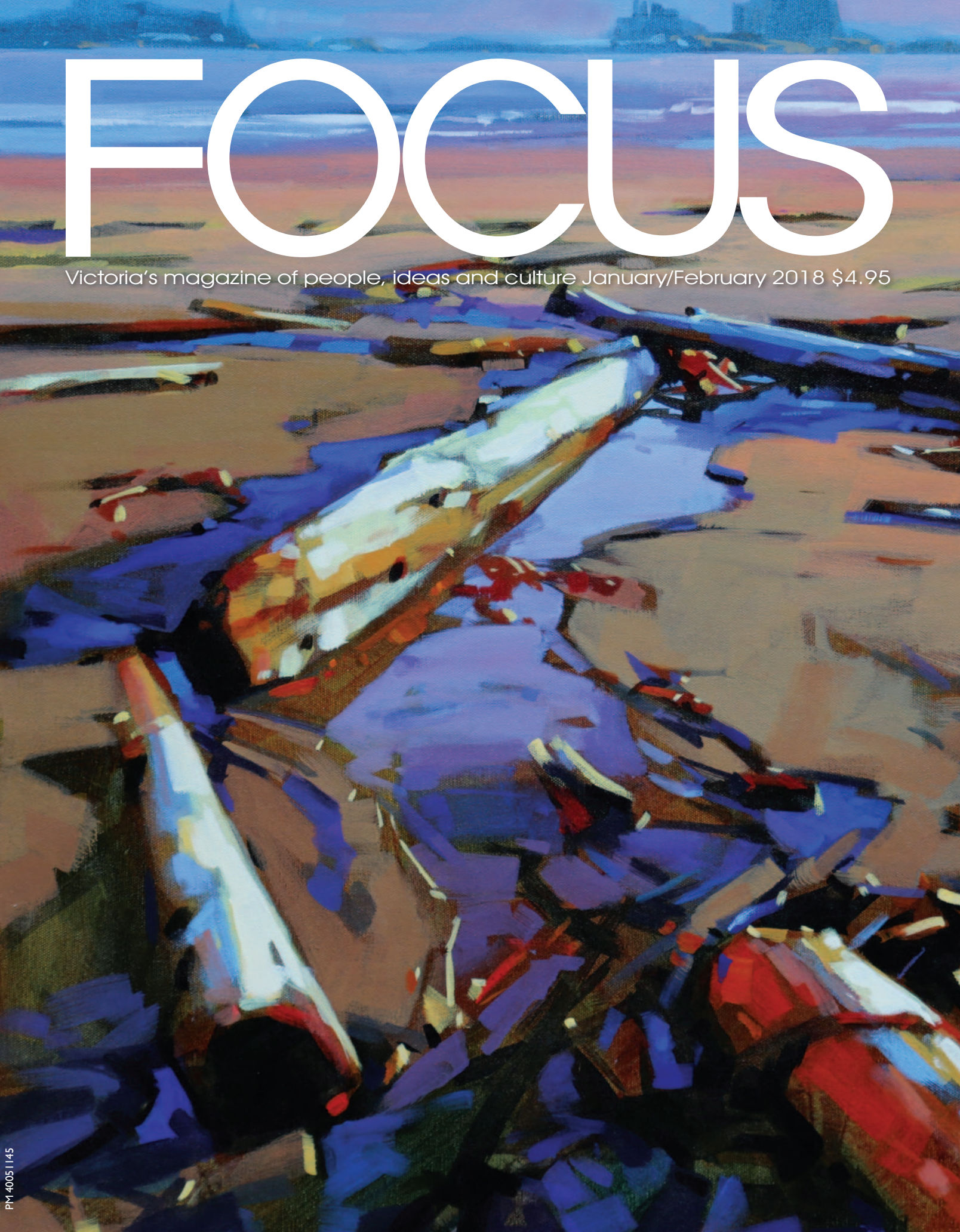
FOCUS

Victoria's magazine of people, ideas and culture January/February 2018 $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.triangleheating.com
770 Spruce Avenue • 250-370-1818

We do not remember days…
we remember moments.

Have a Momentous 2018!

Sharen Warde
Winning Service

ROYAL LEPAGE 250-592-4422

sharen@WardeSims.com • www.WardeSims.com

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**

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

professional painter

tracy martins

for free estimate call **250-519-0497**

interiors & exteriors • carried out to a high standard
residential & commercial • references

contents

January/February 2018 VOL. 30 NO. 3

4 IMMIGRANTS LIKE CRISTINA, JOEY AND C.J. ARE MAKING CANADA GREAT
We're all immigrants, but the newest amongst us make great sacrifices to keep our country strong.
Leslie Campbell

14 DESIGN FLAW HIDDEN FOR A YEAR, THEN QUICK AND DIRTY REPAIR
The latest cover-up on the $115-million project raises the question: What needs to change at Victoria City Hall?
David Broadland

20 ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE OPIOID CRISIS
Leslie McBain advocates for those struggling with addictions and the families who love them.
Leslie Campbell

24 WILL "SUNSHINE" FINALLY COME TO BC?
Exposing Big Pharma's dark influence on doctors who diagnose and prescribe.
Alan Cassels

26 ONE LESS THING TO WORRY ABOUT FOR BC GRIZZLIES
The BC government has killed the grizzly hunt. But will Conservation Officers enforce the ban?
Judith Lavoie

28 #MeToo: WHAT NEXT?
Could a victim-centred approach be a better fit in cases of sexual harassment and assault?
Mollie Kaye

30 VICTORIA'S NEW POLICY ON SHORT-TERM RENTALS
Unintended consequences of Airbnbs are leading to new measures to deal with the loss of housing stock.
Pamela Roth

32 IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS
Lynn Branson's reverent connection to her medium brings her wood carvings to life.
Aaren Madden

48 A DECOLONIZING DANCE
The Dancers of Damelahamid confront us with the richness of Indigenous art, past and present.
Robin J Miller

50 STEPHEN FEARING: EVERY SOUL'S A SAILOR
One of Canada's most acclaimed songwriters plays Victoria—his new home.
Mollie Kaye

52 ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEATRE AND MEMORY
A Belfry production looks at the grief and panic of losing one's life partner to Alzheimer's.
Monica Prendergast

54 WHALE IN THE DOOR
Author Pauline Le Bel's personal journey of losses, learning, and hope for Howe Sound.
Amy Reiswig

56 BLOOD, SWEAT AND TAVISH CAMPBELL
One man's graphic video evidence spawns new awareness of fish farming dangers—and a government review.
Briony Penn

58 PANIS ANGELICUS
Could Victoria be a civilizational lifeboat in these crazy, conflict-prone times?
Gene Miller

60 THE ART OF CONSERVATION: MARY SANSEVERINO
Photography gives this ardent naturalist an excuse to go to the wild places.
Maleea Acker

62 OLD WAYS FOR NEW DAYS
With a knack for making do, we can make ends meet and reduce our environmental footprint.
Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic

editor's letter	4
readers' views	6
talk of the town	14
palette	32
arts highlights	36
dance	48
vibe	50
curtain call	52
coastlines	54
deeper shade of green	56
urbanities	58
natural city	60
finding balance	62

ON THE COVER

"Tidal Debris Calvert Island" by Mike Svob, 24 x 24 inches, acrylic on canvas. See more of Svob's work at Peninsula Gallery: www.pengal.com/artists/mike-svob

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

Jane Hair
Private Boutique Salon
using sustainable beauty products
davines
SUSTAINABLE BEAUTY

Jane Guarnaschelli Bruton, Hair Stylist
250.588.7562
106 - 2250 Oak Bay Ave
below The Oaks
Mon - Sat 9am - 6pm (*flexible*)

Immigrants like Cristina, Joey and C.J. make Canada great

LESLIE CAMPBELL

We're all immigrants, but the newest amongst us make great sacrifices to keep our country strong.

Over the past four years my family has been blessed to have Cristina Katigbak in our life. As the live-in caregiver for my mom Jade, Cristina made it possible for Mom to remain comfortably in her home, even as she nears 90 with a condition that robs her of her mobility.

My sisters, who reside in Vancouver, and I have been able to rely heavily on Cristina, knowing she was fully capable, honest, kind and wise. Mom had gone through all sorts of health issues leading up to Cristina's arrival—I have not-so-fond memories of at least three longish stays in the hospital with additional trips to Emergency. But in the four years with Cristina, there's been a general calmness and stability for Mom, with not one hospital stay.

Cristina and Jade

Trained as a nurse in the Philippines, Cristina and her family had emigrated originally to Ireland. But then the UK changed its immigration policy in a way that denied them any hope of citizenship, despite employers who were keen to keep them. After four years there, Cristina applied to come to Canada. Well over a year's worth of bureaucratic processing ensued before she was accepted as a caregiver for my mom. Her husband and son, however, had to head back to Manila.

Canadians are ever-so-fortunate that Cristina and many other Filipinos are willing to sacrifice so much to come here as caregivers for our elderly and people with disabilities.

We are also lucky that they have usually stayed in Canada despite being parted from their own families for many years. Though they are able to apply after two years of approved, continuous employment, for permanent residency—which allows for family members to immigrate—the reality is, due to backlogs caused years ago, it's often many more years before they can be reunited. It took "only" two additional years in Cristina's case, but cases of six or more years are not uncommon, resulting in arduously long marital separations and children growing up without their moms. Frustratingly, there seems no way of knowing where one's application for permanent residency is among the piles that must occupy officials' desks.

Thankfully, in December, Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen promised to process 17,000 backlogged permanent residency applications from live-in caregivers in 2018—leaving another 19,000 for the two subsequent years.

Despite such discouraging wait times and other obstacles, the Philippines—the source of so many caregivers—is Canada's fastest growing subgroup of immigrants and top source of new permanent residents. In the last census, their population here stood at 837,130, which is about 2.4 percent of Canada's population.

Cristina supported her family financially through her work with us. Once she had her "open work permit" after two years with my mom, she took another job on the weekends. Like so many other Filipinos I've met over years of care for both my mom and father-in-law Bob Broadland, working hard seems part of her nature.

Last summer, after what at the time seemed interminable delays, Cristina got her permanent residency, and after another two months her family was approved and in Victoria. Within a few weeks of arrival, both husband Joey and son C.J. had jobs—in construction and cleaning services respectively. I have no doubt they are valued by their employers for their conscientiousness and intelligence.

Despite her family living here in an apartment, not to mention her ability to get a higher-paying job elsewhere, Cristina committed to staying with Mom till December 20th.

There were tears all round on Cristina's final day of work with us. We wish her and her family the very best, and plan to keep her in our lives if at all possible. She and Mom have developed a strong bond that will be impossible to replace.

Cristina is a quiet, uncomplaining person, but over the years I was able to appreciate what an immense sacrifice she and her family had made. In the hopes of a better future, mostly for their son, they had agreed to live apart—for years. "Thank God for Skype," she'd often say.

And I'd think, *thank God for Cristina*—and for the immigration program that made it possible.

CRISTINA CAME TO US UNDER what was known as the "federal live-in care program." The government, recognizing there were not enough Canadians willing to be full-time nannies or caregivers, allowed families like mine—after jumping through hoops that usually required help from an immigration consultant—to employ a foreign resident full-time, paying at least minimum wage. After two years of approved live-in work, they became eligible to *apply* for permanent residency and could work wherever they wanted. With our aging populations, seniors facilities and home support agencies were—and remain—happy to employ them.

An in-home care "pathway" to residency is still available, but the rules have changed considerably in the past few years. Recall the 2014 eruption of indignation about McDonald's hiring foreign workers over local Canadians. That led Stephen Harper's Conservative government to make hasty changes which swamped the live-in program in its wake. Going forward, caregivers were lumped into a tightened-up Temporary Foreign Worker program. Wages are determined so differently now (so as not to undercut Canadian citizens) that the minimum one must pay a foreign caregiver in the Victoria area is $18.93 per hour. The wage is the median paid in this geographical area for "similar" work, all determined by a head-spinningly obscure process. On the Lower Mainland, the wage is $16 per hour. It was already a stretch for most families to employ someone full-time, so no doubt the new minimums are leading more frail seniors—my mom among them—to head to a publically-funded nursing home. Obviously, this will cost taxpayers more.

OUR GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY LEADERS understand that for Canada to thrive economically we absolutely require immigrants.

DESPITE SUCH MADDENING IMPERFECTIONS in Canada's immigration system, a scan of the headlines coming out of the US leaves me feeling somewhat smug about Canada's approach and attitudes about immigration. The US's xenophobic travel bans, wall-building fantasies, round-ups of "illegals" and its president's utterances on the subject all seem designed to terrorize immigrants.

When President Trump praised Canada's merit-based system as worthy of emulation, he seemed to be confused, apparently believing that our system would help him *reduce* immigration to the US.

Yet our government and industry leaders understand that for Canada to thrive economically we absolutely require immigrants—and more of them, given declining birth rates and an aging population.

Since the 1960s—when the federal government removed race, colour, and nationality as considerations—Canadian immigration policy has aimed at being responsive to the nation's labour force needs. This is done through a point system in which work skills, education levels, language ability, and family connections are the main considerations in determining about 60 percent of Canada's annual 300,000 immigrants.

On November 1, 2017, the Canadian government announced its "multi-year immigration plan" that aims to bring 980,000 permanent residents in over the next three years. The economic (point-based) class will continue to account for the majority (58 percent) of all admissions; the family class will account for 28 percent; and 14 percent will be admitted under the humanitarian and refugee categories.

Many would like to see even more immigrants welcomed here. A new report from the Conference Board of Canada states: "If Canada were to welcome 450,000 immigrants per year by 2025, real GDP would grow by an average of 2.05 percent annually between 2017-2040. This is 0.20 percentage points higher than the estimated 1.85 percent growth currently forecast."

But even at 300,000 immigrants per year, Canada "boasts one of the highest per-capita immigration rates in the world, about three times higher than the United States," writes author Jonathan Tepperman in a recent *New York Times* article. Calling our approach "radically rational," Tepperman notes: "Canada's foreign-born population is more educated than that of any other country on Earth. Immigrants to Canada work harder, create more businesses and typically use fewer welfare dollars than do their native-born compatriots."

While there's much more to ponder and debate on the subject of immigration policy, I am confident that, like Cristina and her family, the vast majority of immigrants enrich our communities and nation both economically and culturally—as workers, tax payers, citizens, consumers, and entrepreneurs.

My family feels proud to have played a role in Cristina's journey towards Canadian citizenship—not so much because we helped Cristina. We actually helped *make Canada great*, period.

Like all Canadians, with the exception of First Nations peoples, Leslie Campbell is only a generation or so away from ancestors who immigrated to Canada, in my case Scottish economic migrants.

Focus presents: Iyengar Yoga Centre

ADVERTISEMENT

Biggest misconception about yoga…

At the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, your first class is free

Do you want to increase your flexibility? The biggest misconception about yoga is that you must be naturally flexible to do it. No matter how stiff or flexible you are, yoga will help maintain and improve flexibility, increase range of motion and strengthen muscles.

Shirley Daventry French, now in her mid-80s and founding member of the Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria, asserts that: "Yoga is for all of us! No one is too old, too young or too stiff."

What can Iyengar Yoga offer you? Whether you are a first-time student or regularly attend classes, Iyengar yoga is fun and challenging. "We teach a progression of poses to boost mobility, stability, strength and stamina. Iyengar yoga teachers are well trained with a well-developed eye," says Wendy Boyer, general manager and teacher at the Iyengar Yoga Centre. "See for yourself, try us out. Your first class is free!"

BKS Iyengar said, "The effects of yoga practice are beauty, strength, clarity of speech, calmness of the nerves, increase in digestive powers and a happy disposition." The yoga master lived in Pune, India, practising daily until his death at the age of 95, three years ago. Victoria Iyengar teachers still travel regularly to Pune to study at the Iyengar Institute.

The Iyengar Yoga Centre offers 45 classes a week for every age and every body. Classes include Levels 1-4; free Pre/Post Natal, Family and Teen classes; 50+; Remedial; Transition; and Restorative. Check the website for details on the regular classes offered seven days a week.

The Iyengar Centre offers 20 percent off introductory classes in the new year. Also consider a January short workshop called "How to Practice" on January 13th from 1-3pm, with Leslie Hogya. Looking for a weekend workshop? Consider "Heart of Yoga" with Ann Kilbertus on Saturday and Sunday, January 27th and 28th. Please check the website for details.

At Iyengar Yoga Centre you can feel confident you'll be in good hands. The Centre has 22 well-trained teachers and offers one of the most comprehensive teacher training programs in North America. It is a hub for teachers from across the province, and throughout Canada, to train and to upgrade their skills. Certificates issued by the Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada are respected and accepted worldwide.

Iyengar Yoga Centre of Victoria
202-919 Fort Street (above the Blue Fox Café)
250-386-9642 • www.iyengaryogacentre.ca

The orca famine and Puget Sound's poisoned rivers

David Broadland's article has far-reaching outcomes, as many have been pointing fingers at Canadians for the decline of the Southern Resident Killer Whales, and this article shows that we all have to start saving our chinook stocks to help these mammals. The article is well written and well researched. I have sent this link to DFO Canada and to our sport fish community. We have chinook net pens in place and are seeking more fry from DFO to try to increase chinook available to the SRKW. For information on this net pen project, please go to South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition (www.anglerscoalition.com) or call their president.

Thomas Cole
Sport Fish Advisory Board, Victoria

Mr. Broadland's excellent article details the evidence related to urban pollution in Puget Sound's estuaries and identifies another important factor that is increasing the ecological resistance our SRKW and salmon are facing.

Another issue of major concern is the increased competition SRKW's are facing due to the more than 10 percent per year increase in harbour seal and California sea lion populations since the enactment of the *Marine Mammal Protection Act* in 1972. California sea lion populations that once numbered under 10,000 have now increased to over 300,000.

According to NOAA, in 1975 pinnipeds including orca consumed 5 million chinook salmon coastwide(California to Alaska). By 2015 the numbers rose to an estimated 31.5 million fish. By contrast, recreational and commercial fisheries harvested 3.6 million chinook salmon in 1975. That declined to 2.1 million fish by 2015. This speaks volumes about our disappearing salmon.

In the Salish Sea, harbour seals consumed 68 metric tons of chinook salmon in 1970. By 2015 they were consuming 625 mt, double the amount consumed by SRKW in the same location and 6 times the volume caught by commercial and recreational fishermen.

Another recent study by The Pacific Salmon Foundation estimates that 35 percent of the juvenile coho originating from streams within Georgia Strait are predated by harbour seals.

In 2015 NOAA estimated that 43 percent of the adult chinook salmon returning to the Columbia River were predated by sea lions below the Bonneville Dam.

The lack of abundant forage fish, such as herring impacted by over a century of industrial fishing, is cited as a major factor in the increased predation of juvenile and adult salmon by harbour seals and sea lions. In the ultimate negative feedback loop, the lack of forage fish also impacts the ocean survival of chinook and coho salmon.

Allan Crow

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 © 2018. 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

Woodwynn Farms and the opioid crisis

I read the article "Woodwynn Farms and the Opioid Crisis" (November 2017) with interest and also a growing sense of frustration for the hoops and delays that Richard Leblanc and the Creating Homefulness Society are having to endure thanks to Central Saanich Council.

Something prompted me to look up the definition of a bureaucrat. According to the online definition, a bureaucrat is: "An official in a government department, in particular one perceived as being concerned with procedural correctness at the expense of people's needs."

Enough said.

Lia Fraser

The excellent article by Pamela Roth on the Woodwynn Farm operation was followed by the recent decision of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to refuse the application for a non-farm use on the Woodwynn Farm property in Central Saanich. That decision should be deeply disappointing to anyone concerned about local agriculture and the social fabric of the Greater Victoria region. The property, run by the Creating Homefulness Society, offers a therapeutic program of training and rehabilitation for individuals struggling with addictions, homelessness and/or mental health challenges.

The non-farm use application was to provide on-site housing for program participants on 0.8 hectares (approximately 1 percent) of the property. In making its decision the ALC concluded, "while the Executive Committee recognizes the social benefits of the proposal, it does not outweigh the priority given to agriculture." The basis for the decision also referenced the ALC mandate regarding their role in (a) preservation of agricultural land, and (b) encouraging farming on agricultural land.

In refusing the application, I believe the ALC has made a fundamental misinterpretation of their mandate. While the social benefit is the driving force behind the farm, the commission was asked to rule specifically on a non-farm use that is a central component of a business model for operation of a labour-intensive, integrated, mixed-farming operation.

The allowance of housing on 0.8 hectares (1 percent) of the farm land base would have provided direct and effective support to the participant workers, enhanced the efficiency of the work force in the agricultural operation, and significantly reduced overhead costs for off-site housing and transportation.

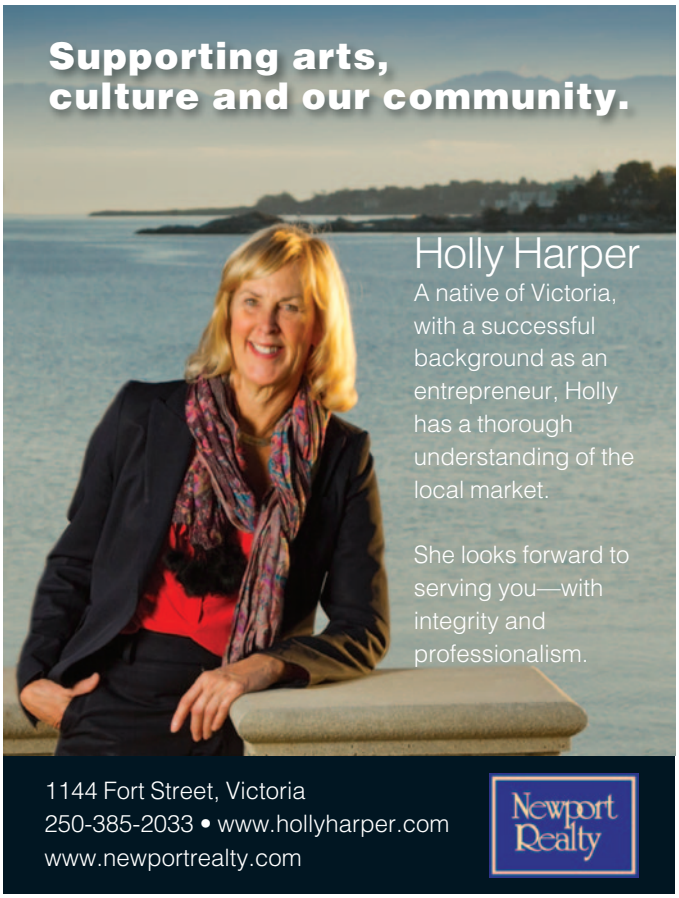
To suggest that this "loss" of agricultural land is a significant concern also demonstrates an institutional blindness to the rampant speculation in agricultural land that is increasing costs, alienating productive land and decreasing agricultural output throughout the province—particularly in the southwest region.

Prior to the current ownership by the Creating Homefulness Society, this farm had not been managed to its agricultural potential. The increased productivity of the land as a consequence of housing the on-site labour force is likely to be orders of magnitude greater than the lost productivity from 0.8 hectares of hay land.

The executive committee of the ALC appears to have been unable or unwilling to evaluate an atypical agricultural business model for high-value mixed-farm production that is predicated on a dedicated

Aurea
FASHION BOUTIQUE &
ESSENTIAL LUXURIES

614 Johnson Street • 250.381.6260 • www.aureagems.com



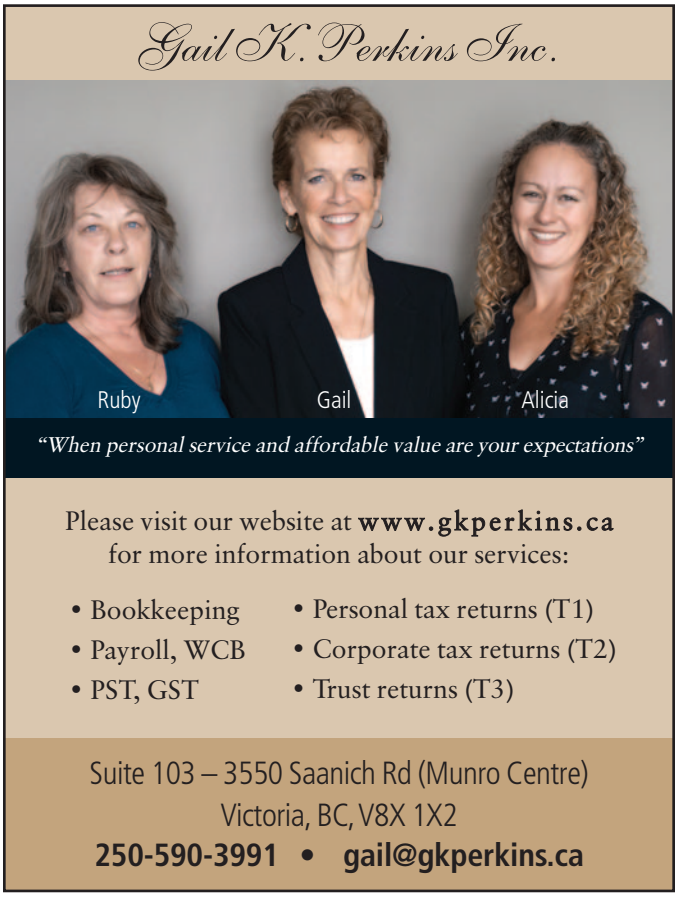


Photo by Gary Utley

on-site labour force. Productivity enhancements to date have demonstrated the potential for the farm to become an important contributor to the District agricultural community—a social benefit directly linked to its agricultural purpose and part of a program that should be facilitated and encouraged by any citizen interested in the survival of local agriculture and healthy communities.

Brian Holl

Pamela Roth's article has turned out to be very timely. Since that was published, Woodwynn has been hit by two more roadblocks to its success: The ALC denied the farm's request to use one percent of its land to house its client workers, and Central Saanich has slapped the minimal existing residential facilities with eviction notices, effective immediately.

Leaving aside for the moment the small-minded NIMBY mindset of Central Saanich council and residents, the attitude of the ALC escapes me.

Recently, along with their denial to Woodwynn, they have allowed commercial interests to take over two large parcels of ALR land for shopping centres in North Saanich, and an industrial marijuana grower to build greenhouses over prime land in Central Saanich. These lands that were supposed to be under ALC care for agricultural purposes are all to be covered over by large commercial, non-food interests.

Yet Woodwynn, a successfully operating farm, is denied permission to house the people who could work to make the farm even more productive and in the process, create better lives for themselves.

I would love to see one of your great investigative journalists give us a detailed report on the workings of the ALC and why it finds it acceptable to make variances for deep-pocket commercialism and not for a real farm, working to help real people.

Ann Reiswig

First things first: making every vote count

Why should I care if the voting system changes in British Columbia?

I feel I should care because our votes are one of the only ways we can influence important decisions that have to be made collectively.

I care because until we have a fair voting system, all voices will not be represented in government, and the complex problems we face require input from all perspectives.

As well, a voting system that accurately represents the votes cast is the foundation of a functional democracy and a necessary first step in dealing with the challenges we face in this province.

I urge you to consider why you should care.

Dave Carter

While I admire *Focus*' passion for investigative journalism, I abhor its failure to provide even a semblance of balance to the issues it champions. Last month's lengthy interview with Terry Dance-Bennink is a case in point.

I have heard Terry Dance-Bennink present at multiple community meetings. I would agree that she is exceptionally knowledgeable and committed to the cause of electoral reform. She has devoted an enormous amount of time to this endeavour and is sincere in her belief that our current system is in need of reform. She is an excellent spokesperson for Fair Vote Canada, and can be convincing in her arguments. She deserves respect and thanks for her efforts.

Her view is that we must change our current voting system because it is undemocratic, since not everyone's vote counts. It discourages voter turnout. Elected governments are invalid since so many votes

are wasted. Only some form of proportional system is the remedy. Let's have a referendum and ask the people what they think.

Any reasonable person would agree. Let the people be heard. Hold a referendum and offer people a clear choice: our current system or a clearly articulated alternative.

Oh no, says Dance-Bennink. We can't do that. "The [referendum] question dictates the outcome—it's that important. Our research shows that referendums that force citizens to choose between first-past-the-post and a proportional system have nearly all failed."

Instead, she favours a "generic" question without offering any details about what the alternative system would look like. No mention of how large individual electoral districts might be, no mention of how many candidates might run or be elected, no mention about how the votes might be counted, no mention of what percentage of the votes a successful candidate might need to actually be elected, no indication that some members might be appointed by political parties rather than elected by voters at large. In short, let's provide no information at all. Let's just vote on something different, fairer and more democratic. Tune in after the referendum and we'll tell you what you bought.

The reality is that the majority of voters favoured change in the 2005 referendum only because the question was generic and they were buying a pig in a poke. Over 60 percent rejected change in the 2009 referendum because they more clearly understood how the proposed Single Transferrable Vote (STV) would actually work. They knew because the government of the day provided funding for both sides to articulate the pros and cons of the two choices being considered. Voters were also informed by the Electoral Boundaries Commission about how people would actually be represented under STV, while the Electoral Reform Referendum Office outlined the complexity involved in the counting of ballots. The very information that Terry Dance-Bennink would withhold this time around.

Under STV, current ridings would have disappeared, to be replaced by large geographic districts that would elect from two to seven parliamentarians from a list of 10 to 30 candidates, depending on the size of the riding. Multiple MLAs would represent a vast number of constituents in sprawling electoral districts, resulting in diminished accountability. Far from being democratic, successful candidates could be elected with as few as 12.5 percent of the votes, using a formula that divided the number of ballots in an electoral district by the number of MLAs who would represent it.

Under STV, Victoria would have had seven parliamentarians elected and been the largest district in BC, encompassing Victoria, Port Renfrew, Jordan, Galiano Island, Salt Spring Island, Greater Victoria, North Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, Metchosin, and the Highlands. Local representation would have been lost.

Voters found STV too complex. It required three pages of diagrams, formulae and mathematical calculations to explain how ballots were to be counted using electoral quotas, transfer values, and "exhausted ballots."

Ms Dance-Bennink's view is that "We want to avoid what happened in 2009 when the 'no' side used their $500,000 to pay for fear-mongering ads, while the 'yes' side organized at a grassroots level."

So the die is cast. Anything said in opposition to proportional representation is fear mongering. Only the yes side is honourable and on the side of the angels. Those favouring first-past-the-post, a system that is still used by a third of the countries of the world, and has served Canada so well for over 150 years, are Democracy Deniers.

I attended numerous "grass roots" public meetings hosted by Fair Vote Canada and other proponents of STV in the months leading up to the 2009 referendum and also more recent public meetings related to

BIRKENSTOCK®

Less is more!

Clean and understated appearance. Classic wool felt winter slipper or comfy shoe.

"The key to a wonderful life is to never stop wandering into wonder."

— *Suzy Kassem*

NOMAD

FOOTWEAR

1205 Government St // Next to New Balance Victoria

778 265 0650 // nomadfootwear.ca

the federal government's electoral reform consultation. Most of the large crowds in attendance were passionately in favour of reform. It was like attending church, with everyone singing from the same hymn book.

Maybe this time around, the "yes" side should spend a little more time and money communicating with the agnostics and others in the general population. But before they begin, my advice would be to be clear on the alternative they want to propose and be prepared to convince me and others why we should vote for it. Anything less would be undemocratic.

John Amon

Editor's Note: Ms Dance-Bennink encouraged readers to get informed and participate. She also suggested, beyond a "generic" question, the possibility of a ranked ballot, allowing citizens to choose among various types of proportional systems, as was done recently in PEI. She urged readers to look at the information on the BC government website (www.engage.gov.bc.ca/howwevote). There citizens can read about different systems' weaknesses and strengths and even see sample ballots.

The government has not decided on the referendum question and is asking citizens to weigh in on that and related subjects until February 28, 2018, after which it will deliberate and announce details towards the fall referendum. The survey takes only a few minutes. *Focus* will be providing more coverage on electoral reform in future editions before the referendum.

Caution…history ahead

Gene Miller's comments, as always, are immeasurably insightful. "Mr. Rantagious" is admirable, entertaining and serves to engender a certain civic conscience.

In particular reference to "Caution…History Ahead," I am moved to ask Gene to wave his magic wand, and tell us how it would look. Go ahead and knock yourself out with a strategic plan, an economic feasibility plan. Check that, forget the economic feasibility. Use play money raised by all the wealthy Victorians who stand behind their civic duty. Dream up a no-holds-barred approach to wake up from our dream of separateness and get this thing done, ok? Could that be a useful and entertaining piece of journalism? I would love to read it and am grateful (in advance) for the effort.

Michael Flynn

Did CRD staff commit fraud?

David Broadland is absolutely correct. The fact that the enhanced sewage treatment juggernaut rolls on with no regional opposition is the real crime here.

This is especially true when you consider the political sea change since the senior governments of (BC Liberal) Gordon Campbell and (Conservative) Stephen Harper forced the Capital Region into an unnecessary and costly enhanced sewage treatment project. Now, BC Liberals have been relegated to official opposition and the Capital Region's own John Horgan is premier of a New Democratic government full of South Island ministers.

Meanwhile, Justin Trudeau, who campaigned in 2012 on the need for "science-based decision-making," is now Prime Minister. It's profoundly disappointing that neither have moved to re-examine the need for enhanced treatment ordered by the two former governments.

Perhaps even more disappointing, though, in this new political landscape, is the inaction of the Green Party leader Andrew Weaver, a star scientist who built a career on the impact of greenhouse gasses on climate change. Besides hijacking public spending, enhanced sewage treatment will needlessly increase CO_2 emissions during its construction and ensuing operation. But rather than using his new-found power and influence to lobby for transit improvements over enhanced sewage treatment, Mr Weaver instead tables a ride-sharing bill that does little for daily commuters but benefits American ride-sharing giants like Uber and Lyft.

BC Hydro's Site C project was the subject of an independent review and so, too, should there be a review of the requirement for enhanced sewage treatment in the Capital Region.

The vast amount of public funds required for this unnecessary project should instead be applied to a regional-based rail transit system. Doing so would not only benefit the region by reducing commuting time and enhancing livability, but help the global environment as well by contributing to greenhouse gas reduction.

Dave Nonen

Sustainability goals; carbon thoughts

The juxtaposition of reading *Focus* while resisting the blandishments of the Black Friday-Cyber Monday long weekend caused me to reflect on life. Projects like Site C and LNG and pipelines are not the cause of the "problem"—consumerism is.

Therefore: Boycott all big box stores (and Langford) and shop at thrift stores and independently-owned "high street" stores. Ensure sales taxes are paid on all online shopping purchases. Mandate a one car (not SUV) per family policy. Double the price of gasoline, and don't drive your kids to school. Media should highlight people living within their means rather than $100,000 kitchens and expensive 6,000 square-feet HGTV renos, even though the $20,000 table may be recycled, live-edge, old-growth fir. Boycott coffee shops and fast food joints which use paper or plastic cups and utensils and horrible-tasting wooden stir sticks. Eliminate the sale of coffee pods and other single-serve contraptions. Replace powered landscaping machinery with manual equivalents and shame neighbours who use noisy leaf blowers. Wash dishes by hand and eliminate most "labour-saving" small electrical appliances. Turn lights off when you leave the room. Don't eat salmon—save them for the orcas.

The list could go on. Doing with less, slowing down, changing the post-WWII consumerism lifestyle, will cause some dislocation but the world will definitely appreciate your efforts.

Tony Beckett

Barbara Julian's letter in the last edition raises such a crucial issue: population explosion. As she points out, other environmental issues will continue as long as we ignore the reality that Planet Earth can not begin to adequately support 7.6 billion people.

Other old people will remember as I do that in the late '60s and early '70s, population explosion was a hot topic. Awareness and concerns were amplified. But then this vital issue lost its trendiness and disappeared from public radar.

Another environmental issue that hardly anyone wants to talk, write, or hear about is air travel. We rinse our tin cans, re-use wrapping paper, and righteously eschew aerosol cans and styrofoam, but we do *not* want to take an honest look at the price our world pays for excessive globetrotting by air. The only person I've ever known to address this topic full on, with an honest acknowledgement of his own excesses, is David Suzuki.

You clearly have a talent for sniffing out brave and brilliant local writers, so perhaps you can find someone to take on one or both of these topics.

Focus just keeps getting better and better.

Barbara Bambiger

Mayor Helps 1.5 percent solution

Kudos to Mayor Helps on her invention of that thing she is calling "The Initial Allocation." In case you haven't heard about it, it's a new way of thinking that could save the planet. Cost overruns will no long occur. Case in point: the City's bicycle lanes.

In "Mayor Helps 1.5 percent solution," David Broadland brazenly claimed: "At the cost per kilometre of the Pandora corridor, the 5.3-kilometre-long Phase 1 would cost about $16 million," not the $7.75 million estimated by the City.

Broadland seemed to think the numbers in costs are somehow related by arithmetic, like: 1 + 1 = 2. That's crazy old thinking, and people rightfully wrote in and set him straight.

Transportation expert Todd Litman reflected the new illogic expertly when he explained, "By extrapolating the Pandora bike lane cost to other Downtown arterials, Broadland estimates that Victoria's cycling program will cost $16 million, which is almost certainly an exaggeration since the first project is always more costly than those that follow."

It was inspiring to read that arithmetic and logic are finally being held in proper contempt by experts.

Regrettably, the *Times Colonist's* Bill Cleverley attempted to retake the field for logical thinking with his overly numerical December report that City staff now estimate first-phase costs will be $14.5 million. Thankfully, he quoted Mayor Helps, who explained to him how that $14.5 million is really the same as the City's original estimate of $7.75 million: "The $7.75 million wasn't a budget, it was money that was allocated initially."

Just like that, the progressive illogics had recaptured the cost battlefield, the brave mayor counter-attacking across mode shares with one hand on the handlebar of her white bicycle, the other clutching her bright green sword emblazoned with the words: *The Initial Allocation.*

Just so you backward cyclephobes know, those three words should always be spoken in a hushed, reverential tone.

Mayor Helps and her councillors can now just skip all the hard arithmetic of estimating and rush onward to an "Initial Allocation." When that money is spent and the project isn't finished, council can then add another "Initial Allocation," and so on, until the final Initial Allocation is allocated. That way, no project will ever cost more than The Initial Allocation.

Hallelujah, we are saved!

Tony Sinclair

Pedestrians need protection from "cyclepaths"

The new bicycle lanes that are being introduced in Victoria are never going to make a significant contribution to reducing the volume of commuter traffic arriving in or leaving the city by automobile or transit at the beginning or towards the end of a typical workday. Indeed, to use Mayor Helps' vocabulary, they are going to sabotage that effort. They are already increasing congestion, air pollution, and fossil fuel consumption while making it more difficult, dangerous and time consuming for transit, emergency and heavy delivery vehicles that keep our city alive and working to get from A to B in a timely fashion. The mayor and council are not going to get value for taxpayers' money from an initial expenditure of $14.5 million dollars for a total of a mere 5.4 kilometres of protected bicycle lanes, with further expenditures to follow.

The bicycle is the quintessential single-occupancy vehicle and it is a short-haul, fair-weather friend that the vast majority of commuters living in surrounding municipalities will never be able to rely on if they must travel significant distances back and forth to work in Victoria in all weather and seasons. Mayor Helps has apparently and belatedly noticed that riding a bicycle in cold and inclement weather is often not pleasant and sometimes even dangerous. This is something Mayor Helps and council would have known from the beginning if they had looked impartially at the evidence rather than cherry-picking from impressionistic and scientifically unreliable reports in order to advance the interests of a well-organized but myopic bicycle lobby and a relatively small group of well-heeled Victorians, who having bought, rented or inherited expensive homes near their workplaces, can cycle the short distances to their work or play places and imagine that they are doing something significant to address our local transportation and environmental problems.

Having looked at the best available evidence, David Broadland, writing in recent issues of *Focus* magazine (July/August and September/October, 2017) concludes that Mayor Helps and the cycling caucus on council have not made a convincing case that large numbers of commuters outside the city centre will be able to significantly reduce their dependence on the automobile in the foreseeable future (though it is true that the internal combustion engine will soon go the way of the dodo). For this service to the community, Broadland has been unfairly criticized rather than praised.

It may not have occurred to Mayor Helps and her council, but walking, not cycling, is the most flexible and economical way of getting around town. I dare say I cover more ground on foot in Victoria during the day than Mayor Helps does on her bicycle. Moreover, I do not have to babysit my mode of transportation or, alternatively, to worry constantly about it being either stolen or sabotaged while it is parked in a public place. I am neither young nor especially fit but I can walk quickly and comfortably from my home in Vic West to destinations in James Bay, Fairfield, the Cook Street and Oak Bay Villages or the Esquimalt town centre area. My mode of transportation, as opposed to Helps', has not cost the taxpayers/citizens of the City of Victoria millions of dollars to make me marginally safer—though I do hope that the safety of pedestrians will be more of a priority for future councils.

Over the past 2.5 decades, as I have walked on the sidewalks, walkways and crosswalks of Victoria, I have observed a number of close calls or have myself been involved in a number of minor collisions involving reckless cyclists, operating with depraved indifference with regard to pedestrians of all ages, from toddlers to seniors.

As a pedestrian in Victoria, I have been frightened far more often by cyclists than by drivers. Travelling silently, cyclists often approach pedestrians from behind at speeds exceeding 30 kilometres/hour, which is greater than the legal limit for motorized vehicles in many parts of Victoria. Furthermore, cyclists are far more prone than motorists to sail through crosswalks, red lights and stop signs, or to disregard traffic laws. Though cyclists do endeavour not to miscalculate and so become traffic statistics, they often ride not just on our streets but on our sidewalks and walkways where they do not show similar restraint, perhaps because running into soft human flesh does not have the same implications as running into metal-bodied vehicles. Typically, cyclists do not slow down or deign to indicate with sufficient volume that they are about to pass pedestrians on one side or the other of a walkway or sidewalk. They count on adults, children and pets on leashes never to move unexpectedly so much as a step to the left or right.

I can understand if cyclists sometimes feel as if they are engaged in a war with the automobile, but I do wonder why cyclists treat pedestrians as nothing more than potential collateral damage. It's a pity it has never occurred to our mayor that Victoria's pedestrians might be in need of greater protection from marauding "cyclepaths."

Council's quixotic, tunnel-visioned detour into the promotion of cycling as an unrealistic panacea is gobbling up time, resources and grey matter that could have been devoted to finding real solutions to the transportation and affordable housing crises facing those who reside and/or work in Victoria and its surrounding communities. Helps and her coterie of relatively young, narcissistic, self-styled progressive council members are entirely indifferent to the plight of waged workers, who tend to live in the suburbs simply because buying or renting a home in Victoria has become prohibitively expensive. In many cases, they must drive rather than cycle into Victoria from a considerable distance, given that they have had to settle for relatively low income, service sector jobs, which tend to be more plentiful in Victoria proper. Due to the failure of leadership on the part of Victoria's City council and other levels of government, these citizens cannot count on either speedy, comfortable, timely and affordable mass transit to get to work or, better still, adequate, attractive and affordable housing within Victoria that would make driving to work unnecessary. The relatively cheap labour these workers provide allows affluent Victorians, including the mayor and council, to continue to pay less for many of the services provided to them both inside and outside their homes.

Since the City of Victoria council has too often failed to show leadership in the above areas, we are indeed fortunate in being able to turn to *Focus* magazine and, for example, to Leslie Campbell's article in the July/August 2017 edition, "Take down a parking lot and put up a paradise" for inspiration, leadership and direction with regard to finding outside-the-box, innovative ways to build more affordable and attractive housing in Victoria, and in the process, to reduce vehicle traffic entering and exiting Victoria on the typical workday.

The best the council of our provincial capital seems capable of is to act as if they represent just one more municipality in the area, and thus to narrow the capital's major roads and to add protected bicycle lanes, thus slowing public transit vehicles to a veritable crawl and increasing our reliance on the automobile, which should have been avoided at all costs. Designated lanes for transit vehicles, and more affordable housing, should have been the first priorities, not bicycle lanes.

John R Bell

Send letters to focusedit@shaw.ca
or comment online at www.focusonvictoria.ca

ADVERTISEMENT

A holistic approach to the beauty of your teeth

Dr. Deanna Geddo is well recognized for her holistic approach to dentistry, one that takes into account the biological aspects of a person, along with their values and spiritual, emotional, and psychological facets. She has helped many patients overcome their fears around dental work.

But some may not be aware of her aesthetic dental practice. Here too she brings a holistic approach. Indeed, she sees the pursuit of beauty as a devotional or spiritual practice. Aesthetic dentistry, in her hands, is a healing art, allowing each of us to discover and express our inner or essential beauty.

Too often, our images or attitudes towards beauty are influenced by all images of celebrities in the media. But, says Dr. Geddo, "It is dangerous to apply such outward standards to ourselves. Besides, the standards are always changing."

Instead Dr. Geddo works to help people pursue their inner beauty. She sees it as a completion of the journey we begin when we are born, a time when our mouth is accepted as central to our being: we explore with it and experience the world through it. Over time, this authenticity is dampened. We become embarrassed by our smile, or uncomfortable—clenching our jaws, wearing down our teeth. We can no longer simply relax and enjoy smiling freely.

"Just as a beautiful painting or musical composition can give us a glimpse of absolute truth and harmony, carrying our soul to a place of grace where we can experience the divinity of our being, so too can developing our own essential beauty."

To complete our personal healing journey, we need to do what many call spiritual or psychological work. But it has a physical expression as well, notes Dr. Geddo, who has studied yoga and meditation for decades. She points to those with highly developed spiritual practices like monks whose ablutions—rituals around bathing, grooming and purification—help them live a life aligned with spirit.

"This is the wider context that inspires me in my dental practice," says Dr. Geddo. "It is not vanity to become the beauty one feels inside." By taking care of our teeth, cleaning and repairing and beautifying them, we are in a sense cleaning the temple, or adorning the altar and thereby creating an environment for our prayers. "True beauty," feels Dr. Geddo, "is one of the paths to enlightenment or God. Just as a beautiful painting or musical composition can give us a glimpse of absolute truth and harmony, carrying our soul to a place of grace where we can experience the divinity of our being, so too can developing our own essential beauty."

Born in Europe to cosmopolitan parents, her family resettled in Argentina when Deanna was seven years old. From an early age the young Deanna was meditating and involved in the arts. In fact, for many years even after becoming a dentist, Dr. Geddo was a concert violinist as well as a yoga teacher. It is this blend of spiritual, artistic and practical wisdom that has led to her unique dentistry practice.

One of her favourite techniques she uses in her aesthetic dental practice is chairside veneers, bonded restorations attached to the front surface of the teeth, that enable her to help bring out the personal beauty of a patient in as little as one hour. Some come to her to get this work done towards a special event—a wedding, graduation or anniversary party. "It is my best offering," she says, noting it can take up to 15 years off a person's face. The thin layer of porcelain can add just enough thickness to plump up lips and support cheeks. Sometimes back molars, which tend to get worn down over the years, need to be built up a bit too, to gently reshape the face. And her expertise in relaxation techniques also helps patients improve the position of the jaw.

In her work with veneers, she hand sculpts the material and can skilfully adjust it to achieve different, subtle effects. She advocates against following fashion or the false-looking Hollywood-style smiles, and instead focus on expressing one's personal, inner beauty.

Photo: Tony Bounsall

Dr. Deanna Geddo DDS

Dr. Geddo encourages her patients to participate in the creation of their smile. She can educate clients to understand the different shapes, textures and colours of natural teeth so they have tools to work with in their decision-making. Some clients bring in a photo of themselves as a younger person to help guide her work. "I search for the size, shape and structure of the teeth that best expresses their personality," says Dr. Geddo. She has had some rather shy, self-effacing people purposely choose slightly bigger, bolder teeth to affirm their presence; while others opt for smaller, softer forms. Even slight changes transform the character of the smile and person.

Chairside veneers are quite long lasting, and actually strengthen the underlying teeth. They are a fraction of the cost of the more permanent type and can be modified as desired. Dr. Geddo works with an excellent lab which uses metal-free, bio-compatible materials and techniques in keeping with her own holistic practice. (Besides her aesthetic services, she offers a full range of holistic dentistry services including amalgam removal and metal-free crowns, bridges, dentures, biocompatible restorations and ceramic implants.)

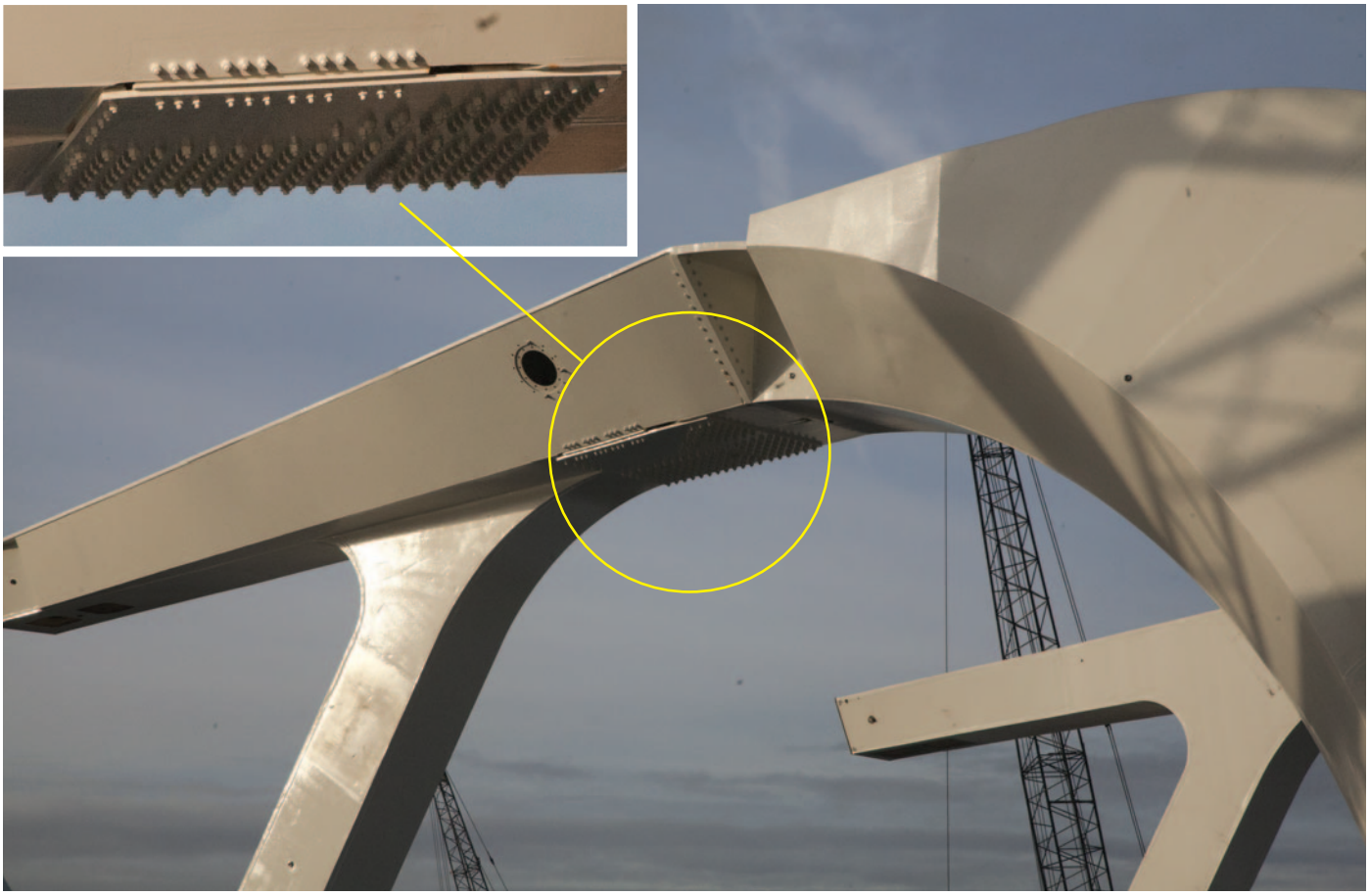
Dr. Geddo feels honoured to have helped transform many patients' lives through helping them enjoy their smile—the expression of their essential beauty. "It can be a very healing experience," she explains. "Many of us travel through life yearning for a freer, more fabulous version of ourselves: our mouth may hold the golden key which opens all the other doors!"

Dr. Deanna Geddo, DDS
Dental Office and Holistic Healing Centre
Yarrow Bldg, #404 - 645 Fort St. (across from the Bay Centre)
250-389-0669 • doctor_dg@shaw.ca
www.integrateddentalstudio.ca

Bridge design flaw hidden for a year, then given quick-and-dirty repair

DAVID BROADLAND

The latest cover-up on the $115-million project raises the question: What needs to change at Victoria City Hall?



As a result of a flaw in its structural design, the signature feature of the new bridge—the rings—required the addition of external bolt-on plates (inset).

Like many Victorians, I visited the Johnson Street Bridge construction site in early December to check out the newly-erected rings. My attention was immediately drawn to two large, heavily-bolted plates attached to the underside of each of the rings at the 12-o'clock position. Uh-oh.

As you may know, I have been watching this project closely, for nine years. No such plates had ever appeared in any of the detailed construction drawings or project photographs that I had seen over the past five years of construction. I snapped a few photographs. At home, blown up, the photos showed that the welded steel rings—which took three years to fabricate in China—had recently been cut open. Steel plates, angle steel and hundreds of bolts had then been placed over the openings. This assemblage had a "quick-and-dirty" appearance, the kind of short-term repair you might expect to see on a bridge deemed to be near the end of its useful life—not at the start.

I sent my photos to Project Director Jonathan Huggett and asked him for an explanation. Over Huggett's nearly four years on the job, I've sent him questions several times. Before this, he hadn't answered a single question. In his last non-response, he had explained, "I am very busy trying to deal with a multitude of issues right now." I didn't expect to hear from him this time, either, but he surprised me.

In an email, Huggett revealed that Atema—the quality-control company hired by the City of Victoria to monitor fabrication in China of the large steel parts of the bridge—had issued a "non-compliance report" (NCR) on December 9, 2016 after an inspection of the rings. Atema's report indicated the structure contained a design flaw that could leave the rings vulnerable to metal fatigue.

In response to discovery of the design flaw, Huggett says, "Lengthy discussions occurred in China and North America during the first half of 2017 and a number of different options to remedy the comments in the NCR were presented and reviewed. After discussions involving many experts in steel fabrication, the Engineer of Record agreed to design a bolt-on steel plate to ensure that the rings had not only the required strength, but also met the fatigue design requirements for the opening and closing of the bridge. This amended design was carried out and signed off by the Engineer of Record."

This project photo of the south ring in March, 2017 shows the intended design. Despite having known about the design flaw for over three months, the project then proceeded in such a way as to make it impossible to back-track and properly address the issue. Later, a large section of steel (in the area indicated by the yellow circle) was cut away from both rings and then covered over with bolt-on plates.

Wow. That's a dramatically understated admission that the project had gone dangerously off the rails. After three years of fabrication, the rings had to be hacked into with cutting torches and hastily repaired. Yet not one of Huggett's public reports to City councillors even hinted at such a problem. Huggett apparently had no intention of publicly acknowledging the design flaw, or the repair, unless someone else brought it up. Were those his instructions from the City?

One question that immediately occurred to me: Is this the structure's only design flaw?

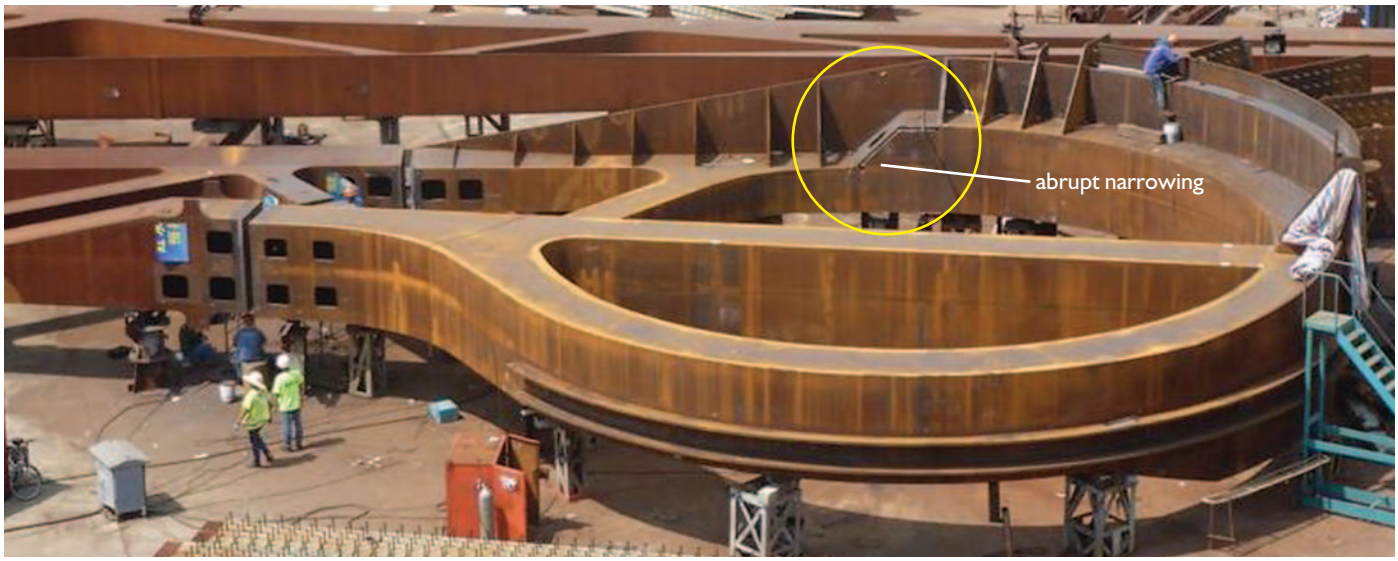
Huggett, a private engineering consultant, was appointed project director in 2014 by the City of Victoria after a report he authored condemned the project for its lack of leadership. He billed the City about $300,000 for his services, including expenses, in 2017.

When pressed for more information, including the date he had informed City of Victoria officials about the design flaw, Huggett simply responded: "We have no additional information to provide."

If Huggett had informed anyone at City Hall about the design flaw, it most likely would have been City Manager Jason Johnson, who hired Huggett in 2014. But Johnson was fired by City council shortly after the rings arrived in Victoria, so I was unable to confirm whether Huggett told Johnson about the design flaw and repair. Five emails to Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps asking her to confirm whether or not Huggett had informed City councillors all went unanswered.

I'll come back to the question of why City Hall is reluctant to acknowledge what has happened, but first let me describe more exactly what was done to the rings after the design flaw was discovered. (If some readers have a hard time wading through this account, my apologies. I am hoping that an engineer with bridge design and/or bridge construction experience will come forward to comment on the repair that has been done to the new bridge.)

I provided Huggett with a written description of what appears to be a hastily-executed repair that has been made to both rings and



The south ring during fabrication in China in July 2016. The yellow circle indicates the area of the ring later red-lined by Atema's non-compliance report.

asked him to correct any part of my description so that it would accurately reflect the "amended design" for the public record. Huggett provided no correction.

Sometime after the trial fit-up of all the major parts of the bridge in China in March 2017, significant, identical alterations were made to each ring. This included cutting out a section of steel plate from the inside flange of each ring. Steel appears to have been removed from the centre of each ring right out to their outer edge. This removal included about one metre of steel along the edge of the rings, including the weld.

These cutouts in the rings would have allowed access to the interior of the ring. Work may have been done inside the rings to address the fatigue issue identified by Atema. A photograph of the rings taken during their fabrication (see photo above) shows an abrupt narrowing of the structural steel in the same area where, later, the bolt-on plates were installed. This abrupt transition in the structure, along with an internal access port, may have prompted Atema's report.

Whether or not any steel was then added to the internal structure of the rings is unknown. If not, the next step would have involved attaching the external plates, which are about one square metre in size. That required drilling 180 approximately three-quarter-inch-diameter holes into each ring, with matching holes in the plates. The plates are bolted along the edge of each ring to a steel angle that protrudes from the gap cut in the rings. The angles are bolted to the inside of the rings' side webs. Filler pieces roughly support the plates at their forward edges where the plates span an uneven surface. The plates appear to be deformed (bent) across this uneven surface.

One question that arises: Wouldn't drilling a large number of holes, in a small area that had already been identified as having a weakness, further weaken the rings? The rings are considered "fracture-critical," which implies their failure could lead to collapse of the bridge.

As well, gaps and joints between the rings' original steel and the bolted-on steel parts, evident in photographs, seem to make it possible for moisture to get between the steel surfaces and from there into the bolt holes. If that happens, corrosion would occur. The plates, angle steel and bolts introduce the need for careful, ongoing inspection, additional maintenance and future repair that would not have been required if a properly fabricated structure had been delivered.

While many questions require answers from the City, what is known seems straightforward and damning: The design flaw was pointed out by a company whose actual job was to certify the grade of steel being used, monitor the quality of the welding, and ensure fabrication proceeded according to drawings that originated with Hardesty & Hanover, the company that engineered the steel lifting section of the bridge. Its drawings were supposed to be checked and approved by the City's project manager, MMM Group, which has billed the City for close to $20 million for its services on the project since 2009. Fabrication of the lifting section began in China in early 2014. So it took nearly *three years* before anyone noticed this flaw in Hardesty & Hanover's design, and then it was discovered by someone not responsible for the engineering of the structure. The structural integrity of this part of the bridge was judged to be so far below standard that an extraordinary intervention was required. It then took, according to Huggett, another six or seven months before a decision was made about how to address the flaw. Part of that decision included choosing to conceal the problem from the public. Another part of the decision was to do a quick-and-dirty repair. Is that because the rings had already been shipped to Victoria, precluding a proper repair at the steel fabrication plant in China?

So many questions with no answers.

While the Engineer of Record may have "signed off" on the bolt-on plates, the Engineer of Record works for the same company—Hardesty & Hanover—that engineered the structural flaw into the design in the first place. As engineers, their work is now suspect and their stamp of approval on their solution to a problem they created seems fraught with potential for conflict of interest. Wouldn't City of Victoria councillors have wanted to obtain an independent, disinterested assessment of the proposed fix? Did they?

If councillors had been made aware of this flaw and its proposed remedy, and agreed to accept a substandard bridge anyway, they have a lot to answer for—public oversight of the project appears to have failed.

Until the City of Victoria makes it clear whether or not Huggett informed City officials of the circumstances related to the design flaw, it ought to be assumed that he did. If that's the case, City councillors will need to explain the basis for their decision to accept a bridge that needed to be repaired. At the very least, they ought to provide public answers to the following:

Sebastien Ricard's 2010 bridge: too difficult to build and under-priced

1. When were City councillors informed about the design flaw?
2. When were they informed about the proposed fix?
3. Did the City of Victoria obtain an opinion from an independent professional engineer—one with no previous involvement with any of the parties undertaking the project—as to whether the City should agree to the proposed fix?
4. In return for accepting a substandard bridge, has the City of Victoria obtained a long-term guarantee from the builder (PCL), beyond the limited two-year warranty previously agreed to, that the damaged rings will be replaced by the builder if the repair shows any sign of deterioration or failure over the expected life of the bridge?
5. Were councillors planning on informing the public of the design flaw and repair before the coming civic election?

It has taken 9 years and, if we're honest, about $115 million to build a 156-metre-long bridge that needed to be repaired before it could be opened.Why has this happened to our city?

Long before this particular design flaw emerged and its cover-up commenced, the project had repeatedly reduced the value of the bridge being built, each time concealing that fact from the public. *Focus* has documented this sad history, right from the project's origins in 2008. This seems an appropriate moment to recount why this troubled project has turned out the way it has.

THE LONG RECORD OF CONCEALMENT OF PROBLEMS with the bridge's design and construction seems to be a natural consequence of the project's controversial origins, and the haste with which a conceptual design was chosen. The project was born at the height of the world financial crisis in late 2008 and early 2009, when governments around the planet rushed forward with gigantic plans for infrastructure spending to stimulate the global economy. In Victoria, the possibility of a big federal-provincial grant appeared just after the City had received an engineering assessment of the condition of the 86-year-old Johnson Street Bridge. This unfortunate coincidence determined the fundamental nature of the project that followed: It was hurried, and therefore ill-conceived.

To justify going after a big grant, whose application deadline was only weeks away, City officials had to quickly manufacture a plausible rationale for replacing the Johnson Street Bridge. They did that by abruptly announcing that the Johnson Street Bridge had a serious seismic vulnerability. On top of that, the City claimed that repairing the bridge would require lengthy closure—at great economic cost to Downtown businesses. Since that repair would be only marginally less expensive than building a new bridge at $40 million, the City argued, building a new bridge was the best choice.

But before the City took that position, it had been advised, unequivocally, by two professional engineers on two separate occasions, to repair the double bridge rather than replace it. The first engineer to provide that direction, Joost Meyboom, told the City in 2008 that an adequate repair, including seismic upgrading, would cost $8.6 million. The second engineer, Mark Mulvihill, gave the same advice in 2009. Mulvihill based his recommendation on the structure's "high and significant" heritage values. But Meyboom's and Mulvihill's professional recommendations were concealed by the City, and were only revealed through FOIs filed well after City council had committed to a new bridge.

That's how the project started. Founded on a fundamentally deceptive approach to providing information about the project, City managers went on to repeat—for the next nine years—that same pattern of misrepresentation and concealment in response to every major challenge that came along.

Instead of following Meyboom's and Mulvihill's recommendations, the City placed its bet on a back-of-the-envelope concept created by Sebastien Ricard at the British architectural firm Wilkinson Eyre. Inexplicably, Ricard's design depended on a novel open-ring (no axle) lifting mechanism that had previously been used for only two small bridges in the Canary Wharf development in London. Just a few years old, the bridges had almost no record of performance or durability. Nor was there any proof that the open-ring design could be successfully scaled up to the size proposed for Victoria. By July 2009 the City was estimating the project would cost $63 million.

When it tried to proceed without electors' consent, a counter-petition—mounted in the middle of a cold winter by indignant Victoria citizens—successfully forced the City to put its plan to a referendum. The City's response to that setback, in preparation for a vote, was to spend heavily on creating the perception that building a new bridge would be less expensive than repairing the existing structure, and that Ricard's design would allow a number of highly desirable features: dedicated bicycle lanes, rail, a high level of seismic protection, a wider navigational channel and a "signature" structure with high-level architectural qualities that would make the bridge "world class" and "iconic."

Critics of the project, like Ross Crockford, a director of the watchdog organization that had forced the City to hold a referendum, pointed to the unproven, experimental nature of the design. To Crockford—who, unlike the City, had sought out the advice of bridge engineers not involved in the project—the design presented an unnecessary financial risk to City taxpayers. The design flaw discovered by Atema is exactly the kind of risk critics like Crockford warned the City about, before and after the referendum. The City ignored those warnings, and so did the majority of City voters. In the November 2010 referendum, electors approved the City's now-$77-million-plan.

Soon after the referendum had been won, project engineers and City staff quietly began stripping away most of the promised elements of the project's scope, even as the project's cost continued to climb.

The first things to go were rail and a wider navigational channel.

Ricard's renderings of the bridge from 2010 all show a bridge wide enough to accommodate rail and long enough to allow a navigational channel 47 metres wide. But records obtained by *Focus* showed that project engineers suspected Ricard's open-ring design

couldn't actually accommodate either. By early 2011, MMM engineers were gathering evidence to help convince City managers, behind closed doors, that the City should build a much smaller bridge.

By mid-2011 the City had signed a design contract with MMM that, contrary to promises made before the referendum, eliminated rail, reduced the opening span from 47 to 41 metres, and reduced the required life expectancy of the approach bridges from 100 years to 75 years. There was no proactive disclosure of these latter two reductions in quality and scope. They only became known to councillors and the public later, through FOIs filed by *Focus*.

The shortage of truthfulness wasn't confined to the engineers. Just before the civic election in 2011, City Manager Gail Stephens announced that the project "continues to be within the budget of $77 million and the March 2016 timeline." But, as we learned much later, she was hiding the truth from both councillors and the public. An FOI filed in 2012 showed Stephens had been warned months before by City staff that the project was definitely over budget. Those staff advised her that councillors should be informed. Stephens failed to do so. As for her claim of being on schedule for completion by March 2016, the truth of that is now evident.

In mid-2012, while the City was working with three companies short-listed to bid on the bridge's construction contract, two significant changes were made to the project's scope. Each of these changes was made to lower the cost of the project after the three companies bidding on the contract made it clear the City's recently-expanded $93-million budget would not cover the cost of even the shrunken bridge it wanted them to build.

The first of these changes was a decision to leave the support piers of the existing bridge in place. That would eliminate the cost of removing and disposing of the piers, but this also resulted in losing one of the primary objectives of the project: a wider navigational channel under the bridge. The width of the channel was limited by the existing piers which were 39 metres apart. Leaving them in place meant the navigational clearance would be virtually the same, with no reduction in the risk of marine traffic hitting the bridge. Project managers hid this change, too, from councillors, who were left to learn about it from the pages of *Focus*.

At the same time, in mid-2012, City managers secretly accepted a lower standard of seismic performance for the bridge. While no engineer can, with great certainty, guarantee that a bridge will be accessible to traffic after a large earthquake, MMM engineer Joost Meyboom had convinced the City that it should buy the highest level of seismic protection possible. Meyboom put the cost of that protection at $10 million and, during the 2010 referendum, electors were told the bridge would include that high level of protection.

However, after it had been established (in secret) by the three companies bidding for the construction contract that MMM's estimate of cost was too low, MMM introduced a document into the procurement process that accepted a much lower level of seismic performance than Meyboom had previously advised the City to accept. This document's reduced seismic design criteria allowed for the replacement of the planned all-steel approach bridges with more economical—but more seismically vulnerable—concrete structures.

Again, councillors were left in the dark. I'll come back to the lowered seismic design criteria in a moment, because the way this issue was manipulated by the City when it was made public in these pages is a good indicator of how the City will respond publicly to the design flaw issue. But first, let me refresh your memory about the warnings about the design that were provided by the companies in their bids for the construction contract.

Two of the bid proposals rejected Ricard's open-ring design outright as too risky in terms of cost, reliability, and repairability. The third bid, from PCL, rejected a part of Ricard's design and altered what remained in a way that allowed PCL to meet the City's price ceiling. But that alteration also resulted in material changes that PCL expected would reduce the life of the bridge before major repairs would be needed. PCL admitted its proposal would result in a bridge in which parts that were "subject to wear" would last only 30 years.

Senior City managers kept all these warnings out of sight of elected officials. Records obtained by *Focus* show that at a critical *in camera* meeting soon after the bids were received—a moment in which councillors could have been fully apprised of the companies' warnings before committing to Ricard's design—City staff didn't even mention them.

In light of the design flaw discovered by Atema and its warning of the risk of metal fatigue, it now seems possible that one of those parts "subject to wear" is the entire section of the bridge built in China.

LET'S GO BACK AND PICK UP the thread about the project's reduced seismic design criteria. The document mentioned above later became part of the City's contract with PCL. Its presence in the contract protects PCL from any future legal claim from the City of Victoria in the case that the bridge suffers unrepairable damage—or is unusable by emergency vehicles—following a much smaller seismic event than that for which Meyboom had recommended the City prepare.

Keep in mind that Meyboom had put the value of that additional protection at $10 million, and the City had agreed to pay for this extra protection in exchange for an implied guarantee that the bridge would stand up well in a large earthquake. That $10 million had been included in the "$77 million" estimate in 2010. That extra $10 million was meant for such features as all-steel approach bridges, which have much better seismic performance than concrete.

Recall that questions about the seismic vulnerability of the existing double bridge had been the primary rationale for replacing it. Ironically, all four of its approach bridges were steel. But inclusion of the *Seismic Design Criteria* document in PCL's contract meant the City had, in effect, agreed to a lower level of seismic performance, so concrete approach bridges could now be used in the new bridge. None of this was divulged to councillors when they were asked to approve a contract with PCL.

When the issue was brought to light by *Focus* in 2015, Huggett, by then project director, provided an extensive non-denial denial that carefully avoided even acknowledging the existence of the contract document that contains the lowered seismic design criteria. For readers unfamiliar with the expression "non-denial denial": This is a term coined by journalists to describe a response from a subject that *sounds* like a refutation of facts, but, on careful examination, doesn't actually refute anything specific in the reporting and doesn't provide any evidence that disproves the report, yet isn't, itself, untruthful.

EACH OF THE ABOVE DECEPTIONS was first divulged to the public in the pages of *Focus*. The City has never presented any evidence that what we have reported was inaccurate or untrue. Yet, in almost every case, some City official—often the mayor of the day—has appeared at other Victoria media outlets with vigorous non-denial denials of our reports.

The City hasn't limited its defensive tactics to traditional obfuscation, though. They've been ground-breakers on keeping the record opaque. When *Focus* filed an FOI that sought evidence that Stephens had been advised the project was already over-budget in 2011, the City employed a legal maneuver—used against a media outlet only once before in BC's history—that allowed it to delay responding to our FOI. On the very day the City was required to provide evidence to the Office of the Information Commissioner to support its tactic, the City withdrew its claim. Such self-inflicted wounds to the City's credibility have not been without cost.

One cost of the serial deceptions has been a continuous loss of top-level City managers closely associated with the project: City Manager Gail Stephens, Director of Operations Peter Sparanese and Director of Engineering Dwayne Kalynchuk all "resigned" suddenly—or were fired. Others, too, have disappeared.

As well as that huge loss of senior personnel, the serial deceptions have had a corrosive effect on the community's trust in its civic government. Why didn't City councillors put a halt to the repeated cycle of beating down the value of the project and concealment of their actions?

The majority on council went along with the original rushed decision in 2009, and concealment of the project's problems provided those seeking re-election in 2011 and 2014 with cover for their original error in judgment.

To be fair, in many of the cases in which City staff reduced the scope of the project in significant ways just to keep Ricard's open-ring design alive, councillors were simply not informed. In some cases, once those issues were made public, senior staff soon resigned or were fired. But getting rid of project managers didn't have any effect on the basic underlying problem: The initial decision to proceed had been rushed, and in that rush a difficult-to-build and under-priced design had been chosen.

That brings us back to the current issue of the design flaw discovered by Atema and concealed by…well we don't know who yet, but when we do, we'll let you know.

What we will likely hear from the City now, if past behaviour is any predictor, is an adamant non-denial denial. Regardless, Victoria is now stuck with a badly degraded version of Ricard's problematic design, and the only recourse for electors seeking accountability is to get out and vote in November's election.

David Broadland is the publisher of *Focus*.

Focus presents: Sterling Financial

ADVERTISEMENT

A solution-oriented, whole-person financial approach to your well-being

Has your mind been stuck on spin cycle around a certain problem? You feel desperate to make a decision around your life—perhaps about a business decision, retirement, divorce or estate planning—but you just can't get a clear enough picture to make a move?

Fortunately, you can turn to Tanya Sterling of Sterling Financial. With over 18 years of accounting experience, she has her CPA, CA designation, and a host of extra credentials. She's a Chartered Financial Divorce Specialist, a Conflict Coach, a Certified Consultant on Aging, Mediation/Negotiation specialist and a Certified Coach in Mind-Kinetics and Quantum Physics (and a Reiki Master!). Mom to two young children, she is active in community organizations and has been recognized with a number of awards, including a "Top Visionaries Under 40" Award.

While her six-person office engages in all the traditional accounting practices, Tanya also specializes in a form of financial coaching that helps people move forward in their lives. Often her clients are people busy making a difference in the world, in business or through volunteer work. They are intelligent, capable folks, but on the cusp of an important and complex change, need a neutral professional to help provide a clear picture of the numbers, personal values and needs, and options for the future. Some of her clients have clear goals, but are at an impasse because they can't grasp all pieces of the puzzle, understand how they could fit together, or what choice is best.

The first order of business is a clear financial picture and road map. "It's a feeling of relief for my clients when they finally find someone who is committed, involved and proactive—someone they can count on," she says. "Once a person has this clarity on the facts of the situation, they feel more confident—which allows them to naturally make the changes they need to."

Of course, some of us feel discomfort around admitting we're not able to figure out some key thing—like a retirement plan, a budget, or how we ended up in our current situation. But as Tanya says, people need to focus their energies on what they are good at, and be willing to seek objective professional advice in areas they aren't. "There is no judgement here," says Tanya.

One of Tanya's clients says she felt vulnerable and and ashamed because of her lack of confidence around finances. She admits she was never really educated in that department, and credits Tanya as an "encouraging mentor" who helped her deal with old patterns and emotional blocks that were holding her back. She is most grateful, she says, for her newfound clarity: "I feel encouraged and have more confidence now."

Tanya Sterling

Tanya's "Financial Brilliance" coaching program helps people transform their relationship with money. It uses scientifically-proven, award-winning methodologies that allow you to tap into your subconscious and gain insights, and results in permanent shifts on a cellular level. The result, says Tanya, is "a permanent, radical transformation in your relationship with money that ultimately radiates out to all areas of your life." Results are noticeable after one session.

The key to Sterling Financial's mission is a complete focus on *your* interests. No products are sold. They will also work with your other professional advisors "to maximize results," making sure, for instance, that your Will is consistent with your tax or financial plan. Her firm will also communicate with the CRA on your behalf.

Sterling Financial takes a solution-oriented, whole-person approach to your financial well-being. Not your typical accounting office, it offers a unique, customized package of services designed to help you maintain your lifestyle, independence and legacy. Tanya and her team are ready to help you with your taxes—they are also able to help ensure the foundation of your financial house is strong enough to support your life goals and dreams.

Tanya Sterling
BComm Honours,CPA, CA, CPCA, CFDS, CPC
101- 860 View Street • 250-857-1857
tsterling@sterlingfinancial.ca
www.sterlingfinancial.ca

On the frontlines of the opioid crisis

LESLIE CAMPBELL

Leslie McBain advocates for those struggling with addictions and the families who love them.

The first nine months of 2017 saw more than 1,100 British Columbians die due to a suspected illicit drug overdose. In 2016—another depressingly bad year—there were 981 deaths. In fact, BC is leading the country in such deaths. The whole of Vancouver Island, along with some Lower Mainland areas, have the highest rates of death from illicit drugs in BC.

So it was welcome news in December that the new BC government has a plan. It will establish an Overdose Emergency Response Centre in Vancouver with dedicated, expert staff working with five regional response teams (starting in January) to co-ordinate and strengthen addiction and overdose prevention programs. Provincial Health Officer Dr Perry Kendall was pleased, pointing out that, up until recently, the crisis had been handled mostly by people working "off the side of their desks." In all, $322 million in new funding was committed.

PHOTO: RACHEL LENKOWSKI

Leslie McBain

Fentanyl is the main cause of the spike in deaths related to illicit drug use. It was involved in 83 percent of deaths in 2017, often combined with drugs like heroin, cocaine or methamphetamines. And now there are deadly variations like carfentanil and cyclopopyl fentanyl being detected. Keeping up to date on the evolving realities of the opioids in circulation will be one of the main tasks of the new provincial centre.

One of the most effective groups lobbying all levels of government for action on the opioid crisis is Moms Stop The Harm, formed by three Canadian women who have lost children to a drug overdose. Besides offering support and resources for families affected by addiction, these women and their now 300 members have developed into a highly knowledgeable and professional all-volunteer organization. They have fought for free access to the overdose-reversal drug Naloxone, the implementation of supervised consumption services and needle exchange programs, and accurate health data that is public and shared in a timely manner. Rather than the failed "war on drugs" or "just say no" approach, the organization urges good-quality education as the best protection.

The stories of the Moms (and some dads—see their website) are heart-breaking. Smart, funny, beautiful young people are dead, sometimes after years of struggling with drugs, sometimes after a one-off recreational use. The deaths occur despite families pulling out all stops to help their child. Of course they ask themselves if they had understood more, or if the doctors had, or if more support had been available—would their child still be alive? They work to ensure others don't end up with the same grief and questions.

One of the co-founders of Moms Stop the Harm, Leslie McBain, lives on Pender Island. She tells me her only child Jordan grew up on Pender and had a happy childhood. He went on travels to foreign lands with his parents, who ran a small plumbing business and had a loving extended family. In his teens, however, he started drinking and smoking pot and had difficulty controlling his use. His parents, always close to him, tried everything they could think of to help him. "His need for drugs is still a mystery—the biggest mystery of my life," reflects McBain. Still, at that early stage, he had lots of support and was not in danger of dying from the drugs he was taking.

After a back injury on the job, however, Jordan's doctor prescribed Oxycodone. His parents tried to tell the doctor that this was a mistake, that some less addictive treatment should be offered, to no avail. Jordan's addiction soon became all-consuming. Eventually, his prescription was cut off—without support for withdrawal or recovery. He turned to the street for drugs. He was obsessed with his next fix, yet he knew he had to get off the drug. "He really wanted to get clean. He researched and found a detox facility and went," says McBain. But he was released after 12 days despite still being in painful withdrawal. "We could find no post-detox support," says McBain, who helped him settle into an apartment in Victoria. "Withdrawal is ugly and painful. There are digestive, intestinal issues, nerves are affected, there are muscle spasms." Jordan knew about Suboxone, now widely accepted as a form of "medication-assisted treatment," but four years ago could not access it. Seven weeks after detox, still in pain, Jordan sought out illicit drugs to medicate himself. He died at age 25.

That was in 2014. A year later, McBain connected with two other women who had lost sons to drugs, and they formed Mothers Stop the Harm. They have since been joined by many more parents all across Canada.

"The worst has happened to us," says McBain. "It allows us to be brave. Nothing much scares us." They give speeches, they meet with Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet, they try new awareness campaigns. Whatever it takes.

Besides her work with Moms Stop the Harm, McBain has a half-time job with BC Centre on Substance Use, an organization dedicated to developing evidence-based approaches to substance use and addiction. She also teaches memoir writing to adults and story writing to teens. She spoke to me from her Pender Island home.

> "THE WORST HAS HAPPENED TO US. It allows us to be brave. Nothing much scares us."
>
> —*Leslie McBain*

Jordan Miller

Q. You lost your son Jordan through an opioid addiction in 2014. Looking back, what are a few key things that could have altered his path and prevented his death?

A. Three key things that could have potentially saved my son Jordan from an opioid addiction and overdose death are these: parental education (mine) on signs and risks associated with problematic drug use; the remediation of our family doctor's dismal lack of knowledge around the risks of overprescribing opioids; and the existence of medical and psychological support for Jordan after he came out of the detox facility.

Q. Was your growing understanding of the issues around his death what prompted you, along with two other moms who lost children, to form Moms Stop the Harm in 2016? How has it grown and evolved since then?

A. Generally we moms blame ourselves when we lose a child to drug use. But I also knew without a doubt soon after Jordan's death how the system had failed us. Or to be more precise, the lack of a system. I saw the great gaps in the continuum of care here in BC and the apparent lack of accountability for doctors' prescribing practices. Needing answers and not wanting another family to go through this tragic and painful experience led the three of us, Petra Schulz, Lorna Thomas and me, who had all lost sons, to form an advocacy group before heading to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drug Use. Hearing our then Minister of Health Dr Jane Philpott speak to the UN General Assembly on progressive reform of policies and perspectives on problematic drug use prompted us to formalize and intensify our advocacy—this grew into Moms Stop the Harm (MSTH). Our membership has grown to well over 300 families across Canada who have either lost a loved one or still have a loved one in active addiction. We give some emotional support to these families and show them how to be advocates to support drug users if they so choose.

Q. In December, the BC government announced new measures to help with the opioid crisis, primarily to establish a new Overdose Emergency Response Centre (OERC) that will link to regional and community action teams in BC communities. How do you think this will help? Would it have helped you and your son?

A. I am pleased to see action taken that is concrete and progressive. It is far too early to tell exactly how the OERC will roll out for those on the ground. We advocate for families being at the centre of treatment for people in mental health and addictions crises, and so far families have been included, on paper. I believe this approach will begin to help the under-served communities around the province.

I am cautiously optimistic that Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Judy Darcy and her excellent team will use the wisdom of the BC Centre on Substance Use and Moms Stop The Harm to address addictions and the fentanyl poisoning epidemic. She has been very consultative so far. The minister has promised rapid response to people who need and want treatment. However, rapid response and help needs an infrastructure that is not yet in place. There is always a waitlist for recovery beds. From the Liberals to the NDP we have been promised "more beds," yet we have seen very few new sudsidized facilities. There is a lot of work to be done.

Q. What else is missing—what more would you like to see from the provincial government?

A. We need to see the funding that will allow existing front line organizations to do their work (which I see as government's work). We need to see many more dollars go efficiently into bolstering the number of addictions doctors and training existing medical personnel. We need the Ministry of Education to engage in a meaningful way with real, science-based education on mental health and addiction in schools. There are so many ways that the provincial government can mitigate this crisis. If the OERC works the way the government intends, it will be immensely helpful to the cause. It is being worked on, but not quickly enough. People are dying in the meantime.

Q. Your organization has lobbied the federal government to decriminalize possession of illicit opioids and establish safe consumption sites. What progress has been made in such areas? What else should the federal government be doing?

A. All the harm reduction initiatives we have advocated for in the past few years have been aimed at keeping people who use drugs alive. Safe consumption sites have saved countless lives. The Good Samaritan Law, which protects those who call 911 in an overdose situation, has saved lives. The widespread, low barrier access to the opioid reversal drug Naloxone has saved thousands of lives. MSTH is proud to have been one of the voices to effect these changes.

Decriminalization still seems a way off, but we ask for this policy change every single time we have access to a federal official.

The act of decriminalizing drug possession and drug use would have so many positive effects. People with substance use disorder have a disorder like many others on the medical front. They must have the drug or they will become very ill. Criminalizing this disorder, sending people to jail for possessing and using the "medicine" they need, is inhumane and absurd. Jail does not end addiction. Decriminalizing illicit drug use and treating people instead—as is done in Portugal—is the humane way to approach addiction.

In my opinion, decriminalization is seen as a radical hot potato for politicians. They are simply afraid to wade into it because they might lose their jobs. It is a big but necessary step.

We have met with Prime Minister Trudeau and with the two most recent Ministers of Health (Dr Jane Philpott and Ginette Petipas Taylor), as well as MPs across the country, asking them to move quickly towards decriminalization of certain drugs. This does not mean legal-

Thank you!

Sustaining donors

Mel McDonald, Doug McPherson
Melody Villeneuve, David Rodenhuis
Rebecca McArthy, Gordon MacNab
Thomas & Phyllis Halsey
Elizabeth Silvester, Alan Dolan

Recent subscribers

Claudette Rolland, Muriel Sibley, Linda Webster, Mary Leppington, Betty Taylor, Thomas Holmes, Louisa White, Betty Andrews, John & Linda Tosney, Maggie Cameron, Dave Stubbs, Mike Sheehan, Amanda Gamley, Susan Newlove, Peter Hall, Wayne Dennis, David McIntosh, David Thatcher, Jim Pine, Herbert Clark, Mark Isaacs, Kathleen Stewart, Bill & Valerie Williamson, Carmel Thomson, Joanne Thomson, Pauline Kenneally, Betty Masson, Aurelie Stirling, Ken & Marion Hargrove, Peter Sussman, Bernie Morris, Dorothy Field, Don & Elizabeth Chambers, Alan Jones, Jim La Morte, Greg Marchand, Denton Pendergast, Roberta Adams, Karin Thomas, Heather Biasio, Greg & Elaine La Riviere, Trevor Smyth, Keith Watson, Francis Blundell, Kim Jordeim, Cheryl Taves, Brenda McBride, Pat McGuire, Herma Coutts, Helene & John Harrison, Michael Tacon, Anne Russo, Ann Reiswig, Gillian Sanderson, Kathy Saluke, Mary Lynch, Fiona Hyslop, Wilma Johannesma, Kathy & Eric Mitchell, Anne Smyth, Lina Bennett, Colleen Smith, Chris & Elizabeth Garrett, Ronald Fownes, Bruce Lemire-Elmore, Dan Dickmeyer, Judy Trousdell, Bill Graham, Maryanne Pollen, Josh Keller, Ellen Eckstrand, Dana Seaborn, Chris Bullock, Barbara Robertson, Evelyn Andrews-Greene, Lou Hammond, David Scoates, Aimée Botje, Diane Spendlove, Brad Nelson, Susan Tychie, Susan Moger, Betty & Jim Hesser, Jean Jordan, John Palmer, Trudy Fellner, Donald Roughley, Karen Martin, Jan Carroll, Audrey Woodward, Wes & Heidi Fisher, Judi Larsen, Tessa Van Engelen, Christina Nikolic, Laura Jacobson, Mary Bomford, Annie Sylvan, Shirley Bardy, Josephine Burges, Beverley Phillips, Cairine Green, Judi Dyelle, Traute Fraser, Marlyn Horsdal, Janet MacDonald, J.N. Braithwaite

ization; it means that people who carry and use drugs are not arrested and prosecuted because of their drug use.

Prime Minister Trudeau indicated in a meeting we had in March that he is working hard on decriminalizing cannabis. The implication was that this is enough for now. Decriminalizing drugs is a long, arduous process and controversial, too. It is a political quagmire, so I think this is why the government continues to stall on this.

MSTH has also asked repeatedly for an anti-stigma campaign to be rolled out by the Feds. The newly created Federal Opioid Response Team requested a teleconference with the MSTH leaders in early December to consult with us on the best approaches. We are optimistic that a campaign will land quickly. Until the public is educated on the nature and science behind addiction, and about evidence-based treatments, it won't fully support changes in drug policy.

Q. What measures can local and regional governments take to help?

A. I think that first and foremost, people need to know and understand what addiction is, what it feels like, how it manifests when people who are addicted cannot get the drug they need. So, an education campaign in the form of social and print media, town hall meetings, and simply talking about the issues surrounding drug use will help move harm reduction measures closer to reality. Regional and local governments must hear from their constituents that they are in favour of supporting the lives of people who use drugs. This is the only way we can move the problem toward the solutions, move people with substance abuse disorder forward into recovery and treatment.

Recently there was a news item that neighbours bought up a house in their community [in Penticton] to prevent it becoming a treatment centre. This shows a lack of understanding and a lack of willingness to learn. We need to address this kind of thinking.

Many municipalities in BC are independently on the move around this crisis, setting up de facto safe consumption sites. Governments move at a glacial pace, as we know. Thousands of people have died in the meantime. As the federal and provincial governments partner on this crisis, we see lowered barriers to opening safe consumption sites, we see health authorities receiving some funding and training on responding. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done on coordinating the best practices across the province.

Q. A lot of people all over North America initially got hooked on opioids through a legal prescription for pain management, to oxycodone, which is highly addictive. The US and Canada prescribe more opioids per person than any other nation in the world. Is the number of such prescriptions for opioids at least declining—is the medical profession now wiser about issuing such prescriptions? What still needs to change on this front?

A. My son Jordan is one of those statistics. Much of the medical profession has been made aware of the risks of over-prescribing opioids. As of November 1, 2017, over 2,000 clinicians have been reached through 54 seminars across BC to support the implementation of new clinical guidelines for treating opioid use disorder. This has been one of the initiatives of the BC Centre on Substance Use. All new and existing medical personnel should be trained or retrained. This again takes funding and the political will to support and mandate the training.

Q. On Moms Stop the Harm's website it's noted that we need to address the reality that three out of four people who die by overdose are men. Why do you think this is and what does it mean in terms of policies?

A. There are so many factors that lead men to use drugs, and to use drugs alone: stigma around drug use, economic pressures, mental health issues, family pressures, trauma. The same set of factors apply to women, but men traditionally take higher risks than women.

The appearance of lethal, illicit fentanyl is what is killing people. Stigma drives people, especially men, to use alone. Thus we find the largest number of overdose deaths are men using alone indoors. It is a tragic circumstance of the war on drug users.

The data being collected on these deaths can help inform anti-stigma campaigning and let us know how to target messaging. It will tell us who and how people will access harm reduction services.

Q. One of the eight keys mentioned on Moms Stop the Harm website is "redefine recovery." Can you elaborate?

A. Over many years the term "recovery" has come to be associated with abstinence-based treatment for people who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. Abstinence-based

recovery works for some, but for the vast majority of people with substance abuse disorder, and over the long term, it has a very low success rate.

Let's face it, we all want all people with substance abuse disorder to recover. So we are saying, let the term "recovery" include all forms of treatment. We advocate for evidence-based, medically-assisted treatment and therapy for all who need and want it. This means if a person should need and want abstinence-based treatment, they should have it. There is an alternative: The BC Centre on Substance Use, in cooperation with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, have rolled out injectable opioid agonist treatment (iOAT) guidelines. It may not be the end-all answer, but if people with substance use disorder could safely and easily receive the drugs they need to help them recover, they would be much further ahead in recovery.

Recovery is recovery, no matter the pathway.

Q. The toll the crisis is taking on families and communities seems immense. How have you coped and what gives you hope?

A. We use a "soft" statistic to show the impact of an overdose (or drug poisoning) death to illustrate the impact on families. When an overdose death occurs, the number of people potentially impacted in a very tragic way is about 135 (family, extended family, friends, co-workers, health workers, church congregations, etc.). Given that over 4,000 people have died in the past 2 years in Canada from drug poisoning and overdose, that is about 500,000 people affected by preventable deaths. I see that as a profound rent in the fabric of our Canadian culture.

How do I cope? Working towards mitigating the crisis, stopping the deaths and seeing some progress does help to cope. Advocacy for us moms who have lost children is very difficult, as our grief is renewed every time we have a new member join MSTH. The ultimate goal is to have no more preventable drug-related deaths. We still dream, we still hope. Someone once asked me if I do this work for my son. I replied that no, I do this work for your son. That is the truth of it.

Leslie Campbell is the founding editor of *Focus Magazine*.

Focus presents: Hydrate IV Wellness Centre ADVERTISEMENT

Advanced natural medicine—delivered directly to your cells

A new naturopathic clinic specializing in IV therapy enables Victorians to maintain or regain their health. The clinic's two highly-credentialled and caring naturopathic doctors, Kristen Bovee and Ariel Jones, use vitamin and mineral infusions to deliver hydration and nutrients directly to your cells.

Hydrate IV Wellness Centre is on the main floor of a lovely old heritage house on Cook Street near Fort (with parking at back). The IV therapy takes place in a large, light-filled room with big white reclining chairs. You can go with a friend and enjoy a cup of tea together, or just enjoy some quiet time on your own. Choose from a menu that includes an energy boost, stress relief, immune boost or ultra hydration. These are often used as a form of "proactive prevention" says Dr. Jones. Both doctors also provide customized IV treatments for those with chronic illness and cancer.

Because the digestive system is avoided, IV doses of nutrients can be higher and are more fully absorbed than those taken orally. Developed in the 1950s by Dr. John Myers, he found a particular IV "cocktail" of nutrients successful in treating asthma, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia. New regimens are now used to treat such conditions as migraines, allergies, muscle spasms and tightness, chronic hives, rheumatoid arthritis, colitis, cardiovascular disease and chronic infections.

Both naturopathic physicians also offer a full range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. For instance, they use a blood test to identify allergies of the "delayed hypersensitivity" type in which symptoms appear hours or even days after eating the offending food. If it's something you eat frequently, the repeated exposure can lead to a constant level of symptoms that begins to seem normal, explains Dr Bovee. Simple changes in diet can lead to remarkable recoveries and renewed vitality, adds Dr. Jones.

Those suffering from pain related to joint degeneration have benefited from techniques like prolotherapy, PRP, and neural therapy, in which both doctors are certified. "These have helped patients reduce or eliminate pain and avoid surgery," notes Dr. Jones.

Others have recovered from serious illnesses through naturopathic medicine. Janice Atkins says her husband Blaine owes his life to Dr. Bovee. After a cascade of health problems that included colitis, tumours and scarring of his liver, he was told by his medical doctor there was nothing to be done—his liver wasn't functioning and he was ineligible for a liver transplant. In desperation they turned to Dr. Bovee, who tested him for food sensitivities—"his gluten and dairy were off the charts," says Janice—and used a series of IV "pushes" to get his liver enzyme levels back into normal range.

Photos: Tony Bounsall

Dr. Kristen Bovee (l) and Dr. Ariel Jones

That was 11 years ago, and now he just sees her every few months.

Janice, who just turned 60, is now seeing Dr. Bovee for back pain so severe she could barely walk. Other doctors had shrugged off her pain as chronic and age-related—"I was told to go to emergency if it became excruciating," says Janice. After her first prolotherapy injection she felt much better; she could even sleep in positions she hadn't been able to in ages. Now, after her second injection, she can walk more comfortably and is confident the healing will continue. A series of three or four injections are generally recommended.

Dr. Jones has had patients with rheumatoid arthritis go into remission and be able to get off powerful pharmaceuticals like methotextrate and leflunomide which have black box warnings about death from liver failure. "There are so many treatment options for people with chronic autoimmune diseases that don't involve pharmaceutical intervention; this is just one example," says Dr. Jones.

Drs. Jones and Bovee have many tools at their disposal, as well as keen listening and problem-solving skills. Let them guide you to renewed health and vitality this new year.

Check out the website for more information, including the monthly membership plan. You can book appointments online or by phone. Direct billing is available if your plan allows it.

Hydrate IV
Open Monday through Saturday
250-590-1482
1-1015 Cook Street (park at back)
www.hydrateiv.ca

Will "sunshine" finally come to BC?

ALAN CASSELS

Exposing Big Pharma's dark influence on doctors who diagnose and prescribe.

David Huntley had an infected tooth, so his dentist referred him to an oral surgeon who told David he needed surgery. But when David explained which drugs he was taking, the surgeon refused to do it.

I had never met David, an 81-year-old retired professor of physics who lives in Burnaby, but I knew pretty quickly why oral surgery wasn't an option for him: He was being treated for osteoporosis, and had been prescribed denosumab to treat the disease, colloquially called the "silent thief," which puts people at risk of fractures.

Now what does the bone-thinning disease have to do with dentists refusing to perform surgery? One of the most serious, but rare, adverse effects of osteoporosis drugs—known as bisphosphonates—is osteonecrosis of the jaw. If it sounds nasty, well, consider this: Osteo=bone + necrosis=death. The jaws of some patients taking bisphosphonates can literally fall to pieces.

Many adventures in the medical world often start with a trip to a specialist, which leads to a test, then a diagnosis, then a drug. David doesn't remember why his GP sent him to get the initial X-ray, but that led to a referral to an endocrinologist in Vancouver who I'll call "Dr X."

Dr X used a specialized X-ray machine called a DXA, which measures bone density and spits out a figure known as a "T-score." David's T-score was -2.8, and he asked the doctor to explain what it meant. "After some questioning, [Dr X] mentioned 'standard deviation,' but beyond that, I don't think he knows. Either he doesn't know or he wouldn't explain it," David told me. Dr X told David that given his T-score, he had a "high probability of breaking something in the next several years." He prescribed David a twice-yearly injectable bisphosphonate drug called denosumab (Prolia) and vitamins.

I have been more than a casual observer of the osteoporosis industry for over 20 years, and I can be confident about only one thing regarding this disease: Everything about it is controversial.

For starters, its very basis, the "T-score," which defines what is and isn't osteoporosis, was crafted during a critical meeting at the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1994. Attended by specialists in bone health—as well as various pharmaceutical company officials—that WHO meeting defined "normal" bone density as that of an average 30-year-old woman, which automatically meant that nearly 30 percent of post-menopausal women had the disease, and were hence deemed "high risk" of having a fracture.

After that crucial meeting, women who were 50, 60 or 70 years old, with normal bone density for their age, were told they had a disease. Some loss of bone density happens naturally over time, a process as natural as grey hair and wrinkles. Yet once it is measured, along comes a diagnosis, and then the drugs.

The bisphosphonates, which include drugs like Fosamax, Actonel and Zometa, are also controversial, due to their minimal effectiveness and toxicity. There's very little evidence that they actually help patients avoid future bone fractures, and longer-term use of bisphosphonates actually *increases* one's risk of bone fractures.

Having pharmaceutical companies sitting at the table defining disease usually ends the same way: The disease appears more common, bigger, more dangerous, and more likely to lead to some kind of drug therapy. By mid-1995, the world's osteoporosis industrial complex was launched, boosted into orbit by major pharmaceutical company Merck, which bought up and distributed DXA machines around the world—while their bisphosphonate, Fosamax, became an über-blockbuster.

Fast-forward 20 years or so, and there are at least half a dozen bisphosphonates on the market, taken by millions of people. The most effective ones may help prevent one out of 100 women with established osteoporosis from having a hip fracture. Which is to say, on that function alone, they are 99 percent ineffective. And they make dentists nervous.

David didn't recall being told about osteonecrosis of the jaw related to bisphosphonates, nor did he know that FDA warnings on bisphosphonates indicate they can cause severe and occasionally incapacitating bone, joint, and/or muscle pain, dangerously low levels of blood calcium, as well as serious infections of the skin, abdomen, urinary tract and heart valves.

I told David that his story seemed so familiar because the industry around measuring and medicalizing bone density has been colonized by the pharmaceutical industry, and underwritten largely by those companies selling bisphosphonates. I really didn't want to get into it, but I was pretty sure Dr X was on the pharmaceutical industry payroll.

WHY WOULD A PROMINENT VANCOUVER SPECIALIST BE so swayed to prescribe denosumab to a relatively healthy man? Follow the money. Most of the major osteoporosis societies in the world receive substantial injections of funds from the makers of bisphosphonates, and, with some easy searching, I found Dr X sits on osteoporosis committees at the provincial, national and international level. He lobbies for the DXA scans and drugs to be covered. He also has extensive ties to global drug companies that make bisphosphonates. How extensive? One of his conflict-of-interest disclosures (taken verbatim from a peer-reviewed journal) reads: Dr X "consults for, receives research grants from, or is on speakers bureau for Procter & Gamble, Merck, Novartis, Eli Lilly, Wyeth, GlaxoSmithKline, Biosante, Servier, Amgen, Johnson & Johnson, and Pfizer." Amgen, by the way, makes denosumab (Prolia).

We are all, in a way, like David, unaware of the possibility that the specialist giving us advice is also financially tied to the companies making the pills being prescribed. Here in BC, it appears we've banned big money in BC politics, and that's a good thing. But have we banned big money in medicine? Not yet.

At the national level, a campaign called Open Pharma is calling for a "dose of transparency" (www.openpharma.ca) and wants "all drug companies with products listed on their formularies to publicly report any transfers of value, e.g., money, gifts, meals, made to doctors." The issue here is not about disallowing payments between doctors and drug firms, but about making those payments transparent.

Right now, as a first in Canada, Ontario has introduced legislation forcing drug companies to divulge their payments to health profes-

UP TO HALF OF THE FUNDING for ongoing education of BC prescribers is coming from the pharmaceutical industry. We know, for example, that osteoporosis specialists, many of whom are highly financially conflicted, are often the ones who teach other doctors.

sionals. As well, one drug company (GlaxoSmithKline) has started voluntarily disclosing payments to physicians and healthcare organizations. Ontario's new legislation looks a bit like the *US Physician Payments Sunshine Act*, which forces medical and drug companies in the US to reveal their compensation to individual physicians, whether they sit on advisory boards, and so on. Some European countries, plus Australia and Japan, have sunshine laws. But mostly, in Canada, any money passing between a drug company and physicians remains largely secret.

Given the world's attention on the opioid epidemic, and emerging evidence that opioid makers in the US and Canada spent millions of dollars to educate physicians about the alleged safety of opioids, you can understand why consumers might be alarmed. What if the specialists who are seeing us, testing us, and prescribing drugs are working "under the influence" of millions of dollars of pharma funding? As of now, BC has no "sunshine" legislation, but our Health Minister says it's coming soon.

Here in BC, it's clear our doctors haven't gotten that memo. The Doctors of BC has no existing policy on this. As its communications spokesperson Sharon Store wrote in an email: "The closest we have is the following recommendation from one of our policy papers from a decade ago: The BCMA supports the CMA [Canadian Medical Association] guidelines on appropriate relationships between physicians and the pharmaceutical industry and encourages other health care providers to adopt similar guidelines." To update that a bit, in 2012 the CMA's General Council approved a motion calling on "pharmaceutical companies to make information concerning their relationships with all physicians receiving any financial or non-financial compensation publicly available."

In my opinion, being transparent is only the start. The long-term goal should be to remove any corporate influence on prescriber education. Up to half of the funding for ongoing education of BC prescribers is coming from the pharmaceutical industry. We know, for example, that osteoporosis specialists, many of whom are highly financially conflicted, are often the ones who teach other doctors. Astonishingly, we allow this. Do our doctors learn of the controversies of the disease, the problems with the medicines, or the potential for serious adverse effects of the drugs? Some might, but that doesn't seem good enough.

We shouldn't have to rely, as David did, on our dentist to inform us that yes, sometimes drugs have dangers.

Alan Cassels is a Victoria writer and health researcher. His most recent of four books is *The Cochrane Collaboration: Medicine's Best Kept Secret*.

ADVERTISEMENT

Focus presents: Triangle Healing

Visit the Victoria Health Show

Triangle Healing Products will feature a four-booth exhibit at this year's Victoria Health Show on January 27 and 28 at the Pearkes Arena. Expert staff will introduce you to proven products designed to maintain and improve your health for the long term.

Do you suffer from SAD? Bring sunshine into your life with a HumanCharger, a small, light-weight, easy-to-use revolutionary light therapy device from Finland, that is effective and efficient. Simply insert the HumanCharger LED ear buds into your ears, and the calibrated white light will then flow through the ear canals into the light-sensitive regions of the brain. Use it for just 12 minutes a day to get the ideal amount of light therapy to increase energy levels, improve your mood, increase mental alertness and reduce the effects of jet lag. Enter the draw to win one at the show.

HumanCharger ear buds and controller

Pacific Essences can help you as well as your pet. Flower, sea, gem and goddess essences are a safe and easy to use form of Energy Medicine. Healing occurs through the essences' relationship and interaction with your energy systems, helping you to achieve physical, emotional, mental and spiritual homeostasis. Doctor of traditional Chinese medicine at Pacific Essences, Sabina Pettit, will be speaking at the Health Show, and will also be available for meet and greet at the Triangle exhibit.

Tribest Greenstar Pro Juicer

We would like to bring your attention to the revolutionary SpinaliS health chair that offers the healthiest way to sit for long periods of time. Sit on one of the chairs when you visit the Triangle exhibit, and you will feel the unique movable spring-mounted seat working to improve posture, ensure mobility, strengthen your abdominal and back muscles, and relax your stiff neck.

The temperature control feature on the new Tribest Dynapro Blender makes it particularly popular with raw foodists. Also on display will be customer favourites such as Blendtec Blenders, the Tribest Greenstar Pro Juicer, Sedona Food Dehydrators, and Tribest Dynapro Blenders. Check out the Radiant Health Sauna, the Bellicon Rebounder, the Teeter Inversion Table and the Amethyst BioMat, to see why these products are consistent best sellers.

The Radiant Health Sauna is an infrared sauna that maximizes safety with its extremely low electromagnetic field. Time spent in this high-quality sauna will help you detoxify, relax and ease sore muscles. Bouncing on a Bellicon Rebounder is one of the most efficient exercise regimens you can do for your overall health and fitness. Then stretch out on the Teeter Inversion Table to relieve back pain, improve joint health and increase flexibility.

Don't forget to enjoy a glass of structured distilled water at the Triangle exhibit. As you appreciate the pure freshness of this water and hear about the proven health benefits, you will surely find yourself feeling more hydrated.

Pop by the store in January to get your 2 for 1 admission coupon! See you at the Health Show on the last weekend of January.

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.

One less thing to worry about for BC Grizzlies

JUDITH LAVOIE

The BC government has killed the grizzly hunt. But will Conservation Officers enforce the ban?

PHOTO: MIKE HOEKENDIJK

Grizzly sow and cubs

After years of letter-writing, strategy sessions and protests, opponents of BC's grizzly bear trophy hunt were euphoric when the NDP government killed the hunt in December.

"Can you believe it? I have just had a weep," said Valerie Murray, founding member of Justice for BC Grizzlies, as Environment Minister George Heyman and Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Minister Doug Donaldson announced that all grizzly hunting in BC would end immediately.

Earlier, in August 2016, the government had said that grizzly hunting would stop in the Great Bear Rainforest and trophy hunting would be banned in the rest of the province, but there was a loophole large enough for a pickup truck to drive through. It took the shape of allowing a food hunt, provided meat was packed out, and perceived trophies, such as the head, hide, paws and penis bone, were either left in the woods or turned over to the government.

Fears that the meat hunt would be a thin disguise for business-as-usual were exacerbated by advertisements on the Guide Outfitters Association of BC website promoting the 2018 hunt.

After the initial announcement, government allowed time for further consultation and the reaction was fast and furious. Out of 4,180 emails received by government, almost 80 percent wanted a total ban on grizzly hunting. "British Columbians told us in no uncertain terms, very clearly, how strongly they feel about protecting grizzly bears and grizzly bear habitat," Heyman said.

The only exception will be First Nations, who will be allowed to harvest grizzlies for food, social or ceremonial purposes or treaty rights. But that impact is expected to be minimal.

Scrapping the "sustenance hunt" surprised both sides of the polarized controversy, with many expressing amazement that the government had listened to the opinions of British Columbians. "We can bearly believe it," quipped Joy Foy of the Wilderness Committee.

On the other side, opposition Liberals and grizzly hunters claimed the ban was an effort to divert the attention of environmentalists from the NDP government's earlier decision to go ahead with the Site C dam.

Members of the Guide Outfitters Association of BC predict some businesses will fail as a result of the ban, but a 2014 study found that bear viewing in the Great Bear Rainforest generated 12 times more in visitor spending and 11 times more in government revenue than hunting.

Also, First Nations are likely to benefit from increases in bear viewing and aboriginal tourism, said Vernon Brown, a councillor with Kitasoo Xai/xais Nation, which runs a successful tourist lodge and bear watching operation in Klemtu.

Liberals John Rustad and Peter Milobar accused the NDP of abandoning "scientific-based decision making in favour of political calculus designed to appease US-based environmental groups."

But, science is largely on the side of a hunting ban.

Government figures put the BC grizzly population at 15,000, but some scientists believe the number is much lower. Although DNA testing is used to assess populations in some parts of the province, computer models are used to calculate populations in other areas and there are concerns those figures could be inaccurate.

BC is one of the last areas in North America where grizzly bears live in their natural habitat, but nine of the province's bear sub-popu-

> "UNTIL THERE IS THE POLITICAL WILL to change the behaviour of the Conservation Officer Service, there is no hope for BC wildlife." —*Bryce Casavant*

lations are in trouble, and three in southwest BC have been assessed as critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Groups such as the Coast to Cascades Grizzly Bear Initiative are pushing to have those populations listed as a species of special concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

While sub-populations are increasing in some areas, studies show other areas have been heavily over-hunted. A 2013 Simon Fraser University and University of Victoria study found that in half the population groups where hunting is allowed, more grizzlies have been killed than government targets allow.

The Province has long claimed a harvest rate of 250 to 300 bears a year is sustainable, but studies point to slow reproduction rates and show that about 34 percent of bears killed are female—a figure generally accepted as too high.

Poaching, accidents and bears shot by conservation officers all increase the death rate. A David Suzuki Foundation study, using government figures, found that between 1975 and 2016, humans have killed 13,804 grizzlies in BC. In 2016, 87 percent of all human-caused killing was attributable to trophy hunters.

In neighbouring Alberta, the hunt was suspended in 2006 and the species was declared as threatened in 2010. The difference between Alberta and BC came into sharp relief in September when Bear 148, who had been radio-collared and relocated in Alberta, was shot by a hunter when she wandered into BC.

ADDING TO PUBLIC DISCOMFORT WITH THE HUNT is a highly critical report by Auditor General Carol Bellringer, released last fall. It found a tangle of unimplemented plans, lack of organized monitoring, spotty oversight and unclear accountability. It also made clear that protecting the bears will take more than a hunting ban. Besides pointing to habitat loss as a major threat, it cited 600,000 kilometres of resource roads with 10,000 more kilometres added each year. The road network means humans have more access into wilderness areas, resulting in the illegal killing of bears and more human-bear conflicts—which usually end with a dead bear.

Heyman, who is promising to implement all recommendations from Bellringer's report, says the government will be looking at Species at Risk legislation, a grizzly bear management strategy, and a wildlife management strategy. Excessive access to grizzly habitat is one problem to be addressed, as is understaffing of the Conservation Officer Service (COS), Heyman said.

A Green Party spokeswoman agreed that environmental enforcement capacity has been crippled by budget and staff cuts. She noted that between 2001 and 2012, while the Liberals were in power, COS staffing levels fell by one-third, meaning a 32 percent decline in boots on the ground at a time when resource activity was increasing. Simultaneously, the number of tickets for environmental violations fell by more than half, and convictions plummeted.

But dissatisfaction with the COS goes deeper than funding cuts, and some are calling for a complete overhaul of the mandate and makeup of the service.

In 2016, 27 grizzlies were killed by conservation officers after encounters with humans, resulting in accusations that gun-happy officers don't look at other options. Over the past four years, according to ministry figures, conservation officers killed 72 grizzlies and 1,872 black bears.

"The public doesn't trust the Conservation Officer Service any more. I couldn't count on my fingers and toes how many times I have heard people say there is no way they would phone a conservation officer because the animal will end up dead," said wildlife photographer Trish Boyum, operator of an eco-charter boat.

Bryce Casavant, a conservation officer, who in 2015 was suspended and then transferred into another ministry after he refused to kill two bear cubs, is blunt about the inherent conflict of interest he sees among conservation officers.

"Until there is the political will to change the behaviour of the Conservation Officer Service, there is no hope for BC wildlife," said Casavant, a researcher with Royal Roads University and a former officer with the Canadian Forces Military Police who ran for the NDP in the last election.

The heart of the problem, said Casavant, is that the COS is an armed police service, basically functioning as a private army for the environment ministry.

But unlike other police services, there is no independent oversight board, and complaints are investigated internally.

There is also no oversight of hiring. Casavant said the vast majority of conservation officers are hunters or trophy hunters, and many are members of the BC Wildlife Federation (which is supportive of hunting, at least under certain circmstances). In fact, recruitment is aimed at those sectors rather than at people with a science or conservation background. "So, it doesn't matter what regulation you put forward. If they want to kill bears, they are going to kill bears," he said. In some cases, a CO has posed for pictures with a tranquillized bear cub, only to shoot it in the head once he is out of the public eye, Casavant charged.

In December, BC Supreme Court ruled against the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals and Dawson Creek resident Tiana Jackson who claimed a conservation officer had exceeded his authority by killing a black bear cub even though a wildlife centre had agreed to take the cub. However, the court did confirm that conservation officers had to follow government policy.

Before taking on new battles around habitat conservation and COS practices, environmentalists are celebrating the Christmas present for grizzly bears. "We are very grateful that the government has finally stepped up to do what the people have asked for, which is an end to this barbaric, bloody sport hunt," Foy said.

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

#MeToo: what next?

MOLLIE KAYE

Could a victim-centred approach be a better fit in cases of sexual harassment and assault?

Trump, Weinstein, Moore, Franken, the RCMP…Every hour, it seems, more are added to a dizzying list. But remember the 2014 Dalhousie Dental School case, where "gentlemen" students waxed horrific on Facebook about their over-the-top, sexually violent predilections? The men were initially suspended. Then some of the female students referenced in those ghastly posts said they preferred a restorative justice process—an approach that involves facilitated dialogues and co-created, positive-action agreements—rather than university sanctions or criminal indictments. The media was outraged. Talking heads rolled. How dare these women demand some namby-pamby, non-punitive process, when the overwhelming public consensus was that the offenders must be expelled?

Oh, the irony. Women finally come forward to break their silence around the near-ubiquitous sexualized aggression woven into our workplaces, only to be silenced again in a "justice" where "authorities" dole out punishments. Victims' needs and input are not just ignored, but derided: "Ladies, these men have offended you. Now step aside, and let Law and Order restore your honour and make you safe. Your offending male classmates will not get a wink and a nudge; they will be *destroyed* for their transgressions. This is how we will make things better for you—it's fear of punishment that prevents bad behaviour."

Except it doesn't actually work that way. Even the death penalty does nothing to deter violent crime. A Public Safety Canada study concluded that "compared to community sanctions, imprisonment was associated with an increase in recidivism…longer sentences were associated with higher recidivism rates."

So why are we in such a rush to punish—to lock people away, fire them from their jobs, and put them on registries—especially in cases where sexualized aggression is involved? Shouldn't we listen to victims, and support what *they* think should happen next?

I SPEAK WITH A RESTORATIVE DIALOGUE FACILITATOR in Victoria who has worked on sexual assault cases (and for confidentiality reasons, declines to be identified). She tells me about a man who had committed rape. His lack of empathy was noticeable, but so was the fact that he genuinely didn't understand sexual assault. The restorative justice process transformed his attitudes: "He was just floored by what women have gone through…how this plays into the bigger social fabric. He had never learned any of that. [He wondered] 'Why don't they teach this to us in schools? Why didn't anyone teach us about consent? This is probably the most important thing I will learn in my life, and I didn't know it.'" The facilitator tells me, "He made drastic changes in his life…It was really impressive to see him transform—in his thinking, in his behaviour, in his demeanour…the person who walked [in] a year later was not the same person. It was phenomenal." In certain cases, the facilitator notes, "whatever things [offenders] have gone through in their own lives, they have closed themselves off. It is absolutely possible to help those people open up again and start feeling and start empathizing, and I've seen that happen."

At Restorative Justice Victoria, I ask Complex Case Manager Jessica Rourke if she believes restorative approaches can be successfully applied to local sexual harassment or violence cases. (Disclosure: I am a volunteer facilitator at Restorative Justice Victoria, though like other volunteers I am not insured to handle such cases there). She says "Yes," and that from her perspective, "Most sexual assault victims want two things: for the offender to know how extensive the negative impact of their behaviour was, and to walk out of there feeling confident that he is not going to do this again, that he is not going to [harm] someone else." But, she asks, "how are you going to know that? What do you need to feel [confident about] that—what does that look like for you?" Restorative dialogues, when offered, she says, answer those needs and questions, and are what many victims say will bring them a sense of safety, healing, respect and hope.

So why do we reflexively insist on punishing offenders, without victim input? If it's agreed that the long-term solution to sexual aggression is for men to become more empathetic and self-aware, are we serving that goal by limiting victims' recourse to only the punitive courts or the shaming media? To develop empathy, offending men must hear from the women who have been affected by their actions, and understand the devastating impact they've had. Rourke has observed that the criminal justice system isn't optimal for this: "There's no room for 'could you learn from this and change? Could you become a better person? Could you repair some of the harm you have caused?'" The victim, too, is sidelined. "The State is now the victim, it's the State vs the Offender—your experience is now taken away from you…you're a spectator."

The offending Dalhousie dental students expressed gratitude for their experience in the restorative justice dialogue with their female classmates. They wrote, "We learned that saying sorry is too easy. Being sorry, we have come to see, is much harder." They realized that it was not only their female classmates, but future patients and the larger community who were traumatized, and added, "We deeply regret if this has made even one person more reluctant or afraid to access the oral health care they need and deserve."

Though university sanction guidelines called for expulsion of the men, the women in the Dalhousie dental class who participated in the restorative justice process were always adamant in their desire to graduate alongside their male classmates. "We are a part of a generation in which inappropriate sexualization is more common and widespread than ever before and we have become used to this," they wrote. "More than [simply accepting the male students' apology], though, we have seen the men learn why they are sorry, and what that requires of them."

THE TSUNAMI OF REVELATIONS in the media has helped illuminate both the nature and extent of sexual harassment. In Canada, we learn, $100 million is being set aside for a possible 20,000 harassment claims within the RCMP. Over 30 percent of Canadians surveyed in a recent federal government report say they have experienced sexual harassment at work. Of those, 94 percent are women. An Insights West poll, released December 6, found that 50 percent of Canadian working women experienced some amount of sexual harassment in the workplace—though more than 40 percent of victims felt

WHY ARE WE IN SUCH A RUSH to punish—to lock people away, fire them from their jobs, and put them on registries…Shouldn't we listen to victims, and support what they *think* should happen next?

they should "handle it on their own" rather than report the behaviour, fearing for their jobs and seeing no palatable choice for meaningful resolution within the current landscape of options.

In a December 5th *New York Times* article by Nellie Bowles, businesswomen were asked about the widespread revelations of power abuses, and the sometimes swift and draconian consequences meted out to the offenders—without due process or dialogue with their victims. Most agreed that "a reckoning for the sexual misdeeds of men in the workplace was a long time coming. But ask the question 'What do we do about it?' and the answer has become as wide ranging, nuanced and intensely personal as the offenses themselves…Most of all, many women are wrestling with how this reckoning will work in practice: Who is the judge, who is the jury and what evidence is admissible."

Gillian Lindquist, executive director of Restorative Justice Victoria, agrees there isn't a one-size-fits-all, punitive approach that can be applied meaningfully in sexual aggression and harassment cases, especially if significant time has passed since the incident. She feels more could be done to bring nuance into deciding consequences such as firings or being placed on a registry. "If you committed this assault 15 years ago, it has a huge impact, but have you changed? There hasn't been any discussion of this. It's just, 'Boom, you're gone.' Maybe some of the women do want that, but maybe some of them don't. I haven't heard of a single case where someone has asked them."

Most of us would agree that victims' needs and desires should be integral in justice outcomes. Research tells us that perpetrators of sexual aggression are more likely to change course when they understand the direct impact they've had, and are given constructive actions to take, rather than simply being shamed or punished. If the criminal justice system isn't currently set up to serve either of these goals effectively, and the government isn't providing alternatives, the community needs to step up and provide a container in which these dialogues can occur.

Successful restorative dialogues in sexual aggression cases like the one at Dalhousie Dental School require funding for facilitators with extensive professional training. Neither the criminal justice system nor any of the (largely volunteer) restorative justice programs here on the Island offer consistent victim access to such resources. Until funding is provided for a new, parallel system, which would provide supported dialogues between offenders and victims, many offenders will be subject to disproportionately harsh, unproductive punishments, and victims will continue to endure the demoralizing, demeaning process of proving—to the media or the courts, "beyond a reasonable doubt"—they have been harmed. "Wouldn't it be amazing," posits Rourke, "to have survivors of sexual assault creating the system?"

Writer Mollie Kaye is a volunteer facilitator at Restorative Justice Victoria, and believes that empathy-based, victim-centred dialogues are far better than punishment as a strategy to restore trust and heal communities.

ROCKPORT®
Cobb Hill COLLECTION

"The key to a wonderful life is to never stop wandering into wonder."
— *Suzy Kassem*

NOMAD
FOOTWEAR

1205 Government St // Next to New Balance Victoria
778 265 0650 // nomadfootwear.ca

Victoria's new policy on short-term rentals

PAMELA ROTH

Unintended consequences of Airbnbs are leading to new measures to deal with the loss of housing stock.

PHOTO: LESLIE CAMPBELL

The Janion, where nearly half of its 120 suites are used as short-term rentals

For $138 per night, one can stay in a luxury two-bedroom condo in the heart of downtown Victoria. Located on Humboldt Street, the condo is within walking distance to a number of amenities and popular attractions. It's also fully equipped with a concierge.

But the condo is not a hotel; it's a residential building where many residents no longer know their neighbour. Instead, they see a string of new faces passing through the halls each week, people arriving late at night, making noise, not knowing where to go, or the rules of the building. Many are fed up with living in one of the city's many "ghost hotels."

"Living in the Downtown core, people always have safety and security issues and that's kind of the impetus for people starting to question 'why am I seeing strangers in and out of my building all the time?'" said Downtown resident Eric Ney, who's part of a citizens coalition that's trying to better regulate short-term rentals (STRs).

He believes the vast majority of Downtown condo buildings have STRs operating in them—and this is borne out by websites advertising them. He notes that about half a dozen strata councils have now brought in bylaws that restrict the short-term use altogether. "Unless the strata council takes action to bring in bylaws to essentially make STRs illegal, operators are just going to go ahead and do that," added Ney.

CONDO BUILDINGS WERE ENCOURAGED DOWNTOWN to bring in more full-time residents who would presumably help maintain a healthy core. The City of Victoria allowed all buildings within the "transient zone" (areas allowing hotels, motels, vacation rentals and bed and breakfast accommodation) to host condos that could be rented out by their individual owners, likely never imagining the disruptive blossoming of a new vacation rental industry. With people able to rent out a suite for $165 per night, they can earn a substantial amount during the tourist season alone—often enough to out-price a year-round long-term renter.

As a result, STRs have become a significant factor behind a rental vacancy rate that won't budge from around 0.5 percent—the lowest in the country—despite the abundance of new developments built over the past half a dozen years. Due to STRs, many Downtown condo units that might otherwise have been rented out to local residents sit empty most days of the year. A recent City of Victoria report states there are close to 1,500 unique listings of STRs, with the bulk of them located Downtown.

In order to prevent precious long-term housing units from being gobbled up for brief stays, Victoria City council started looking at ways to regulate STRs. Last fall it finally took action when a new set of rules was approved that include prohibiting STRs for less than 30 days in transient zones and no longer allowing them in new Downtown developments.

A grandfather clause stipulates that property owners who already legally operate STRs as a business will be allowed to continue, but will lose that status if they are not operating for a six-month period. The only new STRs that will be allowed will be within the principle residence of the owner—one or two bedrooms in houses or condos. All operators will also have to purchase a business licence.

The next item of business to be decided is what the City of Victoria will charge STR operators for that business licence. City staff proposed a fee of $200 for a principal residence that rents out a bedroom—and $2,500 per year for a unit that is not one's principal residence.

Besides the fees, STR operators would have to comply with a list of operating requirements such as getting a letter of approval from the strata council. The framework also calls for an enforcement strategy that involves a third-party monitoring service to identify STR addresses and non-compliant operators. The City recently found that many aren't following the rules by operating outside of transient accommodation zones.

According to the staff report, the proposed fees were developed to recover the costs of administering the program (including the third-party monitoring), level the playing field between STR operators and

> "IT'S BRUTAL. It does affect the culture. When I look out at night, I just see a wall of black windows because it's not peak season so people aren't renting the units. This is altering the structure of our city." —*Johanna Merth*

traditional accommodation providers, and ensure operators pay a fee commensurate with revenue generated. But after considerable push-back from operators, officials are now collecting more data and considering alternative fee structures, including a flat fee that all STR operators would pay, regardless of the type of unit. ("The majority of feedback received was from STR operators or individuals employed in the industry," states the staff report.)

Councillor Ben Isitt introduced the motion of STR regulations at council, pointing out that "These buildings were built, approved in this chamber, with people believing they were going to be ordinary, residential condominium buildings…We've found these buildings have evolved into something very different."

Councillor Geoff Young has heard from a number of unhappy residents living in ghost hotels and can't help but sympathize with them. He'd like to see the proposed business licence fees start low and escalate over the years.

What council would really like to see, he noted, are changes in the provincial legislation regarding the classification of those units. Hotel rooms are classified as commercial while STR accommodation is classified as residential, he explained. It's important because commercial users pay three times the property tax that residential users do.

Besides providing greater fairness among hosts, new property tax regulations would be fairer to the City. As Young explained, "We've been losing real hotel rooms once paying commercial property tax rates…at the same time that this Airbnb use has been burgeoning. The Airbnbs are paying much lower taxes than the hotels and we would like to see a fair, even playing field with everybody who's operating a hotel paying the same taxes."

Another big change council would like to see is the grandfathering done on a unit-by-unit basis instead of building-by-building. "If a unit continues to be used for STRs, that's fine, but you can't take other units in the same building that have been used for residential accommodation and transfer them into STRs," said Young.

KEN HANCOCK LIVES IN THE JANION BUILDING where nearly half of the 120 suites are used as STRs. But he likes it that way—it's one of the reasons he made the purchase, noting it's the same story for many property owners in the building. Most of them, he said, either live Up-Island or in Vancouver and purchased their property as a place to retire or stay whenever they come to Victoria.

Besides being the strata council president, Hancock also works as a concierge for a select group of condo owners in the Janion to assist travellers coming and going from various suites. Sometimes he feels like he's living in a hotel, but he knows most of his neighbours and loves meeting new people from around the world.

As for the proposed $2,500 business licence fee that could soon be required to continue operating many of the STRs at the Janion, Hancock shakes his head. "You have a group of people who specifically bought, invested and set up these little micro businesses because they were legal. The zoning has been in place since 1994," said Hancock, who believes most people will keep their place if they don't want to pay the fee, but won't use it for long-term rentals.

"They specifically bought it because of the Downtown location and as a retreat from their regular home. It's for their use much more than an investment. Everybody I deal with is quite happy to have some sort of regulation as the industry matures and that's not a bad thing. It just needs to be recognized that these are, for the most part, micro businesses."

But for Eric Ney, the proposed rules are a good first step. He's pleased to see that STR owners must get permission from the strata in order to get a business licence, but he'd also like to see the elimination of STRs in multi-dwelling buildings.

A strata council, however, is not likely to be able to disallow STRs or put strong bylaws into place if a good portion of owners are engaged in the practice themselves—like those at the Union in Victoria's Chinatown where about half of the 130 units are used as STRs.

Johanna Merth has lived in the Union for three years and noticed at the last AGM that those who own multiple units in the building, but do not live there, are able to vote en masse on issues that impact permanent residents. One person who owns multiple units, but doesn't live in the building, holds a position on strata, which doesn't sit well with Merth.

"They are voting on issues that may not affect them directly, but affect their business prospects. As a resident and owner in a building, that's a problem. I think some people who run business operations can sometimes forget there are people who live there full time," said Merth, who didn't realize the impacts of STRs when she purchased her condo.

"It's brutal. It does affect the culture. When I look out at night, I just see a wall of black windows because it's not peak season so people aren't renting the units. This is altering the structure of our city."

What impact the City's new regulations will have on long-term rental housing remains to be seen. But with an expected growth of 20,000 residents by 2041, the City of Victoria needs an additional 13,500 apartment units and 2,700 ground floor homes sooner than later (as per Victoria's Official Community Plan). Privately-owned condos are an important source of housing, including rental housing—they represent almost 14 percent of the total rental units in Victoria.

But the City is slowly making strides. Since Victoria's Housing Strategy was approved in June, 25 action items to improve housing affordability have been achieved, leading to an increase in the number of rental and non-market housing units developed and retained in the City (590 rental units are now under construction). There are, however, still a number of issues left to tackle in order to get a grip on the growing housing crisis. STRs are just one piece of a complicated puzzle.

In early 2018, council will be presented with options for business licence fees, along with the short-term rental business regulation bylaw and amendments to the zoning bylaw. The new rules would come into effect shortly after.

A journalist since 2003, Pamela has spent the bulk of her career covering court and crime for various newspapers in western Canada, including five years at the *Edmonton Sun*. An avid traveller, Pamela also specializes in travel writing and recently published a true crime book called *Deadmonton*.

palette 32 arts highlights 36 dance 48 vibe 50 curtain call 52 coastlines 54

It's what's inside that counts

AAREN MADDEN

Lynn Branson's reverent connection to her medium brings her wood carvings to life.

"Cresting the Wave" 19 x 19 x 15 inches, oak

A person could be forgiven for assuming that the sculpture "Mystique," by Courtenay-based artist Lynn Branson, is carved out of marble. Its pale, inviting sheen emanates a similar luminosity to the stone. It is, in fact, a unique piece of walnut from which Branson has released an elegant, mermaid-like female form. Its curves, planes and voids may call to mind the Modern tendencies of Henry Moore or Barbara Hepworth, with Constantin Brancusi humming along in the background. The marble effect is intentional, but once you approach the work, the true medium becomes more obvious—as does the artist's affinity and reverence for it. The perfectly smooth top of the piece curves inward and outward in alignment with the grain. The grain dictates the shape.

Lynn Branson

"I sanded for weeks on that piece—and I have a cyst on my thumb to prove it!" laughs Branson, who knew instantly what it would become when she first laid eyes on the raw wood. "Right away I saw the female form," she declares.

Whether it is a human figure, or her more frequent subjects of bird or beast, she views her wood carving practice as an act of releasing the thing within. "Wherever I look," Branson shares, "whether it's the raindrops, or the leaves, or the clouds, I never just see a cloud. I'll see what's *in* the cloud." This outlook and approach reflects her deep regard for the natural world. In her work, she is rewarded by this reverence and awareness—and patience. "I'll have a piece in my studio and I'll walk by it for ten years. Then all of a sudden I'll walk by it and there's something looking at me," she says with delight.

Branson was born and raised in Edmonton, a child with an enormous imagination and an affection for making things. She adored

"Mystique" 26.5 x 15 x 5.5 inches, walnut

"Balance" 35 x 12 inches, maple

spending time on her grandmother's acreage. Her mother was a painter who came to Canada from England with Branson's grandmother; both shared her love of nature. Noting that her grandmother emigrated quite late in life, Branson reflects, "I think she is where I got my adventurous spirit."

Armed with little else, Branson left home for Vancouver at 15, where she found work making beds at St Paul's Hospital. It was not an easy life, but "I would spend hours at the beach looking at driftwood, and I loved [that]," she recalls. She eventually made her way back to Alberta, married, had a son and a daughter, and spent some years raising them. After some time as a single parent, she remarried and lived on a farm in Innisfail.

"Any time I was in the forest or the bush, I would see wood lying on the ground and I was always drawn to it," she says. She started picking it up. Today she purchases about 85 percent of her wood from all over North America. "I don't have any vices; I don't go shopping very often, but if I see a [special] piece of wood, I'll do anything to get it," she laughs. A solid half of her studio space is devoted to various intriguing burls and blocks, some of which she moved with her from Alberta. She jokes that her children fret over what they will do with it all if something should happen to her.

Carving became part of her life while she was on the farm. For a studio, she claimed a former chicken infirmary with straw walls and abundant mice. "I was constantly getting rid of the mice, but it was a great life, farm life. I was very close to nature everywhere I looked," she recalls. She carved as much as she could, building her skill and making a name for herself at competitions and sales.

Sadly, in 2001 her husband was killed in a tragic accident while horseback riding. This, after they had just survived injuries and damage from the Pine Lake tornado in July 2000. After her husband's death, Branson moved back to the west coast. "Everybody has their struggles and their stories," she says. "I am very, very fortunate because I

Left: "The Burl That Wanted To Be A Bittern" 12 x 12 x 14 inches, red cedar
Bottom: "Emergence" 23 x 24 x 13 inches, red cedar with maple base

have another chapter in my life, and I am very grateful for every day that I do what I have such a passion and love for."

That passion has been recognized by her four-time world champion title at the annual Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art Carving Competition held in Ocean City, Maryland. She is the first female winner in its 47 years, and she cherishes the family of carvers she has become part of. The event is an annual highlight for her and her partner Greg Pedersen, an accomplished carver in his own right. She has also been a judge at the Pacific Brant Carving and Art Show since her farm days. Her work is widely collected, and she was the only female to be invited to participate in the Blakely Burl Tree Project, a small group of artists commissioned to create works from the giant burl of an old pecan tree in Georgia. She was invited to do so by friend and mentor Mark Lindquist, the renowned American wood turner.

He's among a varied list of influences Branson credits. Along with the aforementioned Moore, Brancusi and Hepworth, Georgia O'Keeffee, Robert Bateman, Emily Carr and Courtney Milne have all had an impact on Branson's practice. But Lindquist gave her perhaps the best advice she's received: "He told me always to have fun. If it's no longer fun, then you don't do it."

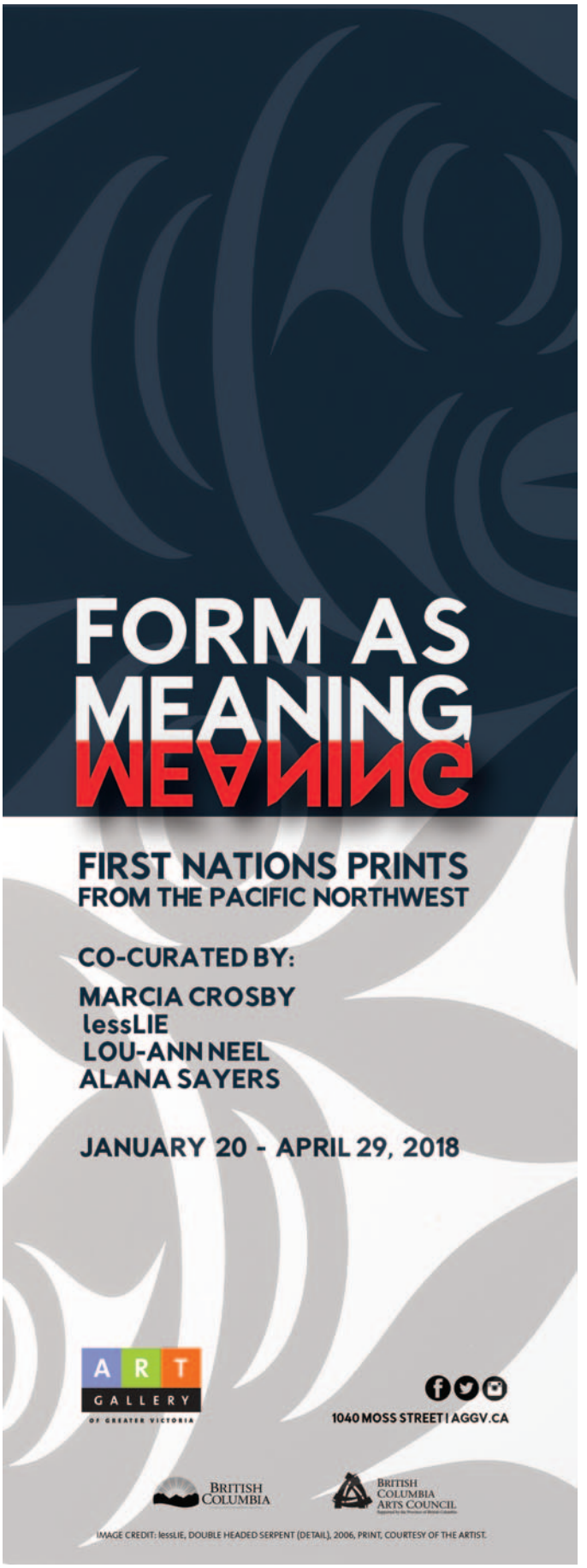
That's truly necessary, considering each piece takes about three to five months to complete. Not to mention the extreme physicality of the work—some of her pieces begin in the hundreds of pounds. At about five feet three inches, Branson is not a large person, though her work has made her strong. She may begin a piece with a chainsaw to rough out the form or remove the dead wood. Next comes hammer and chisel and/or electric grinders for shaping. With a high speed tool called an NSK (yes, the one used by dentists), she can render a subtle suggestion of feathers or, remarkably (and after hour upon hour), the fine grit of sandstone. "Balance" is a carving where you can see this virtuosity. Bare-handed to ensure the proper feel, she employs sandpapers ranging from 80 grit to 800, the latter being the key to that marble-like finish. Final steps involve polishing cloths and finishing in oil, acrylic or wax.

Occasionally, like in the piece "Cresting the Wave," she will add a touch of pigment. In this carving of a kingfisher at the helm of a swirling wave, subtle swathes of bluegreen play among the grain as if the oak itself is saying, "You see, I was water all along."

"That's just an extraordinary piece of wood," Branson enthuses. A portion of it was petrified, and Branson interpreted it as a dollop of seafoam. "I carved a lot of [the wood], but the shape was already of a wave." Setting it free, while a months-long process, begins and ends with the wood itself: "I don't spend hours planning, I just start. The wood tells me where to go."

Lynn Branson's work can be seen at Peninsula Gallery, 100-2506 Beacon Avenue, Sidney, 250-655-1722, www.pengal.com and at www.rawearthcarvings.com.

Aaren Madden's own affection for nature has found its way into her home in the form of several bouquets of driftwood, pilfered sea shells, pine cones, myriad stones, bits of moss, and twigs. Her husband duly frets.



ALAIN BÉDARD 2017

Victoria Film Festival • February 2 – 11

NOW IN ITS 24TH YEAR, the Victoria Film Festival (VFF) is Vancouver Island's largest and longest-running film festival. With over 118 films screened in various locations over the course of 10 days, VFF could leave movie-lovers a bit dizzy with all the possibilities to choose from. The full listing of all 74 confirmed feature films to be screened is not available until January 8, but here is a "sneak peek" at a few of the highlights.

Pickups, directed by Jamie Thraves, will have its international premiere at the festival. *Game of Thrones* star Aidan Gillen is featured in this low-fi, high-stakes drama about the bizarre life of a jobbing actor who suffers from insomnia.

Oh, Lucy! is a Japanese film directed by Atsuko Hirayanagi, and will have its BC premiere at the festival. When a middle-aged woman in Tokyo decides to escape her oppressive office life by taking an English class taught by a charming American (Josh Hartnett), she dons a blonde wig and adopts the name "Lucy" at his urging, all to better understand Americans. She then ends up on a rescue mission to San Diego, accompanied by her constantly disapproving sister, to bring back the young, impulsive niece who has run off with the American fellow.

Zoe Hopkins

Kayak to Klemtu will have its BC premiere at the festival, and was filmed here in the province as well. Zoe Hopkins (Heiltsuk/Mohawk) is the director of this film which chronicles Dave Ellis (Evan Adams), a Kitasoo/Xai'Xais activist who dies. His 14-year-old niece Ella (Ta'Kaiya Blaney) sets out on a voyage to take his remains home to Klemtu and stand in his place at a community gathering protesting a proposed pipeline. The voyage is arduous, requiring her to paddle the challenging waters of the Inside Passage.

Ethel & Ernest, a charming, animated British chronicle of a "greatest generation" couple's sweet, enduring relationship, is a beautifully hand-drawn film. It tells the true story of award-winning author and illustrator Raymond Briggs' own parents—two ordinary Londoners living through a period of extraordinary social change. The characters' voices are those of Brenda Blethyn and Jim Broadbent.

The Film Festival's opening gala on February 2 features a screening of *The Waterboys*, at the Victoria Conference Centre Theatre.

Festival film passes range from $129 to $299; there are five-film vouchers at $56, ten-film vouchers at $110; single admission $11.43. See victoriafilmfestival.com for tickets, passes, film directory, locations, film trailers, and more. —*Mollie Kaye*

"BELL TOWER OF THE VILLAGE" ALAIN BÉDARD, 30 X 24 INCHES, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

February 3–22

FRENCH IMPRESSIONS GROUP SHOW

West End Gallery

West End Gallery artists create a group show based on the endless inspiration provided by colour, light, and landscape. Whether Quebec or France, that allusive *je ne sais quoi* is magically captured on canvas by these talented painters. Participating artists include: Aleksandra, Alain Bédard (shown on facing page), Claudette Castonguay, Ariane Dubois, Joanne Gauthier, Jean-Gabriel Lambert, Raynald Leclerc, Annabelle Marquis, Guy Roy and Robert Savignac.1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

January & February Events

PROGRAMS IN EARTH LITERACIES

The Planetary Shaman, Integral Theory, Evolutionary Spirituality & Participation in the Sacred Biosphere
with **Layman Pascel**
Four Tuesdays, Jan 9 – 30; 10am – 12pm
$75 or $20 drop in
Friends Meeting House, 1831 Fern Street

Earth's Imagination
with **Gertie Jocksch**, SC DMin
Five Wednesdays, Jan 10 – 31 and Feb 7, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm; By donation
St John's United Church, 10990 West Saanich Rd, North Saanich

Powers of the Universe, Part I
with **Gertie Jocksch**, SC DMin
Five Tuesdays, Feb 6 – 27 and March 6, 10 am – 12 pm; $95 or $20 drop in
Friends Meeting House, 1831 Fern Street

Engaging the Enneagram: through the gateway of typology, exploring our place within the cosmic whole and its place within us
with **Dawn Kilarski and Barry Vall**
Friday, Feb 23, 6 – 9 pm and Saturday, Feb 24, 9 – 4 pm and 6 – 9 pm; $125
Friends Meeting House, 1831 Fern Street

Please do not let cost deter you from attending. Ask us about our scholarships.

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

JOY ANSON FINE ART
joyanson.com

Contact Chris Bardon
778 839 5834

TOP: "LIFE CYCLE". BOTTOM: "CABINET OF CURIOSITIES" (DETAIL), MARTINA EDMONDSON

January 16–27

MARTINA EDMONDSON: NOW AND THEN

Gage Gallery

Martina Edmondson's assemblages combine her own handmade materials, nature's treasures and found ephemera. Like an archeologist, sifting through bits and pieces, individual vignettes are created and their stories combine to form larger narratives. The use of natural materials and manmade objects creates tension and balance, reminding of the struggle between man and nature, and the propensity, especially in the Victorian era, to collect, identify and catalogue everything. Opening Jan 18, 5-8pm. Daily Tues-Sat 11am–5pm. 2031 Oak Bay Avenue, 250-592-2760. www.gagegallery.ca.

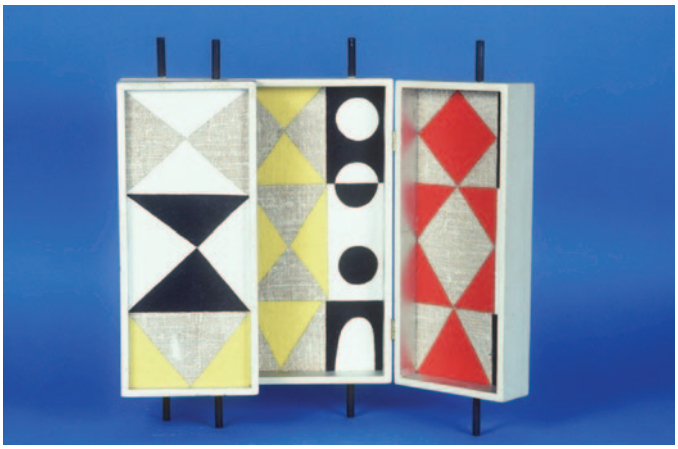
"TRIPTYCH FOR AESTHETIC IDOLATRY" B.C. BINNING (1953), 20 X 27 X 2.5 INCHES, OIL, GIFT OF B.C.BINNING

Continuing through March

BEYOND THE EDGES: ART & GEOMETRY

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

This exhibition questions dominant Modernist art histories, favouring instead cross-cultural and cross-temporal explorations of the possible meanings of geometry in art, and looking at the use of geometric vocabularies by Canadian artists working in the modern and contemporary periods. With an emphasis on artists of the West Coast, Beyond the Edges features works from the collection by such figures as Lawren Harris, Jan Zach, Elza Mayhew, B.C.Binning, Roy Kiyooka, Rita Letendre, Takao Tanabe, Robert Davidson, Susan Point, and Luanne Martineau. 1040 Moss St, www.aggv.ca.



"BIRCHES IN WINTER, ALGONQUIN PARK" DIANA THORNEYCROFT, 21 X 30 INCHES, DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH

January 13–27

PULP AND PROCESS III: DIANA THORNEYCROFT

Madrona Gallery

Highlighted in this exhibition will be the work of Diana Thorneycroft, an internationally-recognized, Winnipeg-based artist. Her "Canadians and Americans–Best Friends Forever / Its Complicated" series deconstructs ideas of Canadian identity and histories. *Canadian Art Magazine* selected Thorneycroft's "Group of Seven Awkward Moments" as one of The Top 10 Exhibitions of 2008. Also works by other gallery artists: in watercolour, pastel, acrylic, collage, mixed media, graphite, ink and coloured pencil. Opening Jan 13, 1-4pm. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

"MITLENATCH ISLAND I" (LEFT PANEL OF DIPTYCH) NAOMI CAIRNS, OIL ON CANVAS, 48 X 60 INCHES

January 6–25

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARTISTS GROUP SHOW

West End Gallery

Participating artists look to their own backyard for inspiration for the New Year. Paintings featuring the diversity of the landscape hang alongside whimsical still life paintings offering bright and cheerful colours. Participating artists include: Steven Armstrong, Naomi Cairns, Rod Charlesworth, Richard Cole, Ken Faulks, Greta Guzek, Gabryel Harrison, Dana Irving, Patricia Johnston, Paul Jorgensen, Ken Kirkby, Mary Ann Laing, Grant Leier, Joel Mara, Elka Nowicka, Glenn Payan, Paul Paquette, Peter Shostak, Deborah Tilby and Peter Wyse. 1203 Broad St, 250-388-0009, www.westendgalleryltd.com.

"Meditation II"

Bronze, 13.5" x 25" x 5"

by Carol Gold

2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney
250.655.1722
www.pengal.com

PENINSULA Gallery
Fine Art Since 1986

THE AVENUE GALLERY

Mocking Bird in Orange Bush, bronze, 50 x 21 x 29 inches

MICHAEL HERMESH
and so it goes…
January 18 – 29
Artist's Reception: Saturday Jan 20 1-3pm

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

January 5-21
Mary Babineau
"The Vegas Project"
Opening reception:
Friday January 5, 7-9pm

February 3-18
Kyle Labinsky
"Pillar of Smoke"
Opening reception:
Friday, February 2, 7-9pm

Xchanges Gallery
2333 Government Street
250.382.0442
www.xchangesgallery.org
Open Saturdays & Sundays, 12-4

Xchanges Gallery gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the CRD

EXHIBITION JANUARY 13 - MARCH 29, 2018

TRANS HIRSTORY IN 99 OBJECTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA TRANSGENDER ARCHIVES MEETS THE MUSEUM OF TRANSGENDER HIRSTORY & ART (MOTHA)

LEGACY ART GALLERY DOWNTOWN
WED - SAT 10 - 4PM

630 YATES ST. VICTORIA BC
250. 721. 6562 LEGACY.UVIC.CA

University of Victoria Libraries & Legacy Art Galleries
Chair in Transgender Studies The Transgender Archives
MOTHA Museum of Trans Hirstory & Art

D. ARVIS

Great Big Show • Feb 7-10

ON AN UNSEASONABLY WARM, SUNNY December morning in Victoria, I arrive, as directed, at an Art Deco building situated on the edge of Beacon Hill Park. All the way up the stairs I hear singing. Upon entering the apartment, I am greeted by 12 happy faces, who roar with approval when they hear I am a writer from *Focus* magazine, but they immediately get back down to business: an all-day rehearsal for *Great Big Show*, an original musical co-created by the cast, all of whom are developmentally disabled adults.

Seated at a keyboard facing the group of performers is Wes Borg (perhaps best known as a member of the '90s comedy troupe "Three Trolls in a Baggie"), who accompanies, sings, directs, and advises on dialogue all at once, with enviable patience and skill. First I hear the familiar opening theme of *Sesame Street*, grafted onto an original song the cast has created. Borg tells the group, "You're not children; let's take out this *Sesame Street* thing and go straight to the verse." A brief discussion ensues, the group easily agrees to the change, and the modified number is run again.

"You're not children" is a good way to sum up the mission of *Great Big Show* (*GBS*). Borg and Kathryn Popham, co-producers who successfully brought in the $120,000 of Canada Council funding for the project, have been running a day program for developmentally disabled adults interested in performance, songwriting, and stage tech since 2015. "All the cast is 19 or over," Borg explains, "so we can have darker and more mature content."

Borg and Popham intend, through this raw, tender, funny and entertaining theatre production, to get a real conversation going between the larger community and this population. All material is created by developmentally disabled people—they're not simply performing it—and it highlights the myriad challenges they face in their lives as they transition to adulthood. "19 is when the system drops you

PHOTO: TONY SPRACKETT

because you're no longer a child," Borg says. "All kinds of funding goes away."

Borg characterizes the material as "ever so slightly subversive." Popham continues, "The end is sweet and light and airy, but it's a long road to get there. The first act is fairly dark, it brings up a lot of the disability issues, challenging the audience. Going into intermission, we want them to be saying, 'I'm not sure what I should be thinking about this'…But then there is the resolve in act two, in a classic oldies style." This is what I was seeing rehearsed as I walked in. I got a wonderfully sweet and rollicking *Rocky Horror Picture Show* vibe from the songs, which focused on romance and marriage. The Derwin Blanshard Orchestra will provide the live accompaniment.

In the promotional materials for *GBS*, Borg says the term "Adults with Developmental Disabilities" will be crossed out, with the word "artists" written above. It's certainly an eye-opener for me, to see performers from this population working with incredible dedication, wit, focus, absence of ego, and presence of collaborative spirit. It's otherworldly; I have never seen a group of adults co-create and rehearse so joyfully and efficiently. And I've certainly never seen children do it, either.

Supporting professional artists include Juno-nominated Carolyn Mark, Brad Fraser, Geoff Berner, Kris Demeanor, Alice Nelson and Britt Small.

At McPherson Playhouse. Tickets $49.75 at rmts.bc.ca.—Mollie Kaye

"DARK PAINTING" DON JARVIS, 1962, 37 X 51 INCHES

January 20–March 29

INNOCENCE: WEST COAST ART & ARTISTS THROUGH A VISITOR'S EYES

Legacy Downtown, Inner Gallery

This exhibition presents Leonard Forest's 1963 NFB film *In Search of Innocence* and examines the notion of innocence as it pertains to the West Coast in the 1960s and the artists Forest featured in his film. See work by Jack Shadbolt, Margaret Peterson, Roy Kiyooka, Fred Douglas, bill bissett, Joy Long, Sing Lim, Jack Hardman, and Donald Jarvis. On Sat Feb 3, 3-4:30 there's a curator's talk and tour, with light refreshments. Curated by Art History & Visual Studies graduate student Nellie Lamb with supervision by Dr. Carolyn Butler Palmer, Williams Legacy Chair, UVic. 630 Yates St. www.legacy.uvic.ca, 250-721-6562.

THE GALLERY AT MATTICK'S FARM

"Island Sunset" 24 x 24 inches, oil on canvas

Kylee Turunen

January 2 – 28

Opening reception

Saturday January 13, 1-4pm

Artist in attendance

109-5325 Cordova Bay Road • 250-658-8333

www.thegalleryatmatticksfarm.com

Pauline Daniel

RN/COUNSELLOR

Let go of anger and fear.
Find more joy and ease.

- Integrative Body Psychotherapy is a gentle, non-invasive, energetic, body-centered therapy
- Learn breathwork and simple body-release techniques to open you to greater aliveness and a deeper sense of self

250.888.2794 • paulinedaniel.ca

pauline@paulinedaniel.ca

"LILAC IN THE FOREST" REAL FOURNIER, 24 X 36 INCHES, 3D OIL PAINTING ON CANVAS

Throughout January/February

REAL FOURNIER

Peninsula Gallery

There is a childlike *joie de vivre* about Real Fournier's work. He explores his art in infinite dimensions. When he is painting, he wears 3D glasses which allow him to create multiple layers of colours. We are then transported into a fantastic universe. "I now understand why I am painting like that," he says. "It is like I am living the life of my childhood again…Inside I get closer to what my dreams say." Real's artworks can be found in numerous collections across North America and Europe. 100-2506 Beacon Ave, Sidney, 250-655-1282, www.pengal.com.

BLUE/GREEN GLASS GROUPING, LISA SAMPHIRE

Throughout January/February

LISA SAMPHIRE, GLASS ARTIST

The Avenue Gallery

Since 1985 Lisa Samphire has produced a diverse body of work, which includes private and public, sculptural and functional pieces. Her ability to bring a new vitality and approach to her medium year after year is due to her ongoing education at the Pilchuk School and the Corning Glass Museum, her years as owner of Starfish Studio, teaching at Red Deer College and participating in exhibitions internationally. In 2009, Lisa's work was selected to represent Canada at the Cheongju International Craft Biennale in South Korea. 2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

"MAX BATES" (DETAIL) MYFANWY PAVELIC (1973), 22 X 28 INCHES, CHARCOAL ON PAPER

January 25–May 13

LANDMARKS: THE ART OF THE MALAHAT REVIEW

Legacy Maltwood, Mearns Centre, McPherson Library

This exhibition, curated by Caroline Riedel, pays tribute to the role of art in one of Canada's most iconic and long-standing literary journals. Selected from 200 cover images over the past 50 years, the exhibit focuses on works from the journal's home institution, the collection of the University of Victoria. Featured artists include Maxwell Bates, Robert De Castro, Glenn Howarth, P.K. Irwin, Davidee Kavik, Jack Kidder, Elza Mayhew, Eric Metcalfe, Myfanwy Pavelic, Margaret Peterson, Bill Reid, and Gordon A. Smith. www.legacy.uvic.ca, 250-721-6562.

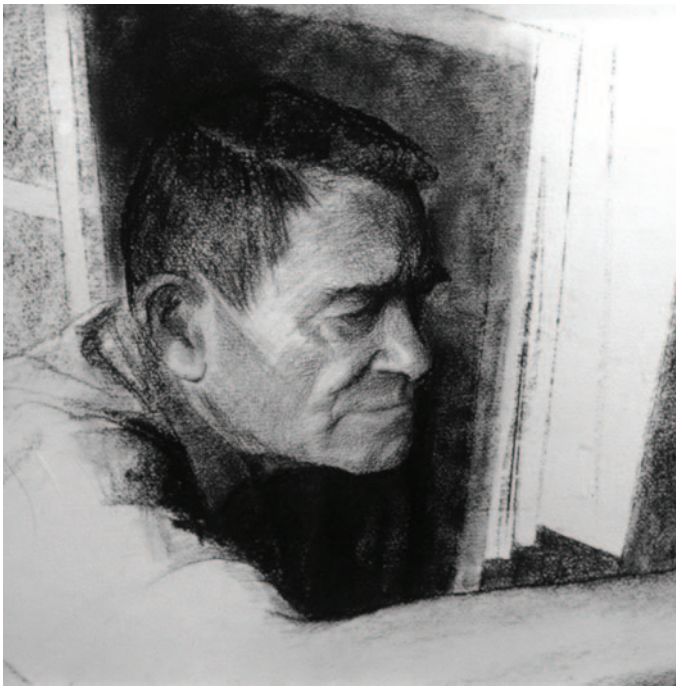
"STRIP" MARY BABINEAU, 17 X 23 INCHES, OIL ON CANVAS

January 5–21

MARY BABINEAU "THE VEGAS PROJECT"

Xchanges Artist Centre

The oil paintings in this exhibit are based on photos taken in Las Vegas and illustrate the artist's uneasy response to that urban environment. Says the artist: "I find comfort and conflict in city structures and am intrigued by contrasts: the public arena, sanctuary, complexity and starkness, interior spaces. Sense memory, gesture, a combination of representation and abstraction allow me to express visceral response to places." Opening reception Jan 5, 7-9pm; gallery hours Sat & Sun 12-4pm during exhibitions. 2333 Government St, Suite 6E, 250-382-0442, www.xchangesgallery.org.



"Sea Breeze" by Ken Faulks, 16 x 20 inches, oil on panel

WEST END GALLERY

FEATURING ARTISTS
FROM ACROSS BRITISH COLUMBIA
JANUARY 6-25, 2018
1203 BROAD STREET OPEN DAILY
250-388-0009 WESTENDGALLERYLTD.COM

MADRONA GALLERY

"Beside Calvert" Corrinne Wolcoski, 36 x 36 inches, oil on canvas

Corrinne Wolcoski : Rivers Inlet
February 3 - 17, 2017
Opening Reception February 3, 1-4pm
606 View Street • 250.380.4660 • www.madronagallery.com

GAGE GALLERY
ARTS COLLECTIVE

NOW AND THEN

MARTINA EDMONDSON
Show runs January 16–27, 2018
Artist's reception: Thursday January 18, 5–8 PM
2031 Oak Bay Ave 250-592-2760 gagegallery.ca

ALCHERINGA GALLERY

Prints From A Perfect Vintage
The personal collection of Roy Henry Vickers
Saturday February 3 - Wednesday February 28, 2017

Joe David *(featured above)*
Robert Davidson
Ron Hamilton
Art Thompson

WWW.ALCHERINGA-GALLERY.COM
621 Fort St • 250.383.8224 • alcheringa@islandnet.com

Black History Month • Throughout February

VICTORIA MAY SEEM BLANDLY, BLITHELY BRITISH, but the population here includes a healthy and diverse smattering of close-knit sub-communities who identify themselves by their cultural and ethnic heritage. The contributions of these communities are many, but they aren't always visible, appreciated, or acknowledged.

Black History Month in Victoria is a passion project for devoted community members who have formed the British Columbia Black History Awareness Society (BCBHAS). Sylvia Mangue is the president, and explains that even the UN is urging more dialogue and awareness among cultures in any given town. "There are key issues that people should talk about in their communities; not only for black people, but for everybody," she says.

"The purpose of celebrating Black History Month in Victoria is to make people aware of the contributions and achievements of black people in Canada, not just here in Victoria, but throughout the country." Entertaining and educational events are planned throughout the month of February; most are by donation. It kicks off with an informational event on Saturday, February 3, noon to 3:00 pm, at the main branch of the Library on Broughton. Members will be available with displays, posters and to talk about upcoming events and answer questions.

At the Belfry Theatre on February 12, 7pm, energizing live music and spoken word combine to create an evening to add some excitement to the pre-spring darkness. Ann-Bernice Thomas, Youth Poet Laureate 2016 for the City of Victoria, will read some of her work, and Vancouver vocalist Cathy Essombe will perform with her band, Ardent Tribe, providing rock, blues, soul, and pop inspired by Tina Turner, Wilson Pickett, David Bowie, and Santana. BCBHAS has joined forces with VACCS (Victoria African Community Cultural Society) to produce the concert, and tickets are by donation.

Speaker Michael Regis of Dispute Resolution, UVic will discuss his research on policing on Sunday, Feb 18; and on Feb 23, there will be a guided tour of the graves of Black pioneers at Ross Bay Cemetery.

Mangue is determined to help community groups network. On January 31, leaders from other small ethnic and cultural communities in Victoria have been invited to a special private reception at City Hall, with an aim to build connections among them all. "We need to make people aware;" Mangue asserts, "there is an Islamic group, a Sikh group, a Jewish group…we must let [these groups] know we exist as a community, like they are. It's about networking, and getting to know each other…different people in our community make it stronger."

For a comprehensive list of all Black History Month offerings, see http://bcblackhistory.ca/index.php/events or pick up an events booklet at any Greater Victoria Public Library branch. *—Mollie Kaye*

"BLACK SPARKLE" MEGHAN HILDEBRAND, 17.5 X 25 INCHES, WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER

January 13-27

PULP AND PROCESS III

Madrona Gallery

This third installment of Pulp + Process is focused on the diversity of paper as a medium. Included are a collection of watercolour, pastel, acrylic, collage, mixed media, graphite, ink and coloured pencil works by select gallery artists. Highlighted in this exhibition will be the work of Diana Thorneycroft (see page 38). Other artists included in the show are David Antonides, Barry Hodgson, Nicotye Samayualie, Pudlo Samayualie, Hashim Hanoon, Meghan Hildebrand, Luke Ramsey, Morgana Wallace. Opening reception Jan 13, 1-4pm. 606 View St, 250-380-4660, www.madronagallery.com.

WWW.JDSTEVENSONGALLERY.COM

JD STEVENSON GALLERY

ROBERT SEARS

KEN KIRBY

KEITH HISCOCK

9768 WILLOW STREET CHEMAINUS BC
JDSTEVENSONGALLERY@GMAIL.COM
250.324.1395

"LAST TRAIN TO GEORGIA" EUNMI CONACHER, 36 X 36 INCHES, MIXED MEDIA ON PANEL

Throughout January & February

EUNMI CONACHER

The Avenue Gallery

Eunmi Conacher began her artistic journey in Seoul, Korea where she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. With a thirst to learn more, she went on to continue her artistic studies at the University of Sydney, Australia, earning a post graduate Diploma in Visual Arts. In 1996, Conacher immigrated to Canada, settling in Whistler, and later moving to Vancouver Island. She became an active member of The Federation of Canadian Artists in 2008, an elected member of the Society of Canadian Artists in 2013, and received her AFCA designation in 2015.

Conacher's broad travels influence this latest series of abstracted cityscapes.

Artist statement: "I describe myself as a contemporary impressionist and expressionist artist. My desire is to create paintings which bring energy to the canvas. My work is more an expression of the mood in the scene rather than a realistic picture of the scene. I use depth of colour to balance realism and abstract. My use of colour, form, and texture is intuitive. My hope is that the viewers connect emotionally with the painting in their own way. The result I strive for is a painting from the heart."

2184 Oak Bay Ave, 250-598-2184, www.theavenuegallery.com.

Pacific Baroque Festival • February 15 - 18

Chantal Rémillard

Marc Destrubé

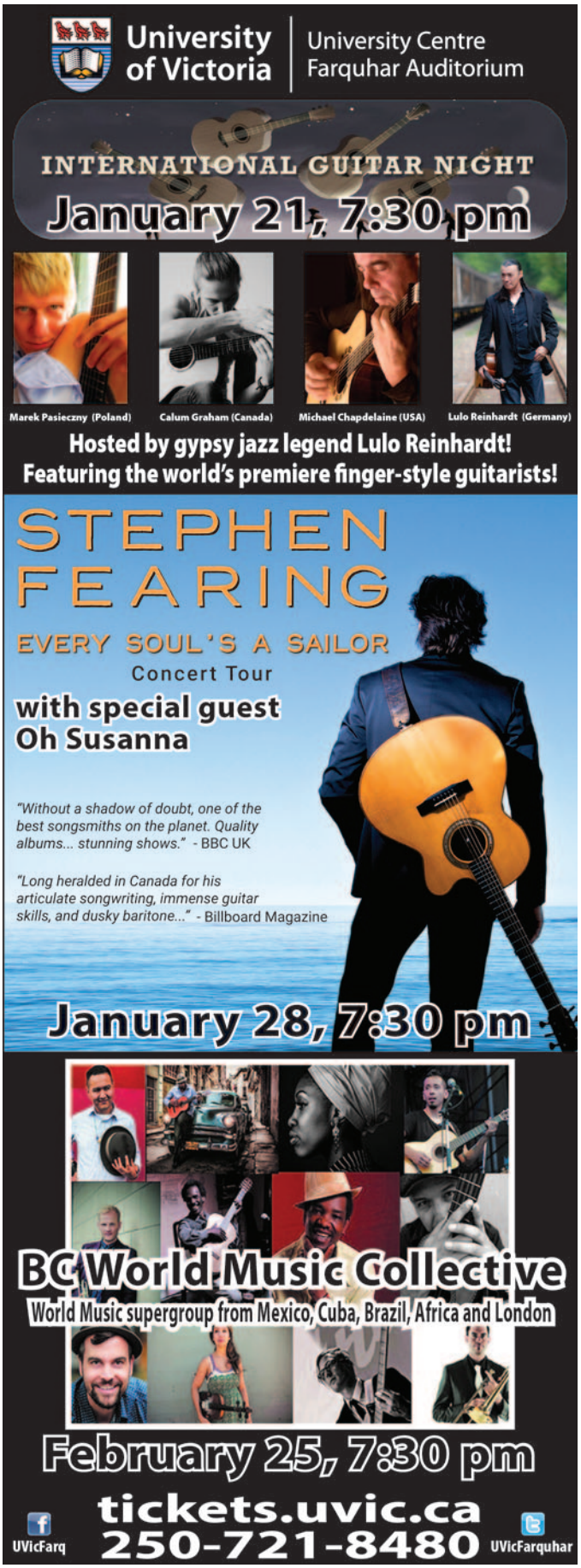
THE BAROQUE-ERA HARPSICHORD IS SMALL, BUT MIGHTY. Unlike its massive, percussive, later-arriving cousin the pianoforte, the strings inside the light and dainty wooden case are plucked instead of hammered, yet provide a rich, powerful, chord-booming lower register. Baroque music, with its myriad trills and ornaments, gives this instrument ample opportunities to show off its crispness of attack and precision in note delineation. And as a melodic voice, it mesmerizes, with the resonance of the plucked strings creating layer upon layer of pleasing harmonic complexity.

If you're a fan of this instrument, you can hear it in all its glory this February, performing the works of one of the great masters of Baroque harpsichord music. We're all familiar with the Bachs, but another celebrated musical dynasty of 17th and 18th century Europe was the Couperin family. This year, the Pacific Baroque Festival's theme is "Le Grand Siècle: Music in the Glow of the Sun King." It will celebrate the 350th anniversary of François Couperin ("Le Grand"), the Johann Sebastian of this French tribe, who authored possibly the most comprehensive and stunning works for the *clavecin*.

Couperin also wrote many works for pipe organ, and keyboardist Michael Jarvis handles both instruments deftly in this series of concerts all centring around the court of France's Louis XIV, "The Sun King." There are five concerts in all, featuring a large range of string instruments and vocalists, and will also include works by Couperin contemporaries Jean-Marie Leclair, Marin Marais, and J.S. Bach. The Couperin offerings will include a sumptuous trio sonata, "L'Impériale," and a performance of one of the masterpieces of French baroque music, his surviving three "Leçons des Ténèbres," for two sopranos, viol da gamba, and basso continuo.

The Festival will feature Montreal violinist Chantal Rémillard performing, with festival director Marc Destrubé, several of the extraordinary sonatas for two violins by Couperin's younger contemporary Leclair, often described as the "Corelli of France." The two violinists' recording of the works has garnered high praise. John Keillor of the *Georgia Straight* writes, "Destrubé and Rémillard's luminescent dialogues are so coherent that the listener feels privileged to overhear them. The players are so honest and unreserved together that anyone can instantly hear the musical intimacy in operation here and marvel at it."

Also performing will be St Christopher's Singers; Hélène Brunet, soprano; Alexander Weimann, organ; Catherine Webster, soprano; Benjamin Butterfield, tenor; Nathan McDonald, baritone; Soile Stratkauskas, baroque flute; Natalie Mackie, viola da gamba, violone; Michael Jarvis, harpsichord, organ; and The Victoria Children's Choir. Festival pass, $100; tickets $20-30, pacbaroque.com, 250-386-5311, or at Ivy's, Tanner's, Munro's, Long & McQuade.—Mollie Kaye



A decolonizing dance

ROBIN J MILLER

The Dancers of Damelahamid confront us with the richness of Indigenous art, past and present.

PHOTO: DEREK DIX IMAGE AND DESIGN

Jeanette Kotowich, Margaret Grenier and Raven Grenier in "Flicker"

It seems unthinkable now, but the third section of the *Indian Act*, signed on April 19, 1884, once declared that:

"Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the 'Potlatch' or in the Indian dance known as the 'Tamanawas' is guilty of a misdemeanour, and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than six nor less than two months in any gaol or other place of confinement…"

"The Potlatch ban," says Margaret Grenier, artistic director and choreographer of Dancers of Damelahamid, "made it illegal to practice song and dance and wear regalia. And that meant, for many families and communities, they lost their song and dance. Their very histories were wiped out." Fortunately for her Gitxsan family, however, "my grandmother, Irene Harris, made an effort to document it and, after the ban was lifted [in 1951], we had someone who knew the songs and dances."

Irene taught them to her children, who taught them to their children, who have now taught them to yet another generation—the result of which you can see on stage this January at the McPherson Playhouse in a visually vivid and beautiful production called "Flicker."

A flicker is a woodpecker native to the Northwest Coast. It appears often in coastal art and mythology. "For this production," says Grenier, "the flicker is embodied by a young man who is on a personal journey, a journey to find self, and is about his ability to navigate through different worlds, including the spirit world of his ancestors. But 'Flicker' is also a metaphor. It's also about the flickering of light and how a flame needs to be nourished to stay alive—just like our art forms of song and dance need to be nourished."

Margaret Grenier's parents, Ken and Margaret Harris, founded Dancers of Damelahamid in the 1960s as a way to ensure that the songs, dances and regalia of their ancestors were not lost, and to allow the public to experience what once had been a private practice, seen only within Gitxsan feast halls.

Named after the original city where, according to Gitxsan legend, the first ancestors were placed on Earth from heaven, the company has always been primarily a family affair. Margaret started dancing in it when she was a child. "I think what I realized growing up is that it was a lot more than dance for me," she says. "It helped to define me as an Indigenous person and really shaped my identity."

Today, based in Vancouver, she continues to dance in the company while her husband Andrew Grenier, a former Damelahamid dancer, now sings and serves as creative producer, responsible for creating the sets and magnificent regalia for each new production. Her two children also dance, and her mother, Margaret Harris, continues to cast her eye over each new production. "In my heart," says Grenier, "I know that what supports a healthy community, a healthy family, is having all the generations connected. Elders and young people sharing knowledge and teaching each other."

The works created by Dancers of Damelahamid today are not simply a continuation of ancient practices, of Elders teaching youngsters the old songs and dances. As "Flicker" demonstrates, Damelahamid is also an up-to-date dance company, combining elements of coastal masked dance with the very latest in high-tech lighting and immersive, multi-media projected environments. (Anyone who saw Pacific Opera Victoria's production of "Missing" in November will recognize the impressive design work of Andy Moro here, too.)

Grenier, who took over the company in 2006, also trained in contemporary dance, and performed with companies including Vancouver's Karen Jamieson Dance. "I realized that when my parents started in the 1960s, it was all about bringing back and saving the hereditary dances," she says. Every gesture and movement needed to be as authentic as possible to ensure their preservation, but now, "my intent is to remain open to the beautiful, creative abilities of different contributors, to be still rooted in our traditions, but not stifled by them." The company's current productions are therefore no longer based on hereditary songs and dances. "'Flicker' is

a newly-created work with an original narrative, original songs and dances, as well as newly-created regalia."

The result, says Stephen White, executive producer of Dance Victoria, "is a performance that my colleague, Bernard Sauvé, believed we absolutely needed to share. He was completely enthralled and said he felt privileged to be in the audience when he saw 'Flicker' at the Canada Dance Festival in Ottawa last year, which is why we decided to present it as the big event of Dance Days 2018."

A pre-show, on-stage discussion—"By Invitation Only: Dance, Confederation and Reconciliation"—will delve into stories of how women and dance were essential to the 1864 conferences that led to Confederation, and how Indigenous dance was banned after Confederation in an attempt to culturally suppress and assimilate Indigenous peoples.

Says Grenier, "'Flicker' is a work that's a reflection of my world as an artist, set on the foundation taught by my parents. It is these voices from the past that I believe will help us get to a better place. When we talk about things like reconciliation and decolonization, what it boils down to is helping people know and be their true selves. There is so much richness to Indigenous art and artists, but most people have not had an opportunity to really hear and know the diversity of those voices, those pasts. I hope that our work will help open up the world to hear and see these other artists too."

Dance Victoria presents "Flicker," with Dancers of Damelahamid, January 19, 7:30pm, at McPherson Playhouse. Dance Days 2018, January 19 - 28: Free dance classes across Victoria, six new contemporary dance pieces at the Metro Theatre, and free community workshop by Dancers of Damelahamid on Indigenous coastal dance at the Songhees Wellness Centre on Saturday, January 20th, 10:00 - 11:30am. Tickets and information: dancevictoria.com.

Victoria-based Robin J. Miller writes for national and international arts publications, and for business and government clients across Canada.

Stephen Fearing: Every Soul's a Sailor

MOLLIE KAYE

One of Canada's most acclaimed songwriters plays Victoria—his new home.

PHOTO: MARK MARYANOVICH

Stephen Fearing

When I sit down with acclaimed Canadian singer-songwriter and guitarist Stephen Fearing, the first thing I want to know is how he ended up living in Minneapolis 35 years ago. Knowing what a hotbed of songwriting talent it's been, I wonder if this Vancouver-born, Ireland-raised son of musicians made a calculated, early-career decision to put himself in close proximity to Prince, Tom Waits, and the legendary First Avenue nightclub (also, it was my home for awhile).

As we sip steaming beverages on a rainy morning at Discovery Coffee, the tall, lanky, bespectacled Fearing tells me no, it was way more random than that. In his final year of high school, he became fast friends with a kid named Paul who arrived in Dublin as a foreign student from Minnesota. "He was a classic midwestern Minnesotan young man, and because I was born in Canada, there was a tenuous connection," he laughs. When they graduated, Paul asked Fearing what he planned to do next. "I didn't have a clue, so I went to visit him in Minneapolis."

After witnessing the empowered life young adults were enjoying in America ("freedom personified"), Fearing turned his visit into a two-year stay. He was a cultural novelty and social success as an "Irish guy." In Minneapolis, he had his first girlfriend, paid cheap rent, got odd jobs under the table, and played his first gigs—in the myriad coffeehouses scattered around the Twin Cities. Without realizing it, he'd landed in something of a singer-songwriter's paradise, a "perfect place…a great place to start doing what I've done."

Escaping "financially depressed" Ireland during the dark, punk-rock Thatcher era was a primary goal of many young Dubliners in Fearing's generation, and Minneapolis was indeed a fortuitous place to land, given the overall trajectory of the music industry. "What I didn't understand in Minneapolis was that I was getting this great education in live performance," a skill set so essential—now more than ever—to his ability to support himself as a modern-day musician. "[Performing] is what I love to do, and as much as I love making records, I don't make my living from that."

Sellout crowds have been a hallmark of Fearing's 2017 North American and European tour. The music business, he says, has had an inversion: Artists used to make recordings in the studio, and tour to support the sale of those albums. Up until a few years ago, he explains, it was "the record gets airplay, and people buy it in quantities so that you don't have to tour—touring was a loss leader so they could sell more records; a way to visit the territories and get the DJs on side." Now, he says, "it's the other way around; the record gets me a little bit of attention, so when I play live, I can get an audience. The only way for me to make a living is live work."

Fearing's most recent solo recording, *Every Soul's a Sailor*, is his ninth. It is beautifully written and produced; highlights include the crooning, swoon-worthy title track, and an Arlo Guthrie-esque political rant on Trump, called "Blowhard Nation." The entire album has garnered impressive critical praise.

"I love making records. I love going into the studio and spending hours and hours tweaking stuff." The trouble, he says, is that the care he takes doesn't necessarily translate into people hearing what he intended for them to hear. Digitization, compression, and distribution through streaming sites like Spotify means "it ends up on somebody's iPad, crushed down into a tiny file that sounds like crap. There's no way around that, except to fly around on airplanes, and have a carbon footprint as big as Sasquatch."

His upcoming performance in Victoria will require minimal carbon; he will traverse a few blocks of Foul Bay Road to get himself and his guitar to UVic's Farquhar auditorium to play with bassist Rob Becker and drummer Leon Power. Fearing and his family moved to Oak Bay a couple of years ago from Halifax, and the change has been a good one, he says. Between performing on the road and madly renovating the heritage home they bought, he hasn't experienced a whole lot of the social landscape. Closer proximity to family, he says, coupled with economics, inspired the relocation from east to west, but as he's getting to know this place, he likes it a lot.

Twenty-first century Victoria has surprised him in many ways; the artisanal startup businesses—and the youthful passion making them succeed—impress him. "I lived in Vancouver, and I would never have moved to Victoria back then. It was this provincial, snooty place where your parents went to have a holiday. That is so no longer the case…the hipster, gen-Y or whatever it is thing is pretty impressive,

> "I KEEP THINKING IF I HANG IN LONG ENOUGH, there's a sort of 'geezer factor' that comes along."
>
> —*Stephen Fearing*

how people are drilling down and reinventing the wheel. I grew up where milk was delivered in horse-drawn wagons…pre-superstores, pre-even-large-grocery stores. There was the butcher, green grocer, baker—people here are rediscovering and reinventing that, with small businesses making the best coffee, the best prosciutto, the best pizza—wrapping it all up in 'this amazing paper [their] friend makes up-Island out of rice husks,'" he says with a laugh.

Fearing, a founding member of the Juno-winning band Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, is something of an artisan himself—a crafter of lyrics and melodies that rely heavily on low-tech, old-world, time-honed skills. "What I do is quaint," he says. "I play and sing. I'm more connected to the minstrels of the court than what's being played on the CBC top 20. Change is happening very quickly, everywhere…I keep thinking if I hang in long enough, there's a sort of 'geezer factor' that comes along," he laughs, alluding to the older songwriters who enjoy a resurgence of popularity when the young and hip rediscover them.

He's certainly made himself relevant with his "Blowhard Nation" song, written in the earliest days of Trump's efforts as a candidate. "I don't wanna live in a blowhard nation / With a king in a tinselly crown / When the whole thing wobbles and the wheels come off / You know what's gonna go down," goes the opening line. "At the time, Trump seemed like a loud-mouthed distraction," Fearing recalls. "I thought, 'Why am I writing this song, they'd be insane to elect him, he'd never become president, there's no way.' I couldn't believe the arrogance of this person, and thought I might pull [the song] out now and then…I'd say to the crowd, 'Remember him?' Maybe I'd play it once a year…But then Trump became leader of the Republican Party, and then he got elected, and holy fuck, I thought, 'I'm gonna be singing this song every day for the next two years—or four years." Fearing's face dissolves into an all-too-common grimace of fear and exasperation. "I just can't imagine four years."

Happily, Fearing's next four years will surely include more touring and performing, since audiences keep enthusiastically gathering to hear him do his thing. The BBC calls him "without a shadow of doubt, one of the best songsmiths on the planet. Quality albums…stunning shows." As long as he can carry on, he says, and manage the physical demands of being on the road, he'll continue to do what he loves most—what he learned to do so very well in the coffeehouses and restaurants of Minneapolis back in 1980.

Stephen Fearing and his trio will perform in the concert "Every Soul's a Sailor," Sunday, January 28, 7:30pm, Farquhar Auditorium, UVic. Tickets: student/alumni $28, general $38, University Centre Ticket Centre, tickets.uvic.ca or 250-721-8480.

Writer and singer Mollie Kaye, who performs with The Millies, lived in Minneapolis for 15 years, starting in 1989. She played in many of the same venues Stephen Fearing did.

2018 summer studio workshops
june 23 - july 6

choose from 2-day 5-day or 9-day workshops.

- screen printing
- ceramics
- pin hole photography
- bookbinding
- felting
- printing on colored clay
- creative writing
- basket weaving
- watercolor
- metallic painting
- textiles
- screen writing
- drawing & pastels
- mixed media
- mentored independent studies + more

METCHOSIN INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

BURSARIES AVAILABLE FOR EMERGING & ESTABLISHED ARTISTS
application deadline march 30

register today at **missa.ca**

BC Black History/Heritage Day 2018

Displays, information, artifacts

Speaker: Micheal Regis
Greater Victoria Police and Local Ethno-Cultures

Church of Truth
111 Superior St
By Donation

Classical Carl.
Dr. Carl Ivey

BC Black History Concert 2017

An Evening of Spoken Word, Rock, Blues, Soul Music. Feb 12, Belfry 7 pm

Youth Poet Laureate
Ann-Bernice Thomas

Cathy Essombe
Ardent Tribe Band

See More Events www.bcblackhistory.ca

On the relationship between theatre and memory

MONICA PRENDERGAST

A Belfry production looks at the grief and panic of losing one's life partner to Alzheimer's.

Theatre has always been about memory. The act of memorization is at the heart of theatre; actors have to face the challenge of memorizing their character's lines and also the blocking, cues, costume and set changes that happen throughout a performance. This memorization work can feel daunting as an actor ages. I know more than one actor who has left the stage because the memory work became too hard.

I found myself back on stage in November at Langham Court Theatre. As a trained actor in my mid-50s, I am finding that memory work is harder than it used to be. My mind does not multitask the way it did in my younger years. The words don't just drop into place. I have to use memorization tricks, such as finding a keyword in one line that springboards into the thought of the next line. Running lines a number of times a day, carrying my script with me wherever I go, going through it silently while riding the bus; these are all ways that helped me cement my lines in Michel Tremblay's *Les Belles-Soeurs* so that they finally became fluid and the effort to recall them lessened.

It is not surprising that playwrights are writing more plays about memory loss as the Baby Boomers age. This generation is living longer than any prior one, and so is also suffering with diseases like Alzheimer's at a higher rate. I saw Quebecois playwright François Archambault's lovely play *You Will Remember Me* in Calgary a couple of years ago. In it, a history professor suffering from late-stage Alzheimer's is abandoned by his wife and left with his estranged daughter to care for him.

Langham Court Theatre mounted another play on this topic last season—*Taking Leave* by American playwright Nagle Jackson—featuring an English professor stricken by the same disease. (Note to self: What is it about academics losing their minds in these plays?) Alongside plays on this topic are movies such as *Still Alice*, *Away From Her* and *Iris*. It begins to feel like an aging generation's collective anxiety about losing one's mind is leaking into our dramas on stage and screen.

So it is that the Belfry is premiering Vancouver playwright Jill Daum's play *Forget About Tomorrow* in January. Daum is married to singer/songwriter John Mann, the lead singer of folk rock band Spirit of the West. Mann was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's in 2015 at the age of 51. In 2016 he went on a farewell tour with the band, reading his lyrics off an iPad onstage. Mann has written two songs that are heard in Daum's play.

PHOTO: VIDEO STILL FROM "SPIRIT UNFORGETTABLE"

Jill Daum

PHOTO: VIDEO STILL FROM "SPIRIT UNFORGETTABLE"

John Mann

Daum (one of the creators and performers of *Mom's The Word*) has written a play about Alzheimer's that looks at the very early stages of this experience. The fictional Jane (a stand-in for Daum) is long married to husband Tom, a therapist. He complains about feeling anxious and down, and has had to lower his caseload as a result. Finally, Tom goes to a neurologist who diagnoses him with early onset Alzheimer's. The play goes on to explore how this news plays out for Jane, their two adult children, and for Tom himself. Jane finds herself lost in her grief and panic and these overwhelming emotions lead her to do something she will regret. Daum's play pushes an audience to come to terms with their own potential responses to the illness of a loved one. Will we have what it takes to get through?

It makes sense for Daum to have focused on the role of the wife and primary caregiver as the protagonist of her play. She, after all, has been Mann's caregiver since his diagnosis. As Daum said in a CBC interview last year: "Things just get harder and you have to constantly adapt to it getting more and more difficult—and the person you love getting farther and farther away. I mean, there's a reason why people are terrified of this disease; it's very hard."

I was curious to hear from the play's director Michael Shamata (also artistic director of the Belfry) about how and why he chose this play. He tells me, via email, "I saw a reading of an early draft of this play at the Vancouver Fringe Festival a couple of years ago. Jill had invited me to attend, as she was wanting me to work with her on its development.

"The play is about a woman who is in denial about the role she is going to have to play as her husband's caregiver—and her husband is still in his prime. The journey of the play is her acceptance of the hand that fate has dealt her. So it addresses Alzheimer's not through a portrait of the victim, but by looking at someone who is being put in the position of becoming a life-long caregiver—and eventually an Alzheimer's widow." And yet, he says, it is also very funny.

I asked Shamata about what he felt might be some of the challenges staging this play. He replied: "One challenge will be keeping the play flowing along smoothly. Jill has written a series of short scenes—which is entirely appropriate for a play that needs to follow the unfolding of the health issue—but that makes it a challenge to move from location to location. I am excited about the approach we are taking to the design.

"Another challenge will be finding the quality of openness and almost naiveté with which playwright Jill Daum approaches life. The lead character is not intended to be Jill, but as she has written it, the actress who plays the leading role will need to find that same clear-eyed and progressive attitude that Jill possesses."

> "THE JOURNEY OF THE PLAY is her acceptance of the hand that fate has dealt her." —*Michael Shamata*

Speaking of casting, Shamata has cast some excellent Vancouver actors to tackle these tough roles. Jennifer Lines plays Jane and she is onstage for the whole play. Craig Erickson plays her husband Tom, while Colleen Wheeler plays Jane's friend and employer Jill. I have seen these three in various Vancouver productions at Bard on the Beach, the Arts Club and here at the Belfry. No doubt the acting quality of the production will be high.

Finally, I wanted to know what Shamata hopes audiences for this play will take home with them afterwards. He tells me, "The play is a celebration of loving relationships. It is a celebration of those who commit to living with their partner through whatever challenges life may put in their way. Therefore, I hope that audiences feel an affirmation of their own loving relationships—and also see the beauty in giving selflessly to another—the beauty that arises from meeting a challenge—despite incredible fear and disappointment and sadness."

Theatre itself is a metaphor for many of these things Shamata names. Theatre-making is hugely demanding, so much so that devoting one's life to it involves facing a lot of fear, disappointment and sadness. The end of every performance, rooted in memory work, is always accompanied by a sense of loss. The loss of the transitory and ephemeral experience of a play that goes on to exist only in the memory. When those memories themselves are lost to diseases like Alzheimer's, so too is the essence of a life, both onstage and in the real world we are all living and dying in. One day at a time.

Forget About Tomorrow *runs from January 23 to February 18 at the Belfry Theatre. Tickets are available at www.belfry.bc.ca or by phone at 250-385-6815.* Focus *is a sponsor of this production.*

Monica hopes that 2018 will prove to be a year in which she finds the time to test her memory with more theatre work. Her latest book, co-edited with Will Weigler, is *Web of Performance: A Workbook for Youth*.

Whale in the Door

AMY REISWIG

Author Pauline Le Bel's personal journey of losses, learning, and hope for Howe Sound.

Outside Pauline Le Bel's front window on Kwilákm/Bowen Island, the Coast Mountains become something new. In what maps call Mount Strachan, Le Bel sees the head of a Sleeping Woman whose pregnant belly carries much more than the mundane name of Saint Mark's Peak. Sometimes blanketed in snow, sometimes clothed in cloud, the reclined giant faces the sky and silently tells a new story—one about seeing differently, seeing what could be, seeing with love.

Written under that view, Le Bel's new book, *Whale in the Door: A Community Unites to Protect BC's Howe Sound* (Caitlin Press), is all about making space for a new story to shape the way we see and approach the land.

A spectacular fjord reaching inward from the Strait of Georgia, with Gibsons on one side and West Van on the other, Atl'kitsem/Howe Sound stretches 42 kilometres up to Squamish. Historically home to the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw/Squamish Nation, Captain Vancouver named this area after Admiral Earl Howe, someone who Le Bel notes never laid foot or eye on its beauty. From mountains she calls "custodians" of the forests, to the deep regions of the ancient glass sponge reefs, Howe Sound is and has been many things to many people, and Le Bel chronicles ways in which use of the Sound has divided people. More importantly, she has now begun to unite those who dare to see it differently—to see, as Le Bel writes, with "eyes that have learned to see source, and not just resource."

Pauline Le Bel

Whale in the Door is partly a chronicle of Le Bel's own learning. From First Nations history to modern industrial despoilment to current ecological and cultural renewal, Le Bel digs into what has shaped this sharp stretch of land and water. Though full of information even locals will likely not know, it's not at all academic. While her previous book, *Becoming Initimate with the Earth*, took its energy from sadness and loss, this one, she tells me, is born out of gratitude and love.

As in any love story, it's all about relationship. Le Bel came to the area 19 years ago, at first falling for the green winters of Vancouver during an eye-opening work trip from Edmonton, and eventually settling on Bowen. A professional artist who's made a living in theatre, music and writing—and won an Emmy nomination for her feature-length drama *The Song Spinner* (also an award-winning novel)—she says the Muses descended upon her with extra force the week after she arrived on Bowen. She was inspired, breathed into. For a curious, bold, and energetic doer like Le Bel, that also meant learning and being changed.

One of her core beliefs, she tells me by phone, is that we are born not just into a place, but into the stories of that place. Which means when we move or exchange places, we can therefore seek out and meet the stories of a new place. That is precisely what Le Bel has poured herself into, and what she shares here.

As a result, *Whale in the Door* is more personal than history or journalism. With her, the reader learns things they'd never know unless, like Le Bel, they went salmon counting or looking for forage fish embryos on the beach with a marine biologist or interviewed industry executives or humbly listened to First Nations Elders over bowls of soup.

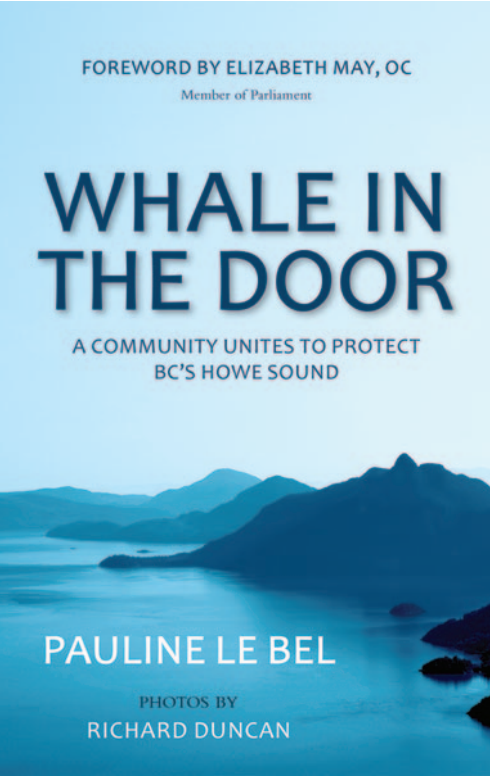
Yes, we learn shocking stories about Howe Sound becoming one of the most polluted places in North America, thanks to pulp mills, mining, chemical plants and other industrial use. But remember, this is a book about relationship. Losses and damage on the land and in the water mean great losses and damage first and foremost to the First Nations whose lives have for centuries been tied to that land and water.

Le Bel's care, not just as a writer but as a person, is what leads us into the book's heart, and hers. Her desire to connect means we get introduced to individuals living the story of Howe Sound, like Randall Lewis, environmental advisor for the Squamish Nation and president of the Squamish River Watershed Society. He remembers football practice in 1973 when a chemical plant explosion sent up orange-green clouds, and Elders warned not to eat the berries and plants. He recalls how a 2005 CN derailment sent fish jumping out of the Cheakamus River to escape the burning caustic soda. And when in the late '80s DFO shut down the crab and shrimp fishing in Howe Sound because of dioxin and furan levels, Elders continued eating the seafood because, as Lewis explained, "there was no other choice and that's all they knew."

But the Howe Sound story is also one of activism and hope, for we see many sectors of the community pulling together to create a new narrative, one of environmental and cultural renewal. Whether it's large-scale industry change, elementary school Squamish language classes, or eelgrass, estuary, and food restoration projects, we see the growing commitment among Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to work together to change the story—a story where people and place are inseparable. We become more aware of the need to recognize relationship. As Randall Lewis told Le Bel: "If you want to fix things, fix the land. We need to make the spirit of the land strong again. If the land is strong, it will make our spirit strong. And future generations will receive the blessings of the land." That goes for all of us here.

> “RECLAIM, REFRAME AND RENAME —without shame.”
>
> —*Pauline Le Bel*

With a foreword by federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May, the book celebrates successes, but begs for caution with regard to future plans. The resilient but still recovering area faces pipelines, a gravel mine, resorts, commercial and residential developments, an estuary-impacting connector road and, looming largest, the proposed Woodfibre LNG plant which is again dividing communities. “Of course we need industry,” Le Bel tells me. “It’s how we do it.” And how we do it depends on the story underneath it. What we need to ask, she says, is: “What story will help us live well?”



Le Bel sees the artist’s role as “reclaim, reframe and rename—without shame.” She hopes the book will inspire people in other communities to realize that the kind of renewal going on in Howe Sound is achievable elsewhere. “It’s a good book for any community wanting to take charge and get that connection,” she says. “It’s possible.”

It’s possible to look differently at what’s outside your window. Most people look at the mountains we call the Lions, but don’t know the story of Chíchiyuy, the Twins or the Sisters, and their example of how conflict can be resolved with dignity, respect, and peace. People climb what they call the Chief but don’t know the story of Siyam Smanit. We can learn. We should learn. Imaginatively giving the area itself a say by writing in the voice of Howe Sound, a voice inspired by her Sleeping Woman, Le Bel says: “In this place, you may come to understand the meaning of your own life.” Heading into a new year is the perfect time to ask: What role can I play?

Part of Whale in the Door*’s proceeds will be donated to Squamish Nation youth programs.*

Having grown up with a glass sponge expert father, writer and editor Amy Reiswig always gets excited when someone else, like Le Bel, knows what they are!

Blood, sweat and Tavish Campbell

BRIONY PENN

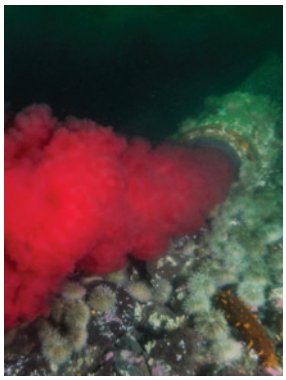
One man's graphic video evidence spawns new awareness of fish farming dangers—and a government review.

Tavish Campbell

It is midnight on Baranof Island, off the coast of southeast Alaska. Tavish Campbell, captain of the schooner *Maple Leaf*, has woken all of us up—crew and guests—to witness a mysterious phenomenon: the mass migration of small opalescent squid to spawn. The water is shimmering with millions of squid that have made their way up from deep on the continental shelf to spawn in the shallow bay in which we are anchored. Few people other than fishermen witness this summer spectacle, and it takes a certain passionate eye with experience to anticipate this kind of event.

Campbell has shared many of these types of moments with people around the world, whether it is the lucky guests aboard the ecotourism boats he captains, or the followers of his powerful videography blog. His latest video has gone viral, but it isn't about squid or the extraordinary diversity of life on our coast—it is about blood…diseased blood, and lots of it.

On November 27, Campbell released his mini-doc *Blood Water*, documenting an underwater pipe spewing out blood and guts from a fish processing plant at Brown's Bay, right on the edge of Discovery Passage, through which one-third of BC's wild salmon migrate. The video points to the poorly-regulated and under-monitored treatment of waste from processing Atlantic salmon from open net fish farms. These farmed salmon threaten the native species, first when they are alive, and then when they are dead, by exposing them to viruses in the offal and blood. *Blood Water* is a visceral video, and was linked to and reported on by many news organizations.



Campbell was busy responding to calls about the video when I reached him where he lives in the Discovery Islands, near where the fish farms in the video operate. The response was international, and is finally getting the attention of the people that can change the narrative once and for all—Dominic Le Blanc, federal minister of fisheries and oceans; and George Heyman, BC minister of environment. On December 20, Heyman announced a review of fish farm processing plants to ensure that contaminated effluent does not endanger wild salmon stocks.

What has been most gratifying for Campbell is how the *Blood Water* video told the story of disease and viruses in a way that other attempts to raise public awareness of fish farming have failed over the years. "I was surprised at how far the video went and is still going. When we captured these images, we knew it was going to be an incredible opportunity to tell a story. Viruses are difficult things to show visually, and then suddenly the image was there to show viruses being released. What we have to do now is to direct the conversation, that even if the effluent is cleaned up, the fish are still infected by virus, and there is still the spread of disease to wild salmon."

The release of the video coincided with the 100th day of the occupation of two fish farms in the Broughton Archipelago by the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw, a cause which Campbell supports and hopes people will connect to the *Blood Water* issue. "We are all coastal people who care about salmon and want open net fish farming to stop."

Campbell has been working on environmental issues as long as he has held a camera and sailed a boat, which has been most of his life. He was described by the CBC "Current" program as a naturalist and underwater videographer, which he was pleased with. "Sure beats being called an activist!" he laughs. "An activist is someone who wants change. I just want the systems that have been around for thousands of years to stay the same. I think the radical activists are the corporations wanting to change everything."

Campbell is also a captain aboard various ecotourism boats like *Maple Leaf*, research vessels for organizations like Pacific Wild, and his own family mothership, *Columbia III*, which takes kayakers around the coast. A captain since he was 19, he has had the opportunity to explore a lot of the coast since his voyages on his first boat, which he and his twin sister, Farlan (also a captain), got at the age of 12. "We were allowed to sail anywhere on multi-day adventures as long as we could reach our parents on VHF radio. The only thing that limited us was the range of the radio."

Today, there are few places at which Campbell and his extended family haven't aimed their cameras. They still keep in touch from their respective boats by VHF. "Anytime we go out and poke around and ask questions, we find things that are surprising and unexpected." In his travels, Campbell has worked with the Heiltsuk nation documenting the impacts of the commercial herring kill industry—largely owned by Jimmy Pattison—that included filming the incredible herring spawns of Spiller Channel. That fishery has now been stopped in Heiltsuk territory. Some of his footage has been used in CBC's "Wild Canada" and BBC natural history productions.

He also captured the ill-fated tug *Nathan E. Stewart* when it grounded and leaked over 100,000 litres of diesel into the pristine waters near

> "AN ACTIVIST is someone who wants change. I just want the systems that have been around for thousands of years to stay the same. I think the radical activists are the corporations wanting to change everything." —*Tavish Campbell*

Bella Bella. "While my colleague April Bencze and I were documenting the damage, a hurricane-force storm came in. We spent the night out in Gale Pass where the boat ran aground, and got footage of the big storm and the tug being bashed out by the storm." It's worth noting: No one else was out there from the "world-class" oil-spill team at that point.

Campbell's biggest passion has been documenting the clearcutting of old growth around his home in the Discovery Islands. The government has failed to live up to the spirit and intent of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement, leaving decisions to industry. He attributes the problem to the BC Liberals' "professional reliance" system, currently under review, where government sets the management objectives to be achieved, and professionals hired by corporations decide how those objectives will be met. Critics call it the "fox guarding the hens." Professional reliance coupled with deregulation, leaves the public interest high and dry.

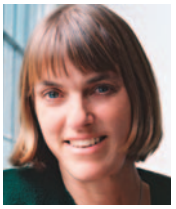
Campbell has recorded the details of the clearcuts, the stumps of old growth, the trashed wetlands, and riparian areas that even the companies' foresters haven't walked. He says, "The trouble is that no one is out on the land anymore, and the people who are, are involved in industry. That means people can get away with whatever they want because no one is watching. If a company's sole motive is making profit, they are going to do surprising things. We are always able to find something that shocks people."

For Campbell, the bigger story he wants to tell is that issues are related—from bloodwater to oilspills to clearcutting old growth. He also aims to encourage people to support a better regulatory system with rigorous, independent monitoring and oversight, instead of citizens having to monitor their own water and wildlife.

When *Blood Water* went viral, he was accused of having some bias. "People asked, 'Why are you doing these films, what is in it for you?' I was fortunate enough to grow up in the islands with a connection to the natural environment. If you see something you love getting hurt, you go to help, not because it benefits you, but because you care, and it hurts not to do something. It isn't theoretical or academic; I genuinely care about the area, and that is what drives me to do what I do."

Campbell fits his thoughtful documentations of coastal life into his work and spare time. It's a labour of love, like getting up at midnight to witness the opalescent squid migration. To get a sense of this labour, go to his other viral video, *This is Why I Care* (www.tavishcampbell.ca), and celebrate our wild beautiful place and the citizens who have tried to stop its destruction for the last 17 years.

If you are a community member who has seen land use practices that you don't feel are in the public interest, you can submit your comments to the Engage BC professional reliance input process available until January 19: www.engage.gov.bc.ca/professionalreliance/



Briony Penn's most recent book, *The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan*, won the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Prize and the inaugural Mack Laing Literary Prize.

Get your feet in shape for your next vacation

Cutera Genesis Plus Laser

Treatment can alleviate musculoskeletal injuries without medications or surgery. Arthritis pain, achilles tendinitis, neuromas, ankle sprains, plantar fasciitis, shin splints, and post-operative pain and swelling all respond well.

Laser treatment has also proven safe and effective in treating warts and toe nail fungus.

Dr. Gregg Congdon DPM, BSc.
Colette Polard RN, BSN

Ross Bay Health Centre

#16-1594 Fairfield Road
In Fairfield Plaza next to Heart Pharmacy

250.477.5433 • laseratrossbay.com

Blue Cross Direct Billing

Panis Angelicus

GENE MILLER

Could Victoria be a civilizational lifeboat in these crazy, conflict-prone times?

The start of a new year, and time for this column's annual post-Christmas bummer. "But, Gene, all your columns are—" Okay, let's move on.

Dropping all niceties, 2018, possibly less than a month old as you read, is damned if not doomed. In a world now operating on tightrope conditions, and in the absence of any snappier handles, I offer this mouthful: "The Year Converging Urgencies Become Emergencies."

Explanations are still congealing in the effort to explain a politically profane and socially toxic 2017 next door. Folks in my circle are clinging to the prayerful fantasy that Trump and the cohort who elected him are some kind of pothole in history's highway, some "time out for crazy," and not the new toll road.

I wouldn't underestimate Trump's canny ability to embody or exploit the raw edge of mood in America. Remember, he didn't come out of nowhere. He's the political expression of a years-building discontent based on real, not imaginary, conditions of growing social disunion and economic (and US hegemonic) decline. Trump's the smart version of something mob-angry and very dangerous right now: namely, America has a hole in its soul.

The values, sensibilities and practices of the progressive agenda (Canada in America, if I can put it that way) are undergoing both policy setback and the ruin of hope. In a likely foretaste of worse-to-come, Trump's gift of projecting his own bad values as political semiotics—winks, nudges, tweets, aggressive off-the-cuff vulgarities—has liberated and emboldened something tidal, dark, racial and xenophobic, re-expressing itself as the drumbeat of the so-called American alt-Right. Now, every under-the-rock hater and neo-conservative I-told-you-so has a float in the parade.

It's practically biblical, Old Testament redux: The Flood in the Book of Genesis—relevant, with the slightest of spins, as an ecological metaphor in our time of rising sea level. Mind, I heard the delicious story that the planet is warming because Hell is getting larger. In the era of Trump and the widening sins of the corporate oligarchy, that fits well with my ontology.

If the ship goes down, lifeboats will be in demand

While we might wish that our neighbour's mounting chaos stopped at the border, today's connected world doesn't work like that. Besides, the progressive agenda in many countries is retreating before "identitarian" politics grounded in culture and race, and yielding to murky, ever-shifting realignments based on "situational principles" as we enter a contractive, anti-globalist, neo-isolationist and altogether more positional era.

What's that word…*horripilation*? Trust your skin; it's a cognitive organ. We are in "all bets are off" times, and the Canadian challenge is to determine any possible means of culturally, economically, geo-politically surviving an unfolding and probably messy US meltdown able to take large swaths of the world with it. Given physical adjacency, economic entanglement and cultural porosity, we're hardly bystanders.

Build the hedge, Justin.

Of course, it could be too late for that, given national identity pretty much limited to universal health care and $2 coins. Trump just declared opioid abuse a "national emergency." The US is the per capita world leader in prescription opioid consumption. Number Two? Canada.

I'm mystified by the mutability and the apparent rejection—the why and the why now—of a value system whose corner-points seemed well-anchored and in good health just a US president ago. It feels as if mutuality has been abruptly, utterly, replaced by self-interest—"us" by "me"—and, in certain circles, the Good Book tossed in favour of *Mein Kampf*.

I digress to assure you that despite the churchy title, you don't have to wear your Sunday best to this column. *Panis Angelicus* (Bread of Angels) is a brief spoken portion of a longer church service, the *Sacris Solemnis*, written by St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1275):

The bread of angels
Becomes bread for mankind
The bread of heaven
Ends all worried thought
Oh, miraculous thing!
etc.

These serious and sacred lines may invite vigourous theological parsing (white, whole wheat or multigrain? for example), but seem to me simply to ask us to sustain our better natures if we wish to thrive as a human community.

Elsewhere, in his *Summa Theologica*, St Thomas boldly argues that the answer to "Why?" is "God." Blind to the mad circularity of that argument, he would, I imagine, reject an assessment of his ideas as proof of crazy assertiveness—a defining feature of our own times as well as his.

Crazy and correct—the surreal outcome that results when reality is asked to contain perverted, up-is-down logic. Israeli psychoanalyst Yolanda Gampel describes an "interminable uncanniness" that lurks within people experiencing residual Holocaust effects, having witnessed (and survived) the "unreal reality" of mass murder. "Such an assault on the boundary between fantasy and reality becomes traumatic in itself and leads to great fear of one's thoughts." Gampel means, I believe, that for such people reality never again quite meets at the corners, never "lands," and they remain wedded to anxiety for a lifetime.

The *New York Times*' Michelle Goldberg adds Trump-era currency: "there's no way, with a leader who lays siege to the fabric of reality, to fully hold on to a sense of what's normal."

You think your life embodies conventions and broadly agreed-to rules for conduct and, suddenly, those rules don't function, or they function badly. You push the button, nothing whirrs, nothing drops into the slot. Worriedly, problematically, this unreality reaches into the everyday, and whole societies are caught in unreal reality, in a strangely synthetic and fraught normalcy that doesn't quite meet

MY ASSESSMENT IS THIS: An extraordinary 3-generation, 70-year run of relative wellbeing is climaxing, and its conclusion is not likely to be "gracefully managed" or "transitional" or "incremental."

at the corners and that leaves all of us with a faint but nagging sense that we're operating in some fictional condition.

This raises a disturbing and provocative question: If some human community—oh, let's pick Victoria, out of thin air—was staring straight at the calamitous denouement of this onrushing near-future (to be called the Second Dark Age in its aftermath), could it stand sufficiently offside to re-cast itself as a preserver of social capital and sanity, activate strategic forms of preparedness, behave counter-chaotically; in essence, be a civilizational lifeboat? Or, with the world drowning in threat, would this place, lacking courage, character and means, collapse in survivalist mayhem?

The *Guardian*'s Paul Mason reported recently on a leaked German government worst-case scenario for the year 2040: "EU expansion has been largely abandoned, and more states have left the community. The increasingly disorderly, sometimes chaotic and conflict-prone world has dramatically changed the security environment."

"Conflict-prone world has dramatically changed the security environment." Quick, a synonym, please. World War III?

My assessment is this: An extraordinary 3-generation, 70-year run of relative wellbeing is climaxing, and its conclusion is not likely to be "gracefully managed" or "transitional" or "incremental." How will it climax? Not sure. When? Soon. How soon? Just...soon. Why? Street view: shit happens. Or slightly more thoughtfully: a collision of converging urgencies results in human systems and institutions hitting the limits of structure and elasticity, leading to spasm.

At the conclusion of Alexander Sokurov's stunning movie *Russian Ark*, the year is 1914 and the aristocracy, at the end of a gorgeous evening of hobnobbing and dancing, slowly descends the grand stairs of the Winter Palace, diffusing and vanishing into the St Petersburg night as if to greet the Russian future: that is, the soon-arriving 1917 Revolution with its 9 million "unnatural" deaths, including the execution of the entire royal family.

You may be feeling a growing irritation with this column's elaborate millenarian vision, but before pique gets the best of you, spend some time reading *New York Times* columnist David Brooks' melancholy October 31, 2017 piece in which he reflects on "politics used as a cure for spiritual and social loneliness [by] people desperately trying to connect in the disrupted landscape of an America where bonds are attenuated—without stable families, tight communities, durable careers, ethnic roots or an enveloping moral culture."

All of which lays the ground for the social mission I am proposing for Victoria—possibly, our shining chapter in the human story. If anything defines or describes the place, sets it apart, it is what I have elsewhere called its "genius for inertia," really, its remarkable talent for social agreement, alignment with limits, love of continuity, and consanguinity with nature.

I call this mission commonwealth; that is, to preserve memory, culture and values of collaboration; to sustain a social grammar and legibility…the idea that all is shared. Commonwealth: intangible assets held in common. What a simple, logical, immediately understandable idea! Not an abstraction but the city you live in, your friends, neighbours and adjacent strangers.

You may recall from a previous column Jennifer Senior's remark about social belonging, that we have so little regard for what's collectively ours. Were I looking for conceptual grounds for commonwealth, I would land right there.

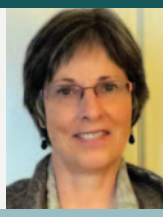
Our civic identity strongly embodies this kind of thinking. The past is our compass, we champion community, nurture social belonging wherever we see it germinating, and ambitiously innovate new structures of belonging that will enrich commonwealth.

I close wishing you a good year, and with the suggestion that we adopt this chaste slogan as the city's motto: "Victoria, Where You Belong."

Gene Miller is currently promoting ASH, an affordable housing concept and, with partner Rob Abbott, has launched the website FUTURETENSE: Robotics, AI, and the Future of Work.

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
250.389.1783

Heartwood Studio
bowls and spoons, wooden utensils, urns, lamps and more
Visit the artist in his studio or online:
250-746-5480
www.heartwoodstudio.ca
Also available at Eclectic Gallery 2170 Oak Bay Ave

The art of conservation: Mary Sanseverino

MALEEA ACKER

Photography gives this ardent naturalist an excuse to go to the wild places.

As January winds and cold temperatures hit the region, Mary Sanseverino is counting down the days until the bloom of the region's first satin flower. The wait will be shorter than readers might think. The earliest appearance she's seen was on January 24, "in a secret spot I can't share," she tells me over coffee in Oak Bay. From there, "the waves of bloom" come and continue all spring. Satin flowers (*olsynium douglasii*), are at the northern edge of their range on Vancouver Island. Their tiny purple blooms, however, can carpet the mossy expanses of remote locations in the Sooke Hills scant days after winter snowfalls melt. After the satin flower, she's hiking all the time, searching for "blue-eyed Mary, shooting stars, chocolate tips, saxifrage—the year just spins along in the Sooke Hills."

Born in Revelstoke, and now a retired computer scientist from the University of Victoria, Sanseverino's passion is the native flora that surrounds the city. She first tried photography in high school, with a "superb" art teacher, and started taking shots of landscapes and macro images of wildflowers in the Rockies soon after. Her macro shots in particular spurred her love of the natural world. "For everything a plant invests biological energy in, there's almost always a reason. As soon as you start to look at that level of detail, more and more intricacy unfolds."

PHOTO: MIKE WHITNEY

Mary Sanseverino with Garry oak, mosses and satin flowers

Why do volunteers in the region work to save species, ecosystems, landscapes? What impels us to pull the invasive Scotch broom, count the limpets, lift the salmon over a fish fence to spawn? A need to preserve biodiversity, yes, and future generations' need for clean air, intact plant communities, plentiful food. But there are other reasons. Like the feeling we get, walking through a flower-filled meadow in spring's warming wind. Or standing on Empress Mountain, in the sunlight, after a swim in a secret lake, above a sea of green and blue that cascades all the way through the Sooke Hills to the Salish Sea.

Ecosystem restorationists accomplish a great deal in our region. But all who work in this field are inspired by the aesthetic beauty of where we live. For Sanseverino, capturing that beauty and presenting it to the world is part of her identity as an amateur naturalist, botanist, mountain climber and researcher. She often returns year after year to photograph certain locations. "It's such a sense of place, to go back to a spot that I know, and see whether there are more plants, or less; whether am I early, or too late. It helps me to align my natural clock," she explains. Her primary destination, the Sooke Hills Wilderness (protected through two CRD parks and a provincial park) is visited by few: trails are unsigned, and suitable only for those accustomed to advanced hiking.

PHOTO: MARY SANSEVERINO

Calypso orchids

I first encountered Sanseverino's work when I worked at the CRD, combing the internet for representative photos of the region's natural areas. Unconcerned with earning a profit, she granted creative commons usage of hundreds of her photos, which still grace CRD brochures and web pages today. She chooses native species for her subjects because, as she says, "you have to go to them. I'm always looking for an excuse to get out into the hills."

Sanseverino belongs to the Vancouver Island chapter of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), where she leads regular flower hikes to the Sooke Hills' Mount Braden, Grassy Lake or Mount Manuel Quimper. She has participated in the annual Christmas bird count for over 20 years, photographing birds on Scafe Hill and Stewart Mountain. Her photography also appears in field guides and brochures in the UK, the United States and across Canada. But her main contributions involve plant identification and historical photography, two kinds of citizen science she believes are integral to research in BC and beyond. She learned from local scientists like Richard Hebda and books such as Pojar and McKinnon's indispensible *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast*, and credits her ability to identify most flower species in the region to the learning she received from these resources.

Sanseverino is one of the main contributions to BC's e-Flora Atlas (ibis.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/eflora/), an online biogeographical atlas of the flora of BC, including vascular plants, bryophytes, algae, lichen, mosses, fungi and slime molds. The atlas, edited by Brian Klinkenberg of the University of British Columbia's Department of Geography, operates with volunteers who check and process plant locations and photographs. To Sanseverino, a longtime contributor to the site, "it's a gathering place, another form of citizen science where we do the legwork."

Sanseverino's work also extends to the high alpine. Until recently, she served on a field team for the Mountain Legacy Project (MLP), based at UVic's School of Environmental Studies. For over two decades,

> "IT'S SUCH A SENSE OF PLACE, to go back to a spot that I know, and see whether there are more plants, or less; whether am I early, or too late. It helps me to align my natural clock." —*Mary Sanseverino*

the MLP has documented landscape change by re-photographing landscapes portrayed in historical surveying photos. The comparison of images show changes in snow coverage, glacier movement and flora differences over the last century, providing a visual representation of climate change's impacts. Though now retired from the team, she continues to visit sites, including Mount Assiniboine, near the Alberta border. Over 7000 historic glass plate images are available for research and download on the site: www.mountainlegacy.ca.

Art is an integral addition to environmental stewardship, though Sanseverino isn't convinced she qualifies. "Most photographs I like are beautiful. So I don't feel like I'm a steward." To Sanseverino, her work isn't political because she purposefully cuts out any of the destruction she finds in wilderness. She frames out the ATV-damaged clearing, power lines, overused trails, or tracks made by dirt bikes or dogs. "I think it's a little akin to only sharing one's spectacular moments on Facebook or Instagram—I don't show the grim part. I want to make people think, 'wow, I want to go there.' My goal is to inspire. And my lens is selective for the things I find beautiful."

Sanseverino doesn't follow the path of Edward Burtinsky, with his apocalyptically beautiful landscapes of large industry damage like the tar sands, or of Chris Turner, who put Midway Island on the map through his photos of dead albatross chicks, their bellies full of plastic. Though arresting, these images don't celebrate the beauty of species that are still flourishing. Perhaps, Sanseverino muses, we need to be inspired as much as we need to be chastised.

But this inspiration, she points out, may also have unintended negative consequences. The more people learn about beautiful places in the region, she says, the more they want to go there. "I like the Sooke Hills the way they are. It's a preserve for people who know where they're going and what they're doing. It's selfish, but I'd like to keep it that way." Having seen stark changes in degradation on local trail systems thanks to increased use, including Thetis Lake Regional Park, Sanseverino wonders whether sacrificing the species in one park (like Thetis) may help protect those in another (like the Sooke Hills' Sea to Sea Park). "There are so many more of us now; we are loving the place to death."

Still, for many who have no ability to access far-flung wilderness locations, Sanseverino's images provide a way of coming to know a landscape without having to visit. A calypso orchid (also her Flickr profile name) nods in a mossy clearing; arbutus trees stretch into the blue fall sky on the top of Mount Wells; raindrops shimmer on a shoreline pine in East Sooke Park. Sanseverino's photos guide the viewer through the beauty of the South Island, her work a testament to the protection and restoration work of countless others.

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

Old ways for new days

TRUDY DUIVENVOORDEN MITIC

With a knack for making do, we can make ends meet and reduce our environmental footprint.

I remember how it felt, staring at the groceries on the Safeway shelves 26 years ago, and wondering how I was going to feed my family. It was mid-winter, we had just moved here from Nova Scotia with three young children, and it was quickly becoming clear that the ratio of salary to cost-of-living was notably less favourable at this end of the country. I knew housing was going to cost us much more, but food, clothing, gas and everything else too? Was I still in Canada? I took a deep breath and turned thoughts to my parents.

In monetary terms, they were categorically poor when they arrived in Canada and settled on a near-defunct farm in New Brunswick in 1952. But, having survived the destitution and ravages of German-occupied Holland during WWII, they knew a thing or two about survival, resilience, and making ends meet. As a result, we Canadian-born kids in our mended clothes and with bellies full of farm-grown food were mostly unaware that we grew up in a working-poor family. I'm sure I voiced plenty of complaints growing up, but I never once worried about food or security. By the time I left home our farm was thriving and our family enjoyed a comfortable life.

ILLUSTRATION: APRIL CAVERHILL

Now standing at Safeway with my mouth slightly agog, I resolved that if my parents (and their parents) could wrestle down such daunting austerity, then surely I could triumph over my own lesser challenge. I'd had good teachers: I knew how to mend, was a half-decent cook, could plant and tend a garden and had a knack for making do.

In the years that followed, we employed many small and homely ways to stretch our after-tax dollars. Much of our retooling centred around food, with strategic practices such as judicious shopping, home-style cooking and zero food waste adding up to big savings as well as healthier eating. We shunned products like plastic wrap and paper towels in favour of free stuff readily available at home: Repurposed cereal bags are much more versatile and rags do a better clean-up job.

We ate out only on special occasions, which made those occasions all the more special.

We vacationed at island campgrounds, hosted birthday parties at home or on the beach, grew our own food, froze the surplus, baked bread, and made soups and spaghetti sauce out of leftovers. We purchased or gratefully accepted used clothing and other hand-me-downs and mended as necessary. We took care of our stuff and passed on what was no longer needed. We consolidated our errands and car trips. When my mother came to visit, she made bedroom curtains and cushions for the kitchen chairs.

The kids soaked all this up by osmosis—if not always willingly—and today they're incorporating many such strategies into their own lifestyle. Cost-cutting is definitely a motivator, but so is the desire for a less cluttered life and reduced environmental impact. And thanks to a relatively recent cultural shift, buying used, repairing, sharing and bartering are now considered cool instead of cheap, and corresponding social media platforms are abuzz with activity.

That's a good thing, given that an increasing number of people are struggling to make ends meet. For many, the salary to cost-of-living ratio is now distressingly dismal, and staggering social issues such as housing, childhood poverty and environmental degradation have steadily become coiled into a massive and tangled Gordian knot that our leaders can neither cut nor undo.

I'm not suggesting that the modest ways from the olden days can fix these conglomerated woes, but they can provide some cushioning against outside chaos. They're also greener, which is crucial in any blueprint for lasting change. And they could be a brave first step towards calming the economy, a notion that the corporate world wants us to continue believing isn't possible. Yes, we need good jobs or a good guaranteed income, but we also need a genuine work/life balance instead of its cunning long-time imposter, the work/buy imbalance that has served commerce so very well. Beyond a certain point, it's not more money for stuff that we need as much as more time to live a little better.

There's wisdom in embracing the tried and tested. Our elders and ancestors would smile their approval.

Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic would like to wish everyone a happy new year.

Victoria Seedy Saturday

Local Seeds & Plants
Seed Exchange &
Educational Speakers

10am-3:30pm
February 17, 2018
Victoria Conference Centre
$7 all access pass - under 16 free

hosted by the
James Bay Market Society
www.jamesbaymarket.com/SeedySaturday

FOCUS Wildwood Outdoor Living Centre Lifestyle Markets

Naturally Beautiful

Gabriel Cosmetics.

Natural cosmetics designed to bring out
your natural beauty and revitalize the skin.
Gluten-Free, Vegan & Cruelty-Free.

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

YOU CAN READ OVER
380
VICTORIA HARBOUR STORIES
ONLINE!

DISCOVERY ISLANDS LODGE

Quadra Island's Kayak Inn

Discover affordable backcountry comfort
at our truly-green kayaker's inn near
Quadra's best sea kayaking!

- Friendly, oceanfront B&B
- Guest kitchen & sauna
- Parks, lakes & hiking trails

www.Discovery-Islands-Lodge.com

DANCE VICTORIA

LEAD SPONSORS

WERNER MAYBURRY WEALTH MANAGEMENT
RAYMOND JAMES

Island BMW Motorrad
735 Cloverdale Ave, Victoria, BC V8X 2S6
250-414-2000
The Ultimate Riding Experience®

Ballet Hispánico

CONTEMPORARY

Three leading female choreographers share works of intense theatricality and passion

April 6 + 7 · 7:30 pm
Royal Theatre

From $29!

"...real wow factor. Energetic, entertaining and always surprising, the company fuses the finest modern ballet with a fantastic Latino flair." – **BROADWAY WORLD**

Tickets **250-386-6121**
DanceVictoria.com

Ballet Hispánico dancers in *Linea Recta*. Photo © Paula Lobo

SEASON SPONSOR

DERMASPA

The Royal & McPherson Theatres Society

Times Colonist – Your Island. Your Newspaper.

Chateau Victoria Hotel & Suites

Canada

CRD – Making a difference...together

British Columbia Arts Council – Supported by the Province of British Columbia

British Columbia – The Best Place on Earth