. He used encaustics for the paintings in his MFA thesis. The preferred ground for encaustics (a hot wax and pigment medium) is traditional gesso. "Now I favour it," he says, "it works better and costs less."

McClelland's many talents are evident on the white walls of his studio. His series of eight circular paintings (called tondos) are titled "Our Glass Paradise Revisited." They show at the Chapel Gallery at St Matthias Anglican Church, March 13-April 5. Serene and meditative, the panels are each 30 inches in diameter. They are usually arranged as pairs, side by side. One of the tondos features a mounded oval shape made from broken wine bottles, glued together with polymer resin.

The tondos offer glimpses of natural scenes, with and without human activity, across a body of water. The watery scenes are deftly articulated with a blue/green palette. The low-light settings imply dawn or dusk adding a touch of mystery to the just-out-of-reach scenarios.

These are "no places," explains the artist, "that reflect both a yearning for perfect happiness and the fragility of the paradises we seek." The tensions and contradictions in his tondos signal both utopian and dystopian environs. His process of layering and amalgamating images becomes a distillation of place and time, seen through the foggy lens of memory and imagination.

The Chapel Gallery is a perfect venue for this thoughtful body of work. "Neil's tondos are absolutely gorgeous," says Nicky Rendell, coordinator. "They will illuminate the tranquil space of the gallery." The Chapel Gallery presents original artwork from both established and emerging artists. The not-for-profit gallery is designed to be a place for community engagement, presenting a wide range of topics and themes.

McClelland first picked up a paint brush in the mid-1990s. He began taking classes at the Saidye Bronfman School of Fine Arts in Montreal. "That was my *aha!* moment," he says, "when I realized *this* is what I should have been doing all along." With excellent instructors, his skill level soared and he became commercially successful. Shows in Quebec, Ottawa, Calgary and Edmonton followed. After ten years, he moved into working with artist-run centres and public galleries as an art educator, juror, and journal editor.

Neil McClelland with "If the World is Like the World," oil on birch panel

"I like having shows at public art galleries," he says. The City of Victoria featured his artwork "Waterline 1" as part of its 2019 bus shelter art exhibition called "Commute." The artist is represented by Winchester Galleries in Victoria, the Wallack Galleries in Ottawa, and the Collectors' Gallery in Calgary.

McClelland's career includes several awards, artist residencies and scholarships. In 2016, he received a generous grant from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation. In January 2020, the delighted artist received a second grant. The Greenshields Foundation supports emerging artists from around the world, who are dedicated to a long-term career in the visual arts. Fellow artist and UVic colleague Todd Lambeth agrees that McClelland is someone totally committed to his painting practice. "Neil has a long-term relationship with his media and methods," he says. "I admire his work ethic, curiosity and ability to experiment."

McClelland's supports for his paintings include metal plates, stretched canvas, rectangular wood panels, and now circular tondos. Lambeth sees the tondos, placed side by side, as representing binocular vision. "This invites an interesting discussion about human visual perception," he says.

Circular paintings originated in Ancient Greece, to augment drinking vessels called *kylikes*. The circle in many cultures represents completion, wholeness, and mystery. In the Renaissance, artists like Botticelli and Raphael used the circle motif for religious

"The Island 2," oil on birch panel, 30-inch diameter

and mythological images. Creating perspective using figures in a circular composition proved challenging. Michelangelo's "Doni Tondo" is one of the most successful examples of this unique format, and greatly admired by McClelland. The artist describes the mood of his tondos series as quiet, slow and contemplative. "We are viewing landscapes," he says, "but from a distance we are trying to overcome."

McClelland was raised on a small farm in the heart of Gatineau Hills parkland. "As a child, I walked out the door and across fields into forest," he says; "there was a lake nearby." Thoughts of his idyllic childhood conjure up mixed emotions. Soon the farm will be absorbed back into the parkland as his parents age.

McClelland notes that Canadians have a strong bond to themes of wilderness and survival. Canadian icon Margaret Atwood elaborates on these themes in works like *Surfacing*, *Survival* and *Wilderness Tips*. He's read them all. "My work explores notions of place," he says, "the search for paradise on Earth, and human relationships to nature." The artist creates a fictional environment with narrative content that intrigues, inspires and alarms. In this world, there are glimmers, a chance to discover something personal or profound about our relationships to time and place.

Our Glass Paradise Revisited *runs from March 13 to April 5 at The Chapel Gallery, St Matthias, 600 Richmond Ave, with an opening reception on March 13, 6-9 pm (artist talk at 6:30 pm). Other hours: Sat and Thurs 10-2 pm; Sun 12-3 pm. Winchester Galleries also carries Neil McClelland's work. neilmcclelland.com.*

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.

AFRIA SUPERMARCHE
Carmen
Beauté

Benefit for Friends of Bowker Creek Society • April 17

Programs in Earth Literacies' mission is "to ignite our sense of connectedness with Earth and nurture a spirituality of Earth care through learning circles." Program coordinator Gertie Jocksch says this is what inspired the 12-year-old nonprofit to bring environmentally-focused singer/songwriter Sara Thomsen into town to give a benefit concert and workshop for the Friends of Bowker Creek Society (FOBCS).

"We've never done this before," Jocksch says of the concert, a new venture for Earth Literacies that organizers thought would be "a perfect fundraiser" for FOBCS; "they're taking out invasive species, keeping that area green, and it's time for us to do something that supports an important project like this."

Historically ignored, buried, and sullied, Bowker Creek runs through the municipalities of Oak Bay, Saanich, and Victoria. The non-profit FOBCS formed to organize watershed cleanup and public education efforts. "They're doing wonderful work," Jocksch says. "There are lots of family activities; it's time to give back… it fits so well with our mission."

Sara Thomsen

Singer Sara Thomsen is on a mission as well. "At concerts, conferences, classrooms, workshops, retreats, jails, places of prayer, and lines of protest, to be with Sara is to want to sing… Sara's ability to get people singing magically transforms gatherings into communities empowered with possibility," her bio reads. Based in Duluth, Minnesota, Thomsen will be performing her Victoria concert with local director Denis Donnelly's groups, Gettin' Higher Choir and Wavelength Community Choir. Thomsen will also be holding a workshop, with proceeds from both events earmarked to benefit FOBCS.

Sara Thomsen performs April 17 at 7:30pm, tickets $25. "Songs Like Seeds—Planting Love Note by Note, Singing Playshop" with Sara Thomsen, April 18, 10am-4pm, $75. Both events at Cadboro Bay Gordon Head United Church, 2625 Arbutus Road. Tickets at earthliteracies.org or 250-220-4601.—MK

IMAGES PROVIDED BY MONICA JAHAN BOSE AND USED WITH PERMISSION

March 29

INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCE: SHUISHUTA (NEEDLE & THREAD)

Legacy Gallery, Downtown Gallery

Bangladeshi-American feminist artist Monica Jahan Bose creates a performance with hand-woven saris from Bangladesh, exploring questions of labour, gender and industry, including the inequitable gender impacts of the garment industry and climate change. Bose uses the hand-woven cotton sari as a symbol for women's bodies and the cycle of life on our planet. She invites viewers to join the performance by sewing with her and writing or drawing personal climate pledges on a sari. The performance is part of Gendered Threads of Globalization, a symposium on women's textile and garment production in Asia (March 27-29, 2020) that includes presentations, panel discussions and an exhibition—"Woven, Embroidered and Stitched in Tradition: Women's Textile Labour in 20th Century Asia." gtog.uvic.ca/. Sunday March 29, 1-3pm, Legacy Downtown, 630 Yates St, 250-721-8298, legacy.uvic.ca,.

Gimme shelter

GENE MILLER

Scenes of homelessness challenge any illusion that our city is well-ordered—and call for a new blueprint for community.

I don't want to break a sweat attempting to conflate *hope* and *home*, but it's hard not to notice that they share three-quarters of their architecture.

I know: you're sorely tempted to note, so do *hole*, *hone*, *hose* and *hove*.

Remember when you had that stupid idea to create dinner-flavoured ice cream (I recall you said pork chops and Brussels sprouts would "go monster")? I kept my mouth clamped shut, even when everybody suggested you might, for a change, want to start receiving your mail on Planet Earth.

So, like, work with me now, okay? *Hope, home.*

Nanaimo Mayor Leonard Krog made the news down here this past December suggesting that for some of the street population—the mentally ill and the thoroughly (I won't write "hopelessly") addicted—housing was less the appropriate response than institutionalization and some updated package of professional health management.

Predictably, he caught shit for this from the handwringer contingent that, in its opposition, invoked horrific, Dickensian images of turreted insane asylums and the baying of the hounds.

Me? I dunno. I've been around too long to have much faith that the rhetoric of perfect solutions bears any relationship to our (diminishing) ability to successfully manage social outcomes. The reasons for my doubts follow later in this column. But, despite those doubts, I cannot heap enough praise on everyone associated with Our Place and other places of protection who, daily, practice hope/home in every way possible.

I recall a recent 5am coffee run to McDonalds at Pandora and Vancouver. En route, I spotted a lump—a garbage or duffel bag—on the far sidewalk, across Pandora from the restaurant. As I made the turn, the image resolved in my headlights: a man, hunched over into the smallest possible volume, his bare toes, knees and forehead in contact with the cold pavement, a crutch or cane beside him. He remained there, still as sculpture. He might have been lost in the intensities of Islamic prayer; he could have been dead.

Victoria, we are producing—not allowing or enabling, but authoring—a new normal: the every night/overnight tent city in front of Our Place on Pandora, the ever-proliferating camperati in Beacon Hill and other city parks, the Downtown doorway crashers, the cardboard real estate everywhere, the tarp-covered shopping cart third-world-ification of the city's sidewalks. I'm less interested in individual whats and whys than I am concerned about the social messaging and emotional impacts on the community-at-large, whose failure to more constructively manage this entire human tragedy is reinforced daily, as we disappear ever further into our individual electronic privacies. If you hit the right street at the worst time, the scene effortlessly conveys the atmospherics of one of sci-fi author William Gibson's terrifying and apocalyptic futurologies.

PHOTO: DAVID BROADLAND

Homeless man on Pandora Avenue

Welcome to Downtown Victoria 2020—real scenes that challenge any illusion that our community is well-ordered, socially coherent, or a place of practiced comfort and safety. When you have a public that effectively says "they're homeless, so fuck 'em," you court—no, you may count on—overall "fuck it" city life; and, owing to some strange social alchemy, all of us rendered separate human atoms, outsiders.

Headlines gathered from the December 30, 2019 *Times Colonist* front page: "Police release video of stabbing attack;" "Man being sought by Victoria police after attempted kidnapping;" "Police look for men who broke into Oak Bay liquor store;" "Security guard stabbed after confronting suspected shoplifter." And with bright promise for the new year, the January 3rd paper added, "One man arrested after fight with weapons in Centennial Square."

Just what brought and keeps you here, yes?

Community, to the extent the word speaks to public life, realm, and assets, is not an afterthought and it cannot, beyond a certain point, be offloaded to City departments. Community begins with *co*: together, shared, us, everybody, mutuality, reciprocity. And big shock: community takes work, time, purpose and structure. Community has to be behaviour, *about* something; otherwise, it's not community, only a cultural conceit, social lipstick, starry-eyed blab, an artifact.

Columnist Nicholas Kristof and colleague Sheryl WuDunn recently penned a painful-to-read *New York Times* piece entitled "Who Killed the Knapp Family?" It chronicles five adult Knapp siblings, born and raised in rural Yamhill, southwest of Portland, Oregon, all but one of whom died from drugs, alcohol and similar misadventures and excesses (the surviving fifth served a long jail term). As Kristof and WuDunn make all too clear, the Knapps were victims of social and economic despair. Yamhill, the writers assert, is everywhere now—a condition incorporating addiction, lack of work, lack of a social safety net, lack of purpose, lack of exit. Suicides, note the authors, "are at their highest rate since World War II; one child in seven is living with a parent suffering from substance

INDIFFERENCE AND PASSIVITY have revealed their limits and generated predictable consequences, including the tragic streetscape of the homeless. Now, it's time for a movement…

abuse; a baby is born every 15 minutes after prenatal exposure to opioids."

"We have deep structural problems half a century in the making," they finish.

Build the wall, Justin!—but no, too late: the same conditions that increasingly colour the American social and political landscape easily penetrate the Canadian membrane. While we do social management better here (health care, notably), we still have our own fish to fry, and our own talent for us-and-them identity politics.

Don Evans, recently retired CEO of Our Place, has written of his own shock at the scale of the homeless. He cites poverty and its consequences as an obvious factor, but worriedly notes other constituencies that "we never imagined would end up on the street: neglected youth, injured workers, abused women, and people suffering from brain injuries and mental health issues that can strike anyone, at any income level, at any time."

We're living in bad-dream times, a spreading hallucinatory condition that intrudes on the everyday, the customary, with ever-greater presence, a revolution not just of perception, but meaning and connection.

With surprising suddenness, it's a challenge to stand firm, to identify fixed points, to know exactly where the solid ground and the corners are. Take away even some of the "common"—shared experience, practice, sense of purpose and reinforcing protocols—and you no longer have community, just people shuffling around the same postal code.

Look, "resilient" was only ever "fragile-with-prayer." Things are breaking—conventional social behaviour, the terms of safety and security. Various economic and cultural certainties are diminishing, wobbling, and life is soon to be more…well, different. And when AI /robotics take all the jobs…?

Imagine, however novelistically, a spooky, not-too-distant future Downtown filled with half-empty apartment towers and long stretches of shuttered shops, victims of online commerce, unsupportable costs, and vanished shopper appetite; the streets witness to an increasing Calcutta of shopping-cart homeless, bolstered by untold numbers living in their parked cars—not because the wife threw them out, but because life threw them out. Lots of campers here now, by the way, if you know where to look besides Dallas Road.

History—our two- maybe three-generation experience of comfort and certainty—is rolling up, suicidally jumping into some dark void, trailingly calling bye-bye. Terrifying! You don't like that idea? You don't like any of this? What are you going to do about it? Not a taunt, but an honest question: what *are* you going to do about it?

You want to understand Victoria's continuing and remaining appeal—so precious, so rare, and so at risk? It's not that the city is still "cute" or "charming" (the recent and continuing rash of tombstone high-rises has put paid to that), but that the social messaging conveyed by still-orderly residential streets in the close-in neighbourhoods, and a few isolated islands Downtown (LoJo for example) suggest Victoria still offers social redemption and is not (yet) a zombie stage set like many other overtaken places. There are in Victoria still places of beauty, proportion and memory, places of comprehensible social narrative—streets, blocks, neighbourhoods—that calm the soul and that promise protection and continuity.

These places are community's physical expression: they project connection, and silently rebuke us for the wider social inheritance we've squandered or misplaced.

The message—hell, it's a shout—to our still-reasonably-healthy, still-promising city society, better equipped than most to survive (the worst of) the future, is that these are times for the hard work of community renewal. Indifference and passivity have revealed their limits and generated predictable consequences, including the tragic streetscape of the homeless. Now it's time for a movement, a new activist programme, a new blueprint for community, to reconnect the city to—to re-express the city as—the *all* of us.

The hopeful news? Again, social alchemy. Merely convening to restore community creates new community.

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

Help Reverend Al Make a Difference

With help from donors like you, Reverend Al Tysick and his team offer compassion, hope and care to the most marginalized members of our community.

Victoria Dandelion Society receives no government funding.

dandelionsociety.ca | 778.440.1471

Dandelion SOCIETY

STRUGGLING WITH LIFE?

JUNGIAN ANALYSIS is insight-oriented psychotherapy toward relief, authenticity, meaning, balance, and wholeness.

MARLENE BROUWER
Jungian Psychoanalyst, I.A.A.P.
D. Analytical Psych., C.G. Jung Institute-Zurich
www.jungianconsultant.com
Inquiries welcome: 778-679-5199

O'Malley's Greenscapes
Certified Horticulturist

GARDEN SERVICES
- pruning
- bed tending
- lawn maintenance
- what have you

Bryan O'Malley
250.419.1650

Nurdle Men on beach patrol

MALEEA ACKER

Two UVic librarians volunteering for Surfrider are leading the battle against industrial plastic on our beaches.

Daniel Brendle-Moczuk takes a small jar from his office shelf and shakes it, his eyebrows knitting together. "This is from one site, one collection, ten litres of sand." He hands me the 192 millilitres of small plastic pellets, about the size and shape of a Baby Aspirin. They are various colours of white, beige, pale yellow, and grey. They darken as they absorb contaminants from the ocean, he tells me.

Brendle-Moczuk's colleague, David Boudinot, walked into his office with a jar of the pellets in 2016. "I started going to monthly beach cleanups at Willows Beach," Boudinot tells me. A foot down, the sand was saturated. "I didn't know what they were."

The beach clean-up Boudinot attended was organized by Surfrider, an international organization started by surfers to clean up the places they love. Brendle-Moczuk soon joined in. Both are University of Victoria librarians, and their investigation into the pellets—called "nurdles," or pre-consumer plastic pellets—have led them to surprising places. Brendle-Moczuk's daughter calls him and Boudinot "Nurdle Man 1 and 2." She's picked up on their dedication to their work. Together, they are helping to illuminate an unfolding environmental disaster occurring quietly on southeast-facing beaches all over the region.

Pre-consumer plastic pellets are just that—plastic which has been produced by a refinery, but not yet made into the plastic bags, buckets, storage containers, and packaging we see in stores. The pellets are small and oval to facilitate easy transportation (imagine trying to ship, then melt, a giant plastic cube). Plastic consumer products are produced all over the world, including just across the strait, in Port Coquitlam, North Burnaby, and Annacis Island, which lies between Richmond and Surrey. Brendle-Moczuk and Boudinot couldn't figure out how the plastic pellets were arriving to Inside Passage waters on the West Coast. At first, they looked to Asia. But there's a commonality to the locations on the mainland: the Fraser River.

Brendle-Moczuk took a trip to see his in-laws and stopped by Annacis Island on his way. With a ballcap pulled down low, he shot photos of several plastics manufacturers' facilities grounds. Though they declined to give me company names, Google map lists Plasticon Plastics, ibox Packaging, Merlin Plastics Supply, and Plasti-Fab Delta as operating facilities on the island. Brendle-Moczuk's photos show train tracks (where the pellets are unloaded into trucks), yards (where pellets are shifted from truck to facility) and parking lots littered with plastic pellets. At the edges of these stretches of sidewalk are storm drains—which empty into the Fraser River.

When Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk took their research to the Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA), they denied responsibility: the pellets, CPIA said, came from Asia. But intertidal movement wouldn't push plastic pellets that far upriver, and certainly not into the canals of the island, or all the way into the storm drains. "This is an industrial solidified oil spill that's been happening for decades," says Boudinot, "and no one is doing anything about it."

Since 2016, Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk have spent countless hours researching the spills, the types of plastic the pellets are made from (both high- and low-density PolyEthylene and Polypropylene), and monitoring spill sites. Brendle-Moczuk has watched pellets disappear from parking lots after staff pressure-washed them down the drains.

Daniel Brendle-Moczuk (l) and David Boudinot

Every time he goes to Vancouver, he does research on the sites he's been keeping track of.

Boudinot spends hours each month combing beaches and sifting sand to get an idea of pellet concentration. Last fall, he spent four hours walking the beach at Goose Spit in Courtney. "This is what we do, every time we go somewhere," he says.

They look for southeast-facing beaches without a hard edge (like a sea wall or rock face) where pellets tend to gather. Esquimalt Lagoon is a prime location. Cadboro Bay, Willows Beach, any southeast facing beaches on the Gulf Islands. Strong winter storms come from this direction, pushing the pellets onto the beaches. They are keeping a map of areas where pellets have been found, which includes locations all over Vancouver Island, the mainland, Sunshine Coast, and the San Juan Islands.

It's estimated that more than 8 million tonnes of plastic are dumped into oceans every year. Over 90 percent of sea birds have plastic in their stomachs. Photos from Midway Island, in the South Pacific, show wildlife that has succumbed to plastic ingestion, literally starving albatrosses to death. By 2050, it's expected there will be more plastic than fish in the Earth's oceans. Much of this comes from post-consumer plastic (plastic which has been made into a bottle or disposable food packaging, for example) but pre-consumer plastic pellets are just as dangerous—not to mention a totally unnecessary and preventable form of pollution.

Plastic pellets absorb hydrophobic pollutants in water, becoming more contaminated the longer they float. These pellets have been found in 22 percent of marine fish, according to a 2016 *Marine Pollution Bulletin* study. Ingestion of plastics can induce hepatic stress, intra-epithelial cysts, affect blood calcium levels, and cause endocrine disruptions in animals. Studies on humans wouldn't be ethical to do, but many extrapolate the effect on animals to include humans. Bisphenol-A, one compound in plastics, has been found to increase anorexia nervosa, disrupt the endocrine system, and impact fetal development in humans. Recently, its replacement, Bisphenol-S, has been found to be just as (if not more) dangerous.

This fall, Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk made a video, in collaboration with Surfrider, on plastic pellet spills in the Fraser River (https://vimeo.com/363904334). Along with scenic shots of the West Coast, the video shows students from the 2019 Geography Sustainability Field School, who found hundreds of nurdles in just an hour of sifting. Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk are also working with law professor Calvin Sandborn to figure out how to best publicize the issue, since the plastics industry is notorious for fighting back against bad press (remember their challenge of Victoria's plastic bag ban?). They've also enlisted the help of UVic's chemistry students to analyze the pellets, and biology students to research the effects of plastic in fish. Geography cartographer Ken Josephson helped them put together their map.

The Canadian Plastics Industry Association promotes Operation Clean Sweep, an international best practices program designed to prevent plastic pellet contamination in waterways and oceans. But participation is voluntary. The Ministry of Environment states that discharge of pollution to the environment is prohibited under the *Environment Management Act*. But it has not responded to Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk's findings, other than to say it will be "looking into these concerns and determining appropriate next steps."

Last Fall, Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk sent their Surfrider video to the media. They held a media conference on Annacis Island in October. CBC and Global News turned up. Boudinot and Brendle-Moczuk recommended that industries should be required to install storm drain covers to collect pellets and prevent them from entering waterways. When Brendle-Moczuk returned to Annacis Island later that fall, he noticed that many of the work sites he had previously documented were suddenly cleaner. Some storm drains had felt filters installed (albeit not all correctly). But he and Boudinot worry this is a temporary measure, designed to ease tensions until media and public attention turns to the next story. "We're calling on the Ministry of Environment and the Province of BC to investigate these spills and monitor them, and make sure they don't happen in the first place," says Boudinot.

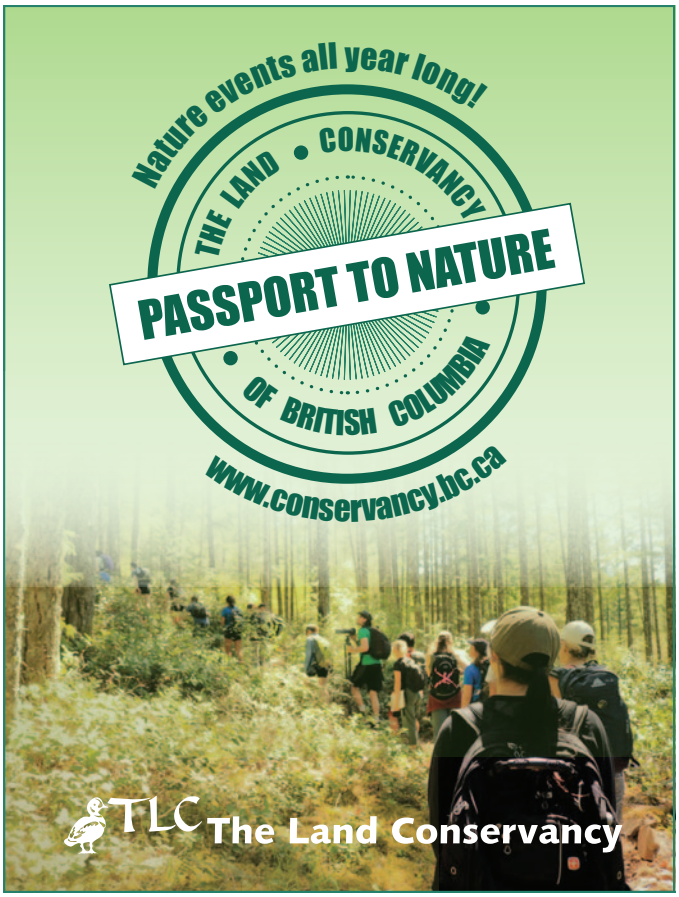
Their fears were confirmed last month. The heavy rains of late January and early February sent thousands of pellets into Annacis Island's Audley Channel. According to Surfrider, the piles of pellets were up to three centimetres deep.

They also want the public to be aware of the insidious nature of plastics production. "The oil industry is pivoting away from oil and gas for cars, and building plastic manufacturing plants instead."

Despite recent moves to reduce single-use plastics, the material is used everywhere. Brendle-Moczuk and Boudinot would like to see pellets labelled as an industrial pollutant. They encourage the public to call RAPP (Report all Poachers and Polluters) if they see a spill. They plan to liaise with First Nations and make another video about the spills happening in their traditional territories. And Boudinot has a simple solution for what to do when pellets escape. "When a spill happens, clean it up!"

Residents can call RAPP to report pellet spills or the presence of pellets on beaches or waterways at 1-877-952-7277.

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.



Vegetarianism: a respectful approach to eating

TRUDY DUIVENVOORDEN MITIC

A plant-based diet came simply and gradually—and with many rewards.

It wasn't anything specific that led me to becoming a vegetarian many years ago; in fact, I never consciously "became" a vegetarian. There was no pivotal deciding moment, no fervent, "from-this-day-forward" declaration. Those were the days when food choices were still pretty straightforward, when they had not yet been conscripted into moral, political and health-related tug-of-wars. In my case, meat just slowly faded off the plate.

Growing up on a dairy farm probably had an influence. Our farm was well run and we were blessed to have wholesome, home-grown food security—all the milk we could drink, rows of ripening vegetables in the garden, and meat from an occasional cow selected for culling.

The butchering of that cow, wide-eyed with primeval fear as she was led behind the barn on a tight halter, was a hard reality, including for my dad, who always hired someone else to get the job done. For a while afterwards, we felt a heaviness, a vague culpability in the heavy-handedness of it all, but those agitations were easily enough reconciled over plates of meatballs with gravy and mashed potatoes.

I never was a big meat-eater, and over the years I came to realize I'd never much cared for its unadorned taste, nor look. The seasonings and sauces were what made it flavoursome; the butter that braised it and enhanced the gravy; the garlic, onions and red wine that perfected stews and roasts.

It was when my own kids were blossoming into adolescents with iron-clad opinions that I proposed a non-meat dinner one day a week. I was getting dreadfully tired and uninspired in the kitchen. Meat is perishable—it can go bad in a really bad way. It's a lot of work (including clean-up) and expensive for the household on a budget. Over the years, I'd boiled our meat choices down to ground beef, chicken breasts and, on Fridays, chicken nuggets. Nobody liked ham anymore, and we'd already ditched the wieners: Even back then, there was no good reason to feed them to anyone.

It will be fun, I told them brightly. Everyone, my husband included, looked at me as if I'd suddenly sprouted a tuft of chin hairs. (I hadn't, although I'm rather familiar with them now.)

Our youngest lived at home until she'd finished university, and by then we three were mostly done with meat, having discovered the elegance and simplicity of a plant-based diet. Who knew that almost any type of winter squash, which is locally grown and storable for months, would make such a hearty and delicious pasta sauce? Who knew that lentils—grown right here on the peninsula—could be transformed into a full-bodied tourtiere? And that grilled vegetables could taste so sweet and delectable?

There are many good reasons for becoming vegetarian. The health benefits have been well established. The land-use and carbon footprints are substantially smaller. Food security is enhanced, since grains, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and legumes (dried lentils, beans and peas) can be stored for months, years even. Add fruit and vegetables from the garden or local markets, and you're all set.

Food factories have jumped on the vegetarian bandwagon, but it's worth knowing that not every new product is necessarily good food. Avoid anything that's overly processed, salted, packaged, and expensive. Many offerings try to mimic meat. You don't need them, unless you have strong cravings. Just keep using your most loved seasonings, and apply them to everything.

Recipes abound, and many have been adapted from meat-based cuisine. Once I figured that out, I started modifying my own simple recipes. If I can do it, anyone can.

A plant-based diet generates very little waste. Very little to wheel to the curb for barging over to Richmond for processing. Surely that counts for something.

Slightly off topic, but then again not, I've recently started scrutinizing and reducing our energy use in the kitchen. Now we often make two meals at once, the second one requiring just a quick reheat. If we must use the oven, we'll load it up with extras to bake and roast for later. We never have all four elements going at once—no recipe is that important.

One last thing. My food evolution did end up being about animals after all. As kids are apt to do, I filed away everything I saw back then for inevitable processing much later in life. Today I'm content that no farm animal has to die for my dinner.

I believe that eating vegetarian is eating more humbly. A little humility in the diet is never a bad thing.

And on another front, Trudy can't help wondering where we could be now if *our* $12.6 billion investment in the Trans Mountain pipeline project had been directed towards alternate energy solutions.

Supporting arts, culture and our community.

Newport Realty is the proud sponsor of Victoria Conservatory of Music's 2019 Mother's Day Garden Tour, May 11 & 12

Holly Harper

A native of Victoria, with a successful background as an entrepreneur, Holly has a thorough understanding of the local market.

She looks forward to serving you—with integrity and professionalism.

1144 Fort Street, Victoria
250-385-2033 • www.hollyharper.com
www.newportrealty.com

Newport Realty

hyalogic

NATURE'S GREATEST NATURAL HYDRATOR FOR YOUR SKIN

Pure HA Face Serum with Hyaluronic Acid provides your skin with deep, penetrating hydration, while improving your skin's tone and appearance.

LIFESTYLE NATURALLY
LIFESTYLE MARKETS
LifestyleMarkets.com

Victoria
2950 Douglas St. • 250.384.3388

Sidney
9769 Fifth St. • 250.656.2326

Cook Street Village
343 Cook St. • 250.381.5450

DEDICATED TO HEALTHY LIFESTYLES IN OUR COMMUNITY

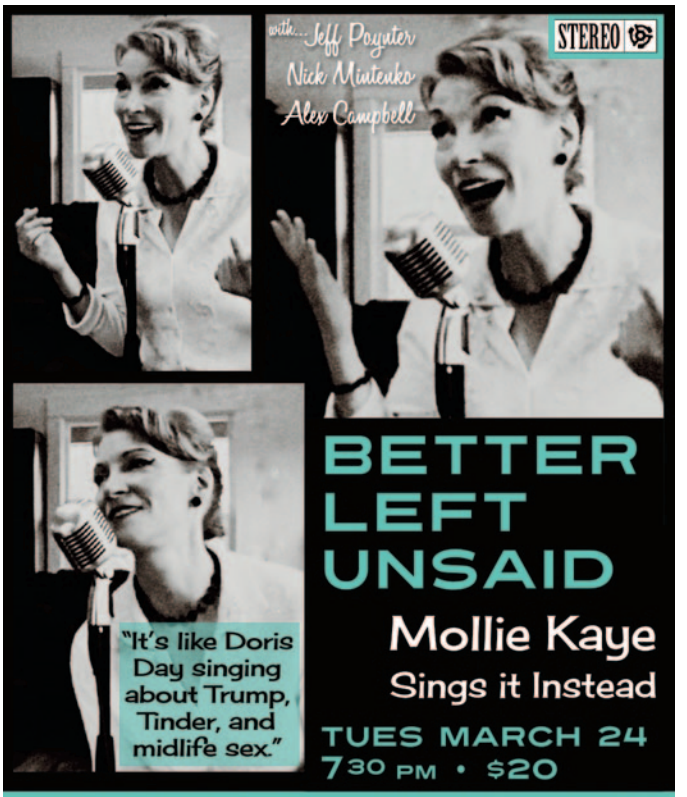
Are you looking for answers on your spiritual quest?

Accelerated class

The International Metaphysical Academy offers cutting-edge education to facilitate individuals. The down-to-earth approach encourages critical thinking and personal responsibility.

The unique 1 year study program of monthly classes begins April 11. Register now.

anneli@metaphysicalacademy.com
250.472.0909 • metaphysicalacademy.com



BETTER LEFT UNSAID

Mollie Kaye Sings it Instead

TUES MARCH 24
7:30 PM • $20

HERMANN'S JAZZ CLUB
hermannsjazz.com

DANCE VICTORIA
THE WORLD'S BEST DANCE

LEAD SPONSORS
JE Jones Emery Hargreaves Swan LLP Lawyers
CIS Cameron·Izard·Snell Chartered Professional Accountants

Ballet BC

Romeo + Juliet MEDHI WALERSKI

MARCH 13 + 14 7:30 PM
ROYAL THEATRE

BOX OFFICE: 250-386-6121
DANCEVICTORIA.COM

From $29!

Scott Fowler and Ballet BC dancers in *Romeo + Juliet*. Photo © Michael Slobodian

SEASON SPONSOR
DERMASPA
The Royal & McPherson Theatres Society
Chateau Victoria Hotel & Suites
Times Colonist
PUBLIC SECTOR
Canada
CRD Making a difference...together
British Columbia Arts Council An agency of the Province of British Columbia
British Columbia