

MEGAPHONE  
CHANGE THAT WORKS | NOVEMBER 2014

\$2

# VOICES RISING

Artists advance  
Indigenous  
conversations





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## Contributors



**Jenn McDermid**  
*Project coordinator*

Jenn has been working and volunteering in the Downtown Eastside since graduating from UBC in 2011. She has been a volunteer with Megaphone for over a year, and is currently the resident Megaphone intern—this fall, she worked on the first Megaphone fundraising breakfast (see story, page 8) and she co-wrote Megaphone's report on homeless deaths in B.C. (see story, page 21). Her involvement with Megaphone stems from a strong interest in issues pertaining to social justice and community building and a general enthusiasm for the organization. Outside of Megaphone, Jenn is currently a graduate student at SFU and runs the Downtown Eastside Women's Art Collective.



**Jesse Donaldson**  
*Writer*

Jesse's work has appeared in *Vice*, *The Tyee*, *Swerve*, and *SadMag*. His first book, *This Day in Vancouver*, published by Anvil Press, was shortlisted for the 2014 Bill Duthie Bookseller's Choice Award. Recently, he contributed a chapter to *Vancouver Confidential*. To date, the book has spent five weeks on the BC Bestseller List. He lives on Commercial Drive.



**Janine Bandcroft**  
*Writer*

Janine Bandcroft is a vegan yogi cyclist and activist living on unceded Coast Salish territory where she works with disabled adults in their communal home environment. She founded the *Victoria Street Newz*, a street newspaper, in 2004, and coordinated its production until June 2014, when she invited Megaphone to expand to Vancouver Island. Janine supports independent media as a Megaphone contributor and as host of the "Winds of Change" program on CFUV radio.



**Allison Griner**  
*Writer*

Allison Griner is a freelance journalist who has spent the last two years reporting from Vancouver, B.C. She's now prowling around her home state of Florida, looking for new stories and dreaming of far-away shores. See more of her work at [www.allisongriner.com](http://www.allisongriner.com), or follow her on Twitter: @alligriner.

## Director's Corner

# Dying on the streets



Sleeping rough in English Bay, Vancouver. Photo: Ahmad Kavousian.

At least 281 homeless people died in British Columbia between 2006 and 2013. The true number is likely much higher. It's this rarely discussed statistic that inspired Megaphone to release "Dying on the Streets" this month, the first report of its kind to look at homeless deaths in the province (read more from the report on pages 20 and 21).

Although municipalities across B.C. struggle with increasing homelessness, and the City of Vancouver is trying to end homelessness by 2015, little attention is actually paid to the hundreds of lives lost in the province simply because people couldn't access housing. This is an incredible tragedy.

By highlighting the significant undercounting of homeless people who die in B.C. each year, illustrating the deadliness of homelessness, and demonstrating that these deaths are largely preventable, Megaphone hopes our report will galvanize governments to do more to end homelessness in the province.

Over the years, Megaphone has highlighted how homeless individuals are at an increased risk of violence from the general public. With "Dying on the Streets," we are now able to show how homelessness is an early death sentence.

Using data from the BC Coroners Service, Megaphone

is able to show that at least 281 homeless people died in B.C. over the past eight years. But because of gaps in accounting and the difficulty of tracking the hidden homeless, we know the true number is likely much higher. This means an untold number of people are dying in our province because of housing insecurity.

Acknowledging that the coroner's data is a drastic undercount is important: homelessness is a life-threatening health hazard. As the data in "Dying on the Streets" shows, the median age of death for a homeless person in the province is between 40 and 49. This is almost half the life expectancy for the average British Columbian, which is 82.65 years.

Homeless individuals are also twice as likely to die by accident, suicide, or homicide than the average British Columbian, which shows not only that homelessness puts people at dramatic risk but also homeless-related mortality is largely preventable.

Homelessness is not just a social or economic problem; it is an early death sentence. It is estimated that there are up to 15,500 people homeless people in B.C., which means thousands of people in the province are at risk of a premature but preventable death.

Across Canada, the data

is even less accessible and the scope of the homeless crisis even more unclear. A survey by Megaphone of other provinces found there is little to no data available on homeless deaths. Today, we only have a very preliminary idea of who is dying and why they're dying. In a country as rich as Canada, we can and need to do better at tracking our most vulnerable citizens.

Megaphone's "Dying on the Streets" report was written in commemoration of every homeless person who has died in British Columbia—many died violently and anonymously. Megaphone's report aims to honour their lives.

To read the full report, visit [MegaphoneMagazine.com](http://MegaphoneMagazine.com).



**Sean Condon**  
Executive Director  
Megaphone

## Chamber of commerce makes Victoria homelessness, panhandling an election issue

By Katie Hyslop

Panhandling and visible homelessness in the Victoria's downtown core isn't just bad for society. According to the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, it's bad for business, too.

Eradicating panhandling and solving street homelessness ranked as high-priority issues in a recent chamber of commerce membership survey, CEO Bruce Carter says, second only to a desire for municipal amalgamation in the Greater Victoria Region. That's why Carter, on behalf of the chamber of commerce, is urging Victoria's candidates to consider the impact of homelessness on business in their campaigns during the run-up to the municipal election Nov. 15.

"More needs to be done to prevent panhandling and homelessness: 56 per cent of our members who answered our annual survey said that was the case," he says.

"Homelessness and panhandling is a major deterrent to economic vibrancy and a social travesty," he adds. Only 25 per cent of members who took the survey indicated the city should "stay the course" on the issue.

This isn't the first time the Chamber has raised homelessness and panhandling with municipal candidates, but Carter says it was less of a priority during the 2011 election, when the recession had business owners more concerned about their bottom lines.

"This strikes me as a bit more of a sign of a recovery in the economy," Carter says.

Instead of pushing for a more fiscally conservative crime-and-punishment response to dealing with street homelessness, the Chamber recognizes that homelessness and panhandling can't be "enforced out of existence," as he puts it.

"The visibility of homelessness is a challenge," Carter says, especially when people sleeping or panhandling block businesses' doorways. "But we need to solve that by tackling core issues... ticketing or arresting homeless people or panhandlers is not an answer."

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness includes a Chamber member on its board of directors. The Coalition and the Chamber co-hosted "The Economics of Homelessness," a talk by Professor Stephen Gaezt of York University, in mid-October.

Coalition executive director Andrew Wynn-Williams agrees city governments can play a vital role in ending homelessness. He says zoning for affordable housing and communicating why housing the homeless benefits everyone is well within a municipal government's power.

"They can't necessarily create the

circumstances where it's really easy [to build affordable housing] because they don't have the capital resources to build housing," he says, "but they can certainly block it. So you need the municipality on board."

Wynn-Williams isn't concerned about the motives behind the Chamber's drive to end homelessness in the downtown core, saying he knows most members understand the complex reasons for homelessness like addiction, mental illness, and trauma. He also notes the members understand the devastating social cost of homelessness. But he says the Coalition doesn't share the Chamber's concerns about panhandling and its eradication with the eradication of homelessness.

"Even if you've ended homelessness," Wynn-Williams says, "You haven't ended poverty." ▶

## Could permanent tent cities be a better solution than shelters?

By Katie Hyslop

Over 200 campers were evicted from a tent city in Vancouver's Oppenheimer Park last month, four months after the first tents were pitched. Another, smaller group of campers remains in Abbotsford's Jubilee Park while they fight for their right to camp in BC Supreme Court.

The situations facing homeless campers across Metro Vancouver have made news headlines for months. And ongoing fights for homeless campers' rights to remain in parks make it easy to forget that six years ago, a notable piece of legislation about homeless camping already passed. In 2008, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled camping in B.C.'s public parks is legal if a person has nowhere else to go.

Pivot Legal Society lawyer DJ Larkin, who represented campers at both Oppenheimer and Jubilee parks in court, says the two cities' bylaws contravene the 2008 ruling because parks in those cities close at night.

But the Supreme Court ruling doesn't allow for 24/7 tent cities, either.

"[The 2008 ruling] says you can only set up a temporary overnight structure if there are not sufficient shelter beds available," Larkin says.

Many campers at Oppenheimer and Jubilee have refused to use shelters for a variety of reasons. Shelters are less desirable than sleeping on the streets, some say, because they have prohibitive rules for guests; they can be triggering for their institutional settings; and they feel unsafe for some women, members of the LGBTQ community, and children. Plus, shelters are only open overnight, meaning residents must leave in the morning.

Earlier in October—before a 69-year-old man was found dead in a tent at Oppenheimer from undetermined, but not suspicious, causes—two Coalition Of Progressive Electors park board candidates pitched the idea of a legal, permanent tent city in Vancouver to accommodate people choosing camping over shelters. Opponents in the Vision Vancouver, Green Party, and Non-Partisan Association parties panned



This photograph from December 2000 was taken in a vacant lot in downtown Portland. Pictured here, from left to right, are Alex Lilly, J.P. Cupp, Tim Brown, and Jack Tafari, some of the original founders of Portland's Dignity Village tent city. Photo: Jason Kaplan.

the idea as a short-term solution that would limit park use for other city residents.

Elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, Seattle and Portland have made tent cities work. In Seattle, Washington, Tent City 3 and 4 were established in 2000 and 2004, respectively. They accommodate up to 100 people each. Set up with port-a-potties and 24-hour security, campers receive bus tickets and hot meals in return for remaining sober, non-violent, and willing to volunteer at the camps.

The Seattle tent cities aren't permanent locations: both camps move every three months, rotating between church properties around King County, an area twice the size of Metro Vancouver. And they can't accommodate all of Seattle's homeless: in September, a man fell to his death on the freeway from a ledge where he was camping.

Portland, Oregon, has two permanent tent cities. One, Dignity Village, is a tent city on municipal property that has evolved, since its inception in 2000, into a neighbourhood of mini wooden houses. The other, called Right 2 Dream, Too, is a tent city on downtown private property established in 2011.

Wendy Kohn, co-director and producer of *Doorways to Dignity*, a documentary on Dignity Village, says there isn't enough shelter space in Portland to accommodate

the thousands of people living on the street. That makes Dignity Village, home to up to 60 people, and Right 2 Dream, Too, home to about 70 campers, essential for the homeless community, she says.

But it isn't just about having a roof over one's head with more privacy and fewer rules than a shelter, Kohn told Megaphone. Legal tent cities and villages create a sense of community that's "really essential for both mental and physical health for people to get back on their feet."

Pivot's Larkin would never endorse people sleeping outside. But she knows until there is enough affordable, adequate housing in B.C., vulnerable people will continue to choose tents over a mat on a shelter floor.

"Even two weeks [of camping] is quite a bit of time for someone to settle and connect with an outreach worker," she notes.

With that in mind, Larkin wants city bylaws to change so campers have a safe place to erect temporary homes. "That might mean not prohibiting sleeping overnight, not prohibiting erecting structures," she says, "but rather saying if you erect a structure on a playground you have to take it down in the morning because it's a playground. Or don't do it in a particularly sensitive environmental area." ▶

# Change that works

Megaphone's first breakfast fundraiser celebrates social enterprise, social change

On Tuesday, October 21st, Megaphone hosted its first ever breakfast fundraiser at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. Celebrating six years of social change work, we brought together our community of volunteers, supporters, vendors, and partners to share a meal prepared by the Potluck Café and to reflect on the impact of social enterprise in our communities.

The morning, hosted by the Vancouver Theatresports League's Ken Lawson, featured a keynote Q & A between Megaphone executive director Sean Condon and Vancity CEO Tamara Vrooman, who shared her perspectives on how to put community at the centre of business practices, not the other way around.

The breakfast was also our occasion to proudly present our first-ever Vendor of the Year award to Stephen Scott. In just over a year of selling Megaphone, Stephen has amassed a group of loyal customers where he sells Megaphone at Davie and Thurlow streets in Vancouver's West End. He's overcome extraordinary hardship—life-threatening injury, illness, and street homelessness—to arrive where he is now. Today, he makes his home near Jericho Beach in a place he loves, and he describes his life today as "a new life. It's a better life."

We exceeded our expectations for the breakfast and raised an incredible \$21,000! Many thanks go to the event sponsors (listed on the opposite page) and all the attendees. That money will go a long way in helping to support Megaphone vendors like Stephen to make positive change in their lives.

See a special Vendor of the Year video of Stephen by Josephine Anderson of Rewild Films at [Youtube.com/megaphonemag](https://www.youtube.com/megaphonemag).

Thanks to our sponsors:



# The life aquatic

Story and photos by Allison Griner

## Local research gives hope in world's worst marine invasion

At a quarter past eight on a September morning, with the sun rising past storm clouds on the horizon, Captain Eric Billips unmoors his boat, the 36-foot "Life Aquatic," from the marina.

He steers it past tropical green waters until the Florida Keys—a string of coral islands that form the southernmost point of the United States—are only a line on the horizon. As the bow of his boat plunges towards the steely grey of the Atlantic, Billips, a seasoned sailor, is unmoved by the spectacular kingfish jumping to his left and the billfish cresting to his right.

Those fish would have been a dream catch for any sportsman, but not for Billips. He and a team of divers from the Islamorada Dive Center are on the hunt for a much smaller, more insidious prey: the lionfish.

Billips and his crew prowl the water alongside other teams taking part in the fifth-annual Key Largo Lionfish Derby, all of them searching for the spiny, striped fish with fins that flare like a lion's mane. Billips hopes to snag two of the derby's top prizes: one for the biggest lionfish, and one for the most lionfish overall. He has a record to maintain, after all. Last

year, Billips had hauled in the largest lionfish ever caught in Key Largo.

Gathered around the steering wheel of the Life Aquatic, Billips and his fellow divers laugh as they dream up inventive ways to catch lionfish. One of the divers furrows his brow, points his fingers like a machine gun and pretends to shoot.

This is "the new face of environmentalism," he quips. That's because lionfish are invaders in these waters. They're infesting millions of square kilometers in the Atlantic and Caribbean, threatening ecosystems with collapse.

Lionfish have been dubbed by many as "the worst marine invasion ever." No other marine species has spread so quickly, over so large an area, causing so much destruction. They're destructive because their appetites are so voracious and wide-ranging; lionfish will eat almost every fish smaller than them.

But scientists in B.C. have been among the first to conduct academic research on the lionfish invasion. Today, their research suggests there may be hope for containing the crisis. And in the waters where lionfish roam, the work of individuals like Captain Billips is keeping the invasion at bay.

### Beautiful trouble

Outfitted with warm red stripes and long, dotted fins, the lionfish seems right at home among south Florida's vibrant corals.

Even Isabelle Côté, a professor of marine ecology at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, can't help but admire the animal.

"It's by far the most beautiful fish I've ever worked on. It's gorgeous," Côté says. "It's just a shame they're in the wrong ocean."

The lionfish's beauty is a large part of its curse. Prized for its exotic appearance, lionfish have been caught from their native range in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and imported as aquarium pets to places like Florida. Lionfish have been documented swimming in nonnative waters as far back as 1985, likely released by aquarium owners.

The lionfish population exploded nearly two decades later, between 2004 and 2010. Around that time, Côté says, one of her students returned from researching sharks in the Bahamas with some startling news: lionfish were popping up all along the coast.

Stephanie Green was another of Côté's PhD students at the time, and she never expected her studies to shift towards lionfish. "I think that most British Columbians start by thinking you're going to work as a salmon biologist," Green says.

But when she and Côté first plunged into lionfish research, they realized that existing information was scant. Lionfish were literally eating ecosystems to the brink of collapse, consuming any prey small enough to swallow. And they had spread to the shores of at least 17 different countries,

from Mexico to Venezuela, Cuba to the U.S.

"At that time, there was pretty much no scientific literature on what was going on with the invasion," said Green. "It was a pretty new problem."

### Stemming the tide

Côté and Green were at the forefront of a surge of scientific interest. Today, they're joined by colleagues from around the world, all of them passionately working to stem the lionfish invasion. Green now divides her time between family in Vancouver and lionfish research at Oregon State University and in south Florida.

The lionfish threat can be all consuming, as Lad Akins knows firsthand. He was the executive director of the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) in Key Largo for 16 years before leaving his position to focus on REEF's lionfish campaign.

REEF organizes the Key Largo Lionfish Derby every September, and Akins is always surprised to see what kind of people join in. The lionfish hunt, Akins said, brings together "recreational divers" with "conservationists who would never think of killing a fish ever."

The lionfish, known for its insatiable appetite, venomous spines, and hardy ability to adapt to most any new habitat, possesses unusual characteristics that have made it a "near-perfect invader," Akins says.

Though they're limited to warmer waters, lionfish have been found as far north as Rhode Island. Côté collaborated on a predictive study to determine if climate change would increase their current range, but any potential increase "is simply dwarfed by the current rate of expansion that's happening without climate change," she said. That's how extreme the invasion is right now.

There's no hope of eradicating lionfish from the Atlantic and Caribbean, scientists believe. But there is a chance to control them. Just this year, Côté, Green and Akins co-authored a study that suggests if lionfish populations are simply reduced to certain levels, native fish can recover.

And lionfish derbies are just one of many methods of lowering populations in particularly sensitive habitats, like South Florida's reefs.

### Catch—and conservation—of the day

Back at the Key Largo Lionfish Derby, Captain Billips and the diving team are hauling dozens of lionfish to the surface. Inside Billips's cooler, lionfish are piled one atop the other, rebelliously flapping their fins.

Billips estimates there are about 70 fish in the cooler as he turns the Life Aquatic back to shore. Maybe the team has a shot

at taking home a top prize.

It's half past three in the afternoon as Billips cruises back towards shore, and there's no time to lose. He must unload the boat, pack the lionfish cooler into his car, and drive to derby headquarters at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park—all before the 5p.m. deadline.

There, the fish are to be counted and measured, and prizes are handed out. With 22 minutes to spare, Billips submits his catch. He waits. The final tally arrives: he has 78 total fish, the largest measuring 428 millimeters and the smallest at 177.

Those aren't bad numbers, but they're not enough to win the derby. The top prize for largest lionfish and biggest haul goes, comically, to a team called, "We're No. 2," which brought in 154 lionfish that day, with its largest measuring 435 millimeters.

But these numbers have a greater purpose beyond the prizes and bragging rights. This year's Key Largo Lionfish Derby was the last in a three-year study, measuring the effectiveness of derbies in reducing lionfish populations.

As the derby winds down, Stephanie Green—the marine ecologist who works alongside Côté and Akins—prepares to travel back to south Florida. She's to be there the following day, ready to follow up on the derby results. The final study, she says, will be finished this fall.

"To give you an interesting preview, we are finding that the derbies are having much more of an effect than we thought they were. They are suppressing lionfish over a really large area," Green says. "But it will be an ongoing battle, just like pulling weeds out of your garden."

People back home in Vancouver are always surprised to hear about her job, Green says. But while lionfish may swim far from British Columbian shores, Green argued that lionfish research could have positive impacts even in Canada.

"Canada has a huge problem with invasive species, too," she said, pointing to British Columbia's problem with green crabs as an example.

Her voice full of optimism, she indicates there's reason to hope. The lionfish invasion is creating a framework for how to combat other invasive marine species.

"The approach we're taking with lionfish, where we're thinking about local action and how volunteers can get involved," she says, "I think that's something that resonates with people when we think about what we might do up here [in Canada]."

Back in the Florida Keys, that grassroots approach already seems to be working. The latest science seems to indicate that the world's worst marine invasion can indeed be curbed. And it's thanks in large part to individuals like Captain Billips, patrolling the shores, spear in hand.♦

To find out more, visit [www.reef.org/lionfish](http://www.reef.org/lionfish).

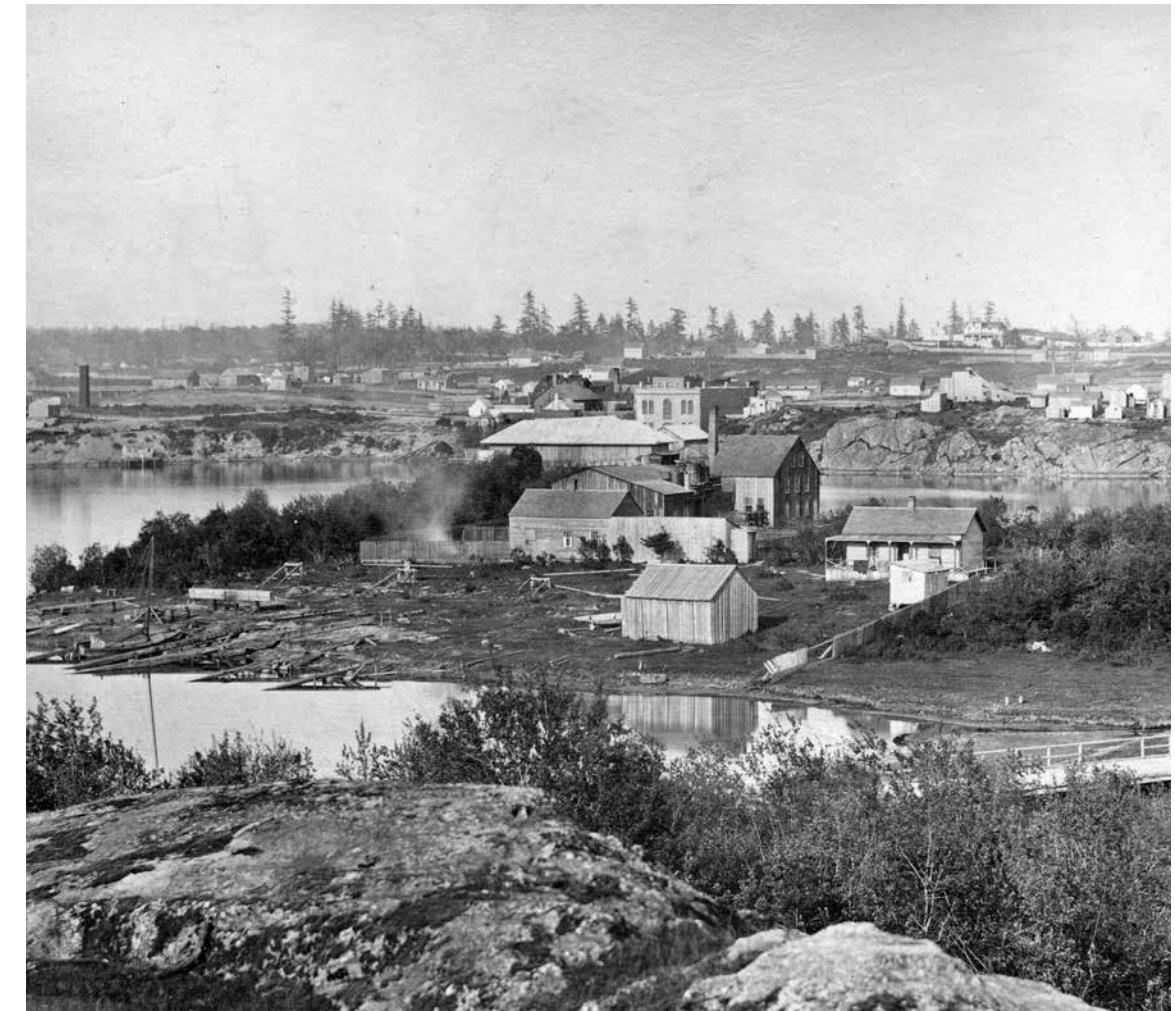


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**Left**  
A mysterious bomb shattered the hindquarters of one of the lions flanking the Vancouver Art Gallery steps in 1942. Image courtesy of the Vancouver archives.



**Left**  
The Victoria waterfront, circa 1860s. In 1866, the controversial creation of new boundaries for B.C. caused a stir among Victoria residents. Image courtesy of the Vancouver Archives.

# Vancouver

## November 3, 1942

Pedestrians in the downtown core leapt for cover as a bomb smashed one of the Vancouver Art Gallery lions.

"The lion on the right of a person facing the Court House was shattered," wrote the Vancouver Sun. "The hind quarters were blown away from the rest of the body and three blocks of granite at least a foot in diameter, were blown on to a nearby parking space."

Several spectators were injured by flying debris as two separate blasts went off on the steps of the building (then the city courthouse). Luckily, the stonecutters who carved the 10-ton lions back in 1910 still lived in the city, and the damage was repaired with relatively little effort. No suspects were ever found.

## November 12, 1954

After years as a WHL franchise, the Vancouver Canucks took the ice at the Pacific Coliseum and played their first game as an NHL team. Despite the presence of 15,000 fans, and such notable figures as Chief Dan George and Fred "Cyclone" Taylor, the game was a disappointing 3-1 loss to the L.A. Kings.

# Victoria

## November 19, 1866

At the stroke of noon, A Royal Navy salute marked the amalgamation of British Columbia and the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island, creating the boundaries of modern B.C.—much to the chagrin of Victoria residents.

The decision to combine the two colonies had been strenuously opposed by both Victorians and British Columbia governor Frederick Seymour, who wrote a series of letters to the British government criticizing Victoria and its citizens. Thanks to Seymour's influence, the capital of

the combined colonies was placed in his home city of New Westminster, not Victoria, a city he dismissed as nothing more than "a fishing place". The decision led to what that day's edition of the *British Colonist* called "a feeling of indignation in the minds of the Islanders toward Governor Seymour, and of hostility to Union that at one time threatened to culminate in open rebellion."

"Happily," the article continued, seething, "that danger has blown over. After calm reflection, the promptings of sober second thought have prevailed, and to-day we venture to say there are no more loyal people than those of Vancouver

Island, or none more disposed to accept the conditions—distasteful though they be—and assist in restoring the country to its former prosperity."

Seymour himself was made Governor of the new colony, with Victoria as a port under his jurisdiction. He died of dysentery in the final year of his first term, and despite his vocal dislike of Victoria and its residents, was buried in the naval cemetery in Esquimalt

And despite having lost their status as the provincial capital, Victorians remained hopeful.

"As the needle is attracted by the magnet," concluded the November 19th *Colonist*, prophetically, "so will the seat

of government gravitate in time toward the Island of Vancouver."

**Jesse Donaldson** is a Vancouver essayist, author, photographer, and one of the founding members of the *Dependent* magazine. His historical contributions to *Megaphone* this issue are inspired by the work of his first book, *This Day in Vancouver*, published by Anvil Press in late 2013. This Day was recently shortlisted for a B.C. Book Prize.

# The piano room at the Rainier Hotel

"I've lived at the Rainier for five years, since September '09. I'm one of the second residents. I had previously been nine years a crack addict in the Downtown Eastside here, hanging out in the back lanes. I used to hang out in that bottle depot lane: in my window, I can see it.

"When I came here, I only had 28 per cent lung function. I quit smoking and it went up to 50. I started playing with the street soccer team and got off all crack, all drugs. I bummed out my knee so I don't play soccer anymore, but when I started, it went up to 64 per cent. Now, I'm still active with yoga.

"It's proof that being in a healing, supportive place—and exercise—can change your life. And there is hope. I feel a sense of community down here I didn't know existed when I was using. You think you're alone out there; I didn't know there were so many people helping.

"In 2010, one of the Rainier staff rented a piano for Christmas. We had it through December and January. So I bought Christmas books and played piano for everybody. On Christmas Day, they had carolers come, and it was Vanessa Richards from the Woodward's Choir—her and some singers. They were caroling on Christmas Day to all the Portland buildings. There were 20 people around me. I'd never played in front of people before.

"I used to escape into the piano as a child; it was my escape from my reality. I grew up in Winnipeg. We couldn't afford lessons, so my dad bought me a book. He was a professional banjo player. I grew up on all that Dixieland stuff and jazz. He had the music fake books where it has the guitar chord and melody line and you just fill in the rest—that's how I learned. So now I can play anything in any key. I like jazz. I play the old '20s, '30s music. Even



Photo: Jackie Wong.

Gershwin, Cole Porter out of the '50s. I play the Beatles, James Taylor, Cat Stevens. I can play anything if I have the music right in front of me; I can sight read real fast!

"Then, with the restaurant [Rainier Provisions] opening next door, one day I walked by and there was a piano in the middle of the restaurant. There was a sign, "piano players wanted." They feed us every Thursday, and on the Thursday, I got my books and asked if I could try out the piano. I played while we were waiting for supper. After supper, I went to the manager and asked, what are you looking for in a piano player? She said, you'd be just fine. It was my first paying gig. I played Tuesdays and Saturdays, noon til 2pm. I was shaking during the first gig, but I loved it. I played there 'til they closed [temporarily for menu development].

"Eventually, the Rainier staff bought the piano from Long & McQuade. I've always wanted to perform, but I never made those decisions. Now, piano is not an escape any longer. It's a joyful pleasure that I want to share.

"Coming to the Rainier afforded me the opportunity to get back on my feet—not just back on my feet, on new feet!

"I've realized life doesn't have to be any more complex than getting up, brushing your teeth, making your bed, eating. That's called life. And I didn't get that before: to be human. It doesn't have to be complicated."

*Paula Armstrong is a longtime resident of the Rainier Hotel. Her writing has been published several times in Megaphone. Her poem, "Dreams" (right) was published in Voices of the Street, Megaphone's 2014 literary anthology.*

## Dreams

by Paula Armstrong

*I had a dream where I had stopped smoking  
I quit alcohol, drugs and  
other mood changers  
My body was becoming trim  
and muscular again  
Running up and down the stairs  
did not leave me breathless  
My piano playing invited me to  
sing to my heart's content  
I loved life and noticed the simple  
pleasures of being in the now  
A quiet mist of confidence filled my insides  
Where there was only fear and sadness before  
I believed that anything was possible  
I could achieve whatever I set my mind to  
I lived at this Rainier Hotel place  
Where there were endless possibilities  
And even God loved me!  
Wow, what a dream.  
But then I awoke... to find I wasn't dreaming  
This is my new life ☺*

# Emmett (Sarah Race) shoots from the hip

of people live in the city, but there's so little communication.

"Photography's one of those ways where you can have that communication. I've met so many great people in so many different walks of life that my little group of people would never infiltrate; we'd never connect. I think you grow as a human being by having the ability to do that and meet people outside of your social network.

"I do mostly event photography and portraits. I also do a lot of babysitting and random jobs, whatever I can get to make



Photo: Jackie Wong.

"Professionally, my name is Sarah Race. That's my work drag name. My nickname's Emmett. I identify as genderqueer—I fall on the transgender spectrum. I moved to Vancouver from Portland in the early 2000s. Since I've lived in Vancouver, I've only lived in Strathcona. I like it because I know my neighbours. Everyone is very friendly. Here, just by how it's structured as a community, you meet people. You meet people who are in your community geographically, not just subculturally, which I find really nice.

"Elsewhere in Vancouver, people here, I feel, stay so closeted in their own worlds, whether those divisions are based on sexuality or class or race. People talk about how diverse the city is—yes, it's diverse, but no one talks to each other. All these groups

my income. I find the biggest barrier [to securing work] is tied into homophobia, specifically gender phobia. If you're crossing a certain gender line where people feel uncomfortable, that really has an impact on possible income and mentorship and access to building and growing and becoming better in what you do.

"I've been yelled at so many times about inappropriate clothing choices. There's been a lot of times when I go into a [job] interview and they go, I love your work, it's awesome. And then they see me; it's either about my weight or it's to do with my gender reflection. I've not even said anything, but their opinion of me completely changes and I'm not what they need.

"A lot of it is a fear of queerness, in some

ways. [Even in politics], you can have people get elected only if they're a very specific sort of queer.

"[Former Vision Vancouver park board candidate] Trish [Kelly] is one of my friends, so we've talked about this quite a bit. You have people who have a very specific idea of queerness in their minds, and if you're another sort of queer—if you talk about your sex life, if you're polyamorous, if you're any of the other things that are part of the queer community—it's no longer acceptable. That extends to class, race, how one speaks. It extends to many different fields.

"My current housemate got a job in the Silicon Valley so he's moving down to the States. I put an ad out, and hundreds and hundreds of people replied. Four of them were families. And they all knew it was just a room.

"To me, it showed we're at a point of desperation. They were at such a place where it was a reasonable decision to make: to move into a stranger's house in a room with a child, as if they have not very many other options. And I find that kind of shameful.

"These parents don't have housing, and there's so many of them. Isn't that what a city is supposed to do? Support the people who live there? It really affects our community when people are put into these sorts of situations, when there's that element of desperation.

"Housing has so many impacts on so many different parts of one's life. It's not only about having a safe place to live. It impacts the art world because you need the spontaneous ability to make art and make it in a way that's not always commercial.

"When I'm taking people's pictures, to me, it's a collaborative project. They're informing the picture as much as I'm informing the picture. I feel like photography is about communication. You're working with how people want to be reflected, how their identity wants to be reflected.

"Art is not always used to make a profit. It can be used to heal; it's a way of expression. And if you limit that, if you don't have outlets for people to express themselves, you're hurting a city, in my mind.

"I do believe that solving the

housing crisis would have an affect on the art that people produce." ☺



## A Tree of Hope Grows in Kitsilano

There's a lot happening in the neighbourhood where I sell Megaphone. There have been some sad incidents that have also demonstrated the care people express towards each other in the community.

One example is the story of Michael. For some time now, the corner of Trafalgar Street and 16th Avenue in Kitsilano has been a controversial spot for accidents and speed. Eleven years ago, a man named Michael was the victim of negligence. Mike was riding his bike down 16th Avenue when a man left his car door open while rushing into the drycleaner's. Mike ran into the door, flipping over it. He was rushed to hospital and he didn't survive.

One of my customers knew Mike. His name is Christopher Richardson. On a few different weekends I saw him go by my vending spot in front of Choices Market with a wheelbarrow of dirt and a shovel. He was working on a monkey puzzle tree, putting new soil where he dug up dirt. Christopher was replacing the post with a bike wheel attached to it next to the tree. It was falling apart, and he was putting up a new one. A lady came by and placed a painted blue rock with Michael's name on it, a token to remember the man who lost his life near that tree. I call it the tree of hope.

Christopher told me the history of the tree, which he planted himself with the help of others. It stands in a place that used to mark where Vancouver ended and Point Grey began, he said. And the adjacent

street used to be a creek, a salmon creek. The tree of hope is planted in the median.

Christopher is a special customer I have known for about a year. He gets around, just like me!

One of my most memorable times with Christopher is when I was walking along near B.C. Place Stadium. He got off his bike and came walking towards me with a five-dollar bill in his hand, saying, "I'll have a Megaphone." I had no idea who he was. Taking his helmet off, I laughed to discover it was Christopher from Kits!

After that, he couldn't fool me with his helmet on. I see him these days doing events all over town. Christopher is a person out there making a difference in his communities. I can tell this when he buys a Megaphone from me. Christopher astonishes me with his knowledge of Vancouver history. He has deep roots in this city, dating back to his great grandfather. He asks me, do you remember the old Smiling Buddha club down in Chinatown? I have a print of the artist who painted a postcard of that, I said. He has one too. The artist, whose name was McKellar, was a person who Christopher used to go down and have chats with.

I have another customer at Choices who also shares Christopher's historical experiences in Vancouver. Wow, I am getting free history lessons selling here! Thank you Mark and Christopher for the history lessons. I am forever astounded by the customers I meet.

Christopher is a very busy man, involving himself on charity boards, raising funds for good causes. As he flips the pages of Megaphone, he'll say, I know this person, and he will tell me a story of his experiences knowing the person. And now, this well-connected man gives me a leaflet. He says he's running for the school board under the NPA banner! Golly gee! Christopher gets my vote and he should get lots of hugs. He demonstrates a transparency and involvement with community that I like to see in politicians.

In addition to receiving free history lessons from customers, I also get free hugs. The hugs always happen at this time of year when the Hope in Shadows calendar comes out. One of my customers, Rebecca, says hugs come naturally for her when she hasn't seen me for a long time. Another customer, Shannon, says that hugs are free. Thank you, both, for your affection and for brightening my day. Here I was, thinking of writing a sequel to a Vendor Voices column I wrote last year about hugs—and oops, I just did!

To my supportive customers, you all move me.♦

Ron McGrath sells Megaphone in front of the Choices Market at 16th and Macdonald. He would like his customers to Google Neil Young's "Who's Going to Stand Up" to discover the inspiration for his poem published here.



Photo: Tom Magliery / flickr

### The World We Live In By Ron McGrath

The world we live in is the world we create  
A loss is not the end of the world  
It's a message—to rebuild  
Rebuilding is slow, it's a challenge  
For heart and soul  
The growth is rewarding

It is time to stop destroying  
Stop the greed, the laundering  
Of our will. The devastation

This world is creating. It's not ours  
To live—nor is it ours to destroy

Yet there seems to be no stopping—  
Like Hitler's demise (The Awakening)  
Warning: the lights are getting  
Dimmer and dimmer.

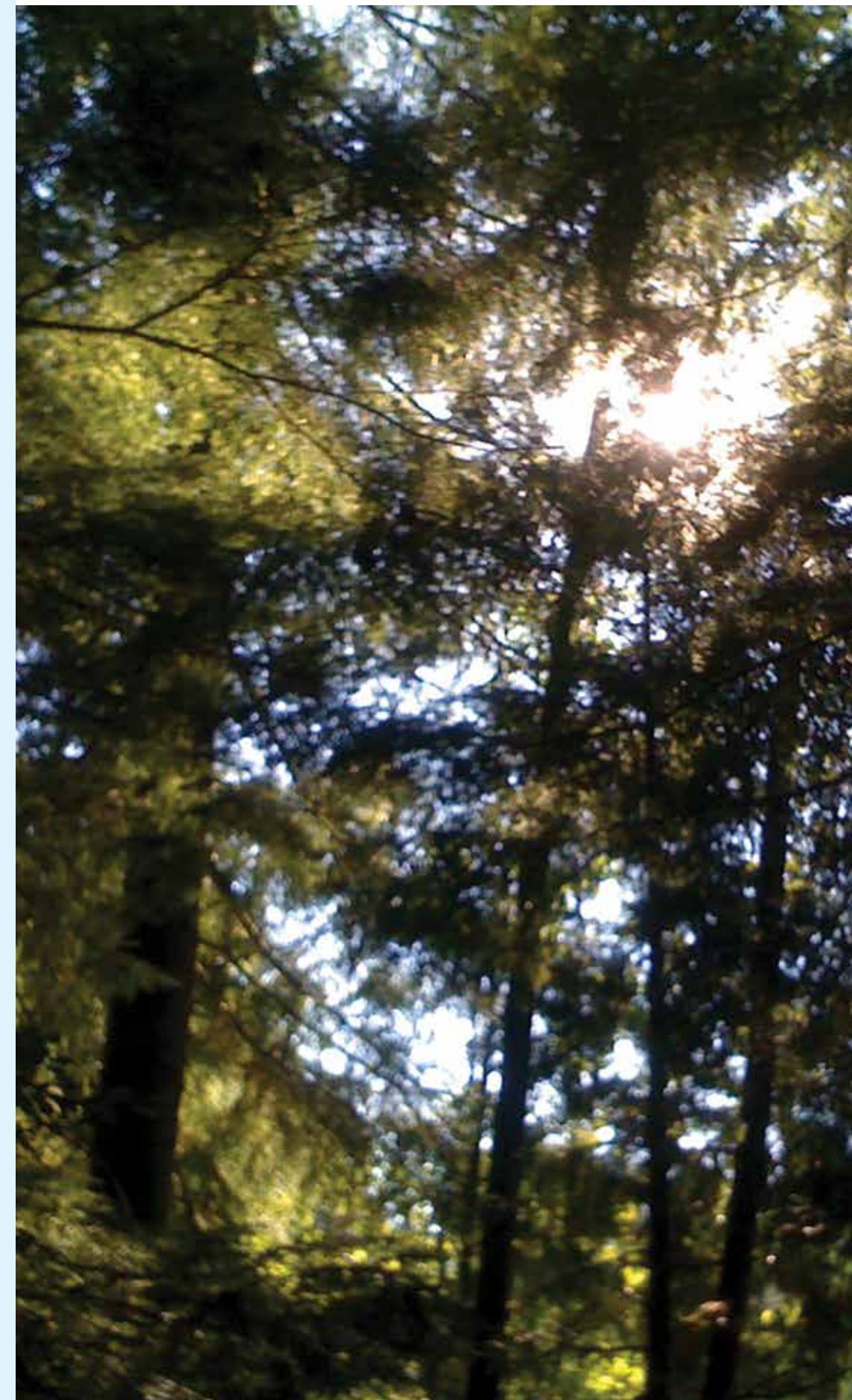
Are there not alternative solutions?  
Our waters are precious

They outweigh the gold—the fools  
That chase has lost their souls  
I have one mother left  
That's Mother Earth  
I want to protect her  
With my heart and soul.

Around the world,  
They're fracking the juices from her  
Every action  
There is a reaction  
It may cause her to form earthquakes  
And floods

Who's going to protect Mother Earth  
And her streams  
Oh, Mother Earth, I will protect thee

Who is going to stand up  
The people who fish  
The people who eat fish  
The people who drink the water—  
And I will  
And I will



I wish someone would ask me

By the Bear Whisperer

I would someone

would give me

a job

that would match me

and my lifestyle.

My lifestyle is crazy, maybe

I live among those  
kinds of people.

I choose this place  
because people are dying  
all the time.

That wasn't the question  
I answered.

Here's the right question:  
I wish someone would ask me

to help out  
in a big game kill,  
from tracking and  
shooting the animal  
to eating it and  
tanning the hide.

Is that too much  
to ask for?

The Bear Whisperer participates  
in Megaphone's creative writing  
workshop at the Drug Users Resource  
Centre. Photo: Jackie Wong.

# REFLECTED LIGHT

*Exploring Photo 101 in the Downtown Eastside*

## DID YOU MISS IT DURING HOMELESSNESS ACTION WEEK?

You're invited to a second screening of UGM's documentary. Join us at Maurice McElrea Place (361 Heatley Ave.) during the Eastside Culture Crawl (Nov 21-23) to view.

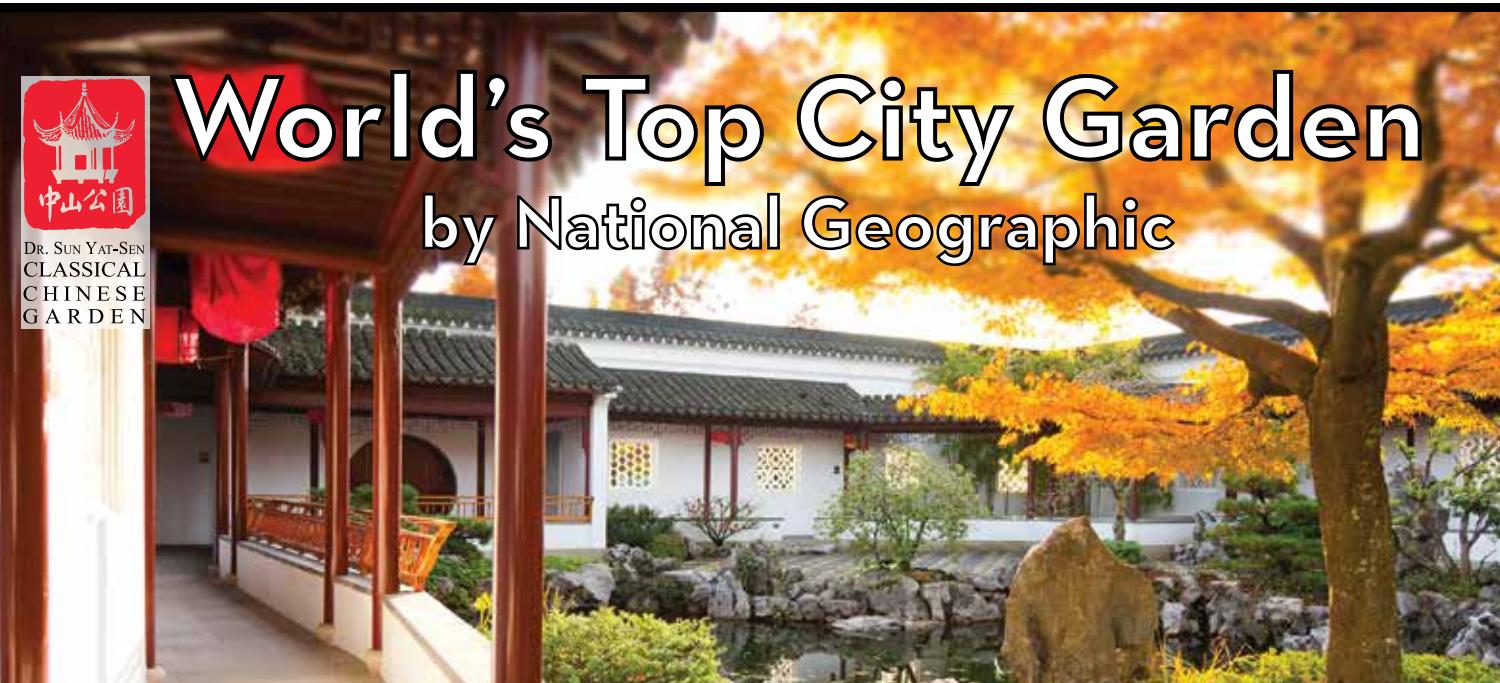
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST**

5:00PM Uncovering Vision art show launch • 6:30PM Seated screening of Reflected Light



Film will be available online at  
[vimeo.com/ugmvancouver](https://vimeo.com/ugmvancouver) on November 24th.

[UGM.ca](http://UGM.ca)



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## In Victoria, lessons from View Towers

Story and photo by Janine Bandcroft

### Low-income renters continue to struggle for supports

David Tataryn receives a disability income—that's \$906 for British Columbians living alone, a monthly amount that makes it near impossible to find housing in Victoria's private rental market. But for 16 years, he managed to rent an affordable suite (\$398 when he moved in, \$526 when he moved out) in Victoria's now-notorious View Towers, a 357-unit apartment building home to many low-income renters since it was built in 1970. That all changed this year, however, when a mass eviction spurred by a fire left Tataryn and 39 other renters scrambling to find lodgings.

On May 15th, 2014, the unit directly above Tataryn's caught fire from a lit cigarette. Along with about 70 others, Tataryn was evacuated. To his surprise, he was also evicted; View Towers landlords, operating as West Sea Construction, deemed the units uninhabitable.

More than half—40 out of 70—former View Towers residents had nowhere else to go following the fire. While tenants like Tataryn didn't find the damage to be so extensive as to render the suites uninhabitable, management barred them from re-entering the building. Those 40 tenants, newly homeless, were given bus tickets, food vouchers, and a toiletry package with toothbrush and toothpaste. The City of Victoria's Emergency Management Agency and Emergency Management BC moved them from place to place.

For the first days after the fire, Tataryn slept in a motel, a hotel, and spent five nights in the dorms at the University of Victoria. It was nothing like home. But he didn't realize it would get worse until he was eventually told, "all you need tonight is a bed." Tataryn and the other evacuees were offered mats on the floor at the Salvation Army.

He wanted to go home, but was barred from his former residence. "Nobody moved back into View Towers," Tataryn says, "Even those willing to pay extra rent."

#### Thrown out

The lock to Tataryn's apartment was changed; he had to complete paperwork requesting small items of necessity. "They brought me the wrong shoes, and only half my prescriptions," Tataryn notes. He went to live with his mother in Nanaimo, began a new search for housing, and challenged View Towers for access to his suite.

Tataryn signed a document offered by West Sea Construction. "Basically it said that I was thrown out because of distress, and in return I got half a month's rent and the damage deposit."

Tataryn didn't think this was fair. So he went to TAPS, Victoria's Together Against Poverty Society. The group provides low-income communities with legal advocacy and supports; a rare thing, given the arid landscape for legal aid in B.C. that has been steadily diminishing since the early 2000s.

David Tataryn, a low-income renter and former resident of Victoria's View Towers apartments, is pictured here at an annual Victoria homeless memorial held on the evening of the winter solstice to commemorate people who died due to poverty throughout the year. Tataryn, alongside 40 other View Towers residents, became homeless following a May 2014 eviction spurred by a fire.

TAPS was able to grant Tataryn a small victory following the chaos of his displacement. After two months, and with help from TAPS legal advocate Victor Ryan, Tataryn was allowed access to his suite for just two days to move nearly two decades' worth of belongings, something he may not have been able to do without TAPS' assistance.

A volunteer with Victoria's grassroots Committee to End Homelessness and the city-funded Coalition to End Homelessness, Tataryn is a passionate supporter of TAPS' work; he knows firsthand how helpful its services can be. In the mid-2000s, when he faced another eviction scar while living at View Towers, TAPS helped him, he says.

#### A necessary resource

TAPS was established 25 years ago by a small group of people wishing to address the challenges of navigating government bureaucracies and administrative processes. Now TAPS has six staff, about 75 active volunteers, and a 10-person board. The group offers free, face-to-face legal advocacy for Victoria's low-income community.

Representatives accompany income assistance (welfare) recipients to appointments with the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation. They help people apply for PWD (Person With Disability status) or assist with appeals when

◀ CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

# Dying for home

Megaphone's exclusive report on homeless deaths in B.C.

By Sean Condon

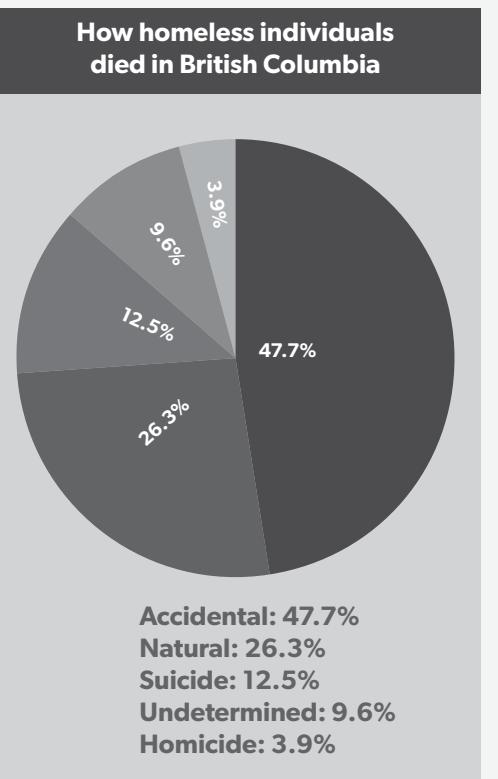
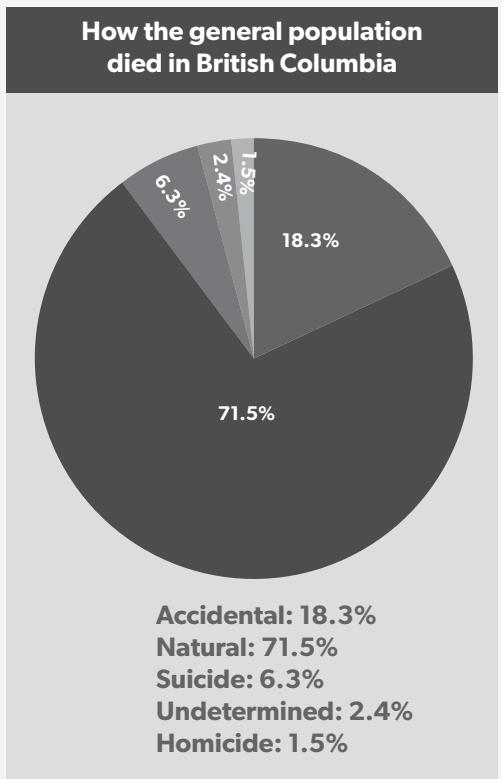
At least 281 homeless people died in British Columbia between 2006 and 2013. As outlined in Megaphone's recently released report, "Dying on the Streets," the true number is likely much higher.

Using data primarily from the BC Coroners Service, "Dying on the Streets" shows that homelessness in British Columbia is both incredibly deadly and largely preventable.

The median age of death for a homeless person in the province is between 40 and 49. This is almost half the life expectancy for the average British Columbian, which is 82.65 years. Homeless individuals are also twice as likely to die by accident, suicide, or homicide than the average British Columbian.

Megaphone released the report in hopes of galvanizing governments to do more to end homelessness in the province.

What follows are a personal profile and key statistics from "Dying on the Streets." To view the full report, please visit [MegaphoneMagazine.com](http://MegaphoneMagazine.com).



## Homeless Deaths in British Columbia

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
<b>Street</b>	21	23	32	31	19	10	17	7	160
<b>Shelter</b>	10	16	13	10	11	6	9	15	90
<b>Unknown</b>	-	-	8	1	4	9	3	6	31
<b>Total</b>	31	39	53	42	34	25	29	28	281

Source: BC Coroners Service

## Homeless Deaths by Age Range

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
<b>10-19</b>	0	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
<b>20-29</b>	4	5	7	1	4	4	5	3	33
<b>30-39</b>	7	6	9	5	12	4	5	8	56
<b>40-49</b>	10	14	15	18	9	5	11	8	90
<b>50-59</b>	9	12	16	14	6	7	4	4	72
<b>60-69</b>	1	2	5	2	2	5	2	5	24
<b>70-79</b>	0	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	3

Source: BC Coroners Service

# In the flowers

Remembering Thomas Sawyer

By Sean Condon

In March 2010, Thomas Sawyer died from internal injuries in a downtown Vancouver alley under what police called "suspicious circumstances." The cause of death was "multiple blunt force injuries." He was 55.

Sawyer was well known in downtown Vancouver, where he often sold or gave away flowers, and was affectionately known as the 'Flower Man.' He had a large number of loyal customers who appreciated his sense of humour and philosophical musings.

"He was a very peaceful, gentle guy, and knew everything there was to know about plants," said Judy Graves, the former homeless advocate for the City of Vancouver. "Before he had a place to sell flowers he would get them out of the gardens in the Bentall Centre and then sell them to the movie crowd, and I would always buy them even though I was allergic."

What most people didn't know about Sawyer was that he had a wild and adventurous past. A child of the '60s, he often travelled around North and South America with just a few dollars in his pocket. His famous name often got him in trouble with the police, who thought he was being cheeky. He eventually settled down in Mexico, where he got married and had a son.

But something terrible happened to Sawyer in Mexico and he returned to Canada in the mid-1990s, damaged and hurt. His brother, Doug, said he wasn't the same again. Sawyer would stay with his brother from time to time, or in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. But fiercely independent, he began to reject any support and spent the last decade of his life on Vancouver's streets.

"He refused to have anything to do with the welfare system and once that stopped then he couldn't afford to rent anything," said Doug Sawyer. "What he needed was something other than a welfare cheque to pay the rent and some sort of safe housing."

Tom Sawyer struggled with some personal issues, but Graves was working with him to get him into housing before he died. "He had decided he was too old for the streets and it was time to come in," said Graves. "It wasn't for a lack of effort



Tom Sawyer, pictured here in front of Vancouver's Dominion Building, was a talented flower arranger who sold his arrangements on the street. Photo: Tom Sawyer & Ikebana © Andrew Owen A01.

to get him in, it was a lack of housing."

"There's always a reason why somebody makes that choice to stay on the streets, and with Tom at that point it was a moral judgment that he placed on himself that he didn't think he deserved to be on welfare so he cut himself off," she added.

The Vancouver Police Department has not been able to determine exactly how

Sawyer died. It is possible that he was the victim of a hit and run or an assault, or fell from a height. But one thing is for certain: being homeless put him in a much more vulnerable position.

"If he had been living inside that night, he would not have died," said Graves.<sup>1</sup>

# What bothers me about the Ghomeshi discussion

By Toula Drimonis

I really like Jian Ghomeshi. As the thoughtful, eloquent, well-informed, highly charismatic and soft-spoken long-time host of CBC's Q, he has quite a loyal following across the country and even south of the border. So it's more than understandable that when news broke that he was fired by his employer, the country went into a collective tizzy.

When Jian Ghomeshi took to his own Facebook page to issue a carefully worded statement and argue that his kinky sex life was the reason behind his firing, I saw the public narrative change immediately. Words of support, scoffs over that old fuddy-duddy of a public broadcaster, attempts to discredit the accusers, people tripping over themselves to reassure Ghomeshi that his sex life was his business—it all unfolded within hours. Websites in support were popping up and a petition to reinstate Ghomeshi was making the rounds. If he had hoped that going on the offensive and issuing a pre-emptive strike would reap online displays of unwavering support, he was more than vindicated.

No one knows the entire truth, and we probably won't know it until this goes to court, now that Ghomeshi has launched a \$55 million lawsuit. But without pointing fingers and taking sides, I take issue with a few things.

Just because someone is a well-loved public figure does not mean they are immune to wrongdoing and exempt from justice. The cult of personality and hero worship are dangerous. They can erode our critical thinking and lead us to automatically assume innocence where guilt may reside. I'm not saying Ghomeshi is guilty, only that he's not automatically innocent simply because we like the way he smoothly poses questions on air or because we liked Moxy Fruvous. (Who the hell liked Moxy Fruvous?)

Despite what many outraged Canadians might want to believe, from the beginning there were clear signs that this was always about more than kinky sex. Sure, our Crown Corporation (and many of its viewers) may not be "hip with the times" and into BDSM, but I have a hard time believing that the

CBC would fire their golden goose over his unsavoury (to some) taste for bondage and spanking.

Even the perception and association with BDSM shouldn't have affected his reputation (and the CBC's, by association) to the point it warranted the broadcaster to get rid of its prodigal son and run the very real risk of legal pursuit by a wronged party.

Without necessarily concluding guilt, there must have surely been enough evidence seen and heard by the CBC to satisfy its legal team that his dismissal was legally sound. There is simply nothing to be gained for the struggling public broadcaster by wrongfully dismissing one of its most popular employees to save face.

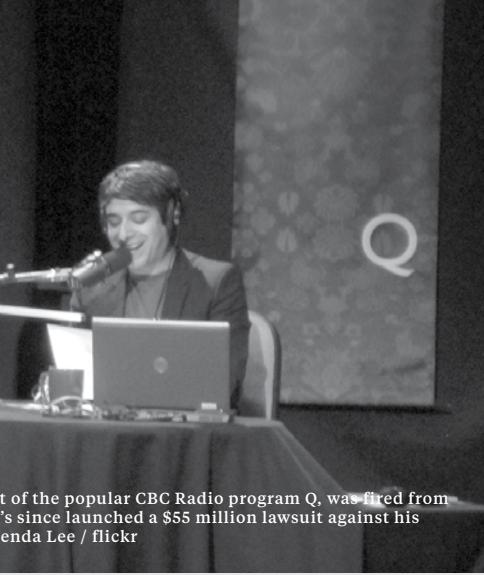
The subsequent *Toronto Star* article that broke Oct. 26 seems to corroborate that point of view. Jian wrote in his lengthy statement that this is happening "as a result of a campaign of false allegations pursued by a jilted ex-girlfriend and a freelance writer."

First off, the "jilted ex-girlfriend" card raises major flags for me. I have written extensively on rape culture and society's easy dismissal of sexual assault accusations as the malicious machinations of vengeful, hell-bent, angry women. In lay terms, "b\*tches be crazy," and you just have to take what they say with a huge grain of salt.

But, contrary to popular opinion, rape and sexual assault continue to be the most underreported violent crimes in North America. Study after credible study has proven that women are simply, and too often, scared into silence, particularly when the perpetrator is a well-known figure with fame, money and public support on his side.

And here's where this story unravels for me: while Ghomeshi alludes to one jilted lover, the *Toronto Star* article speaks of four women who have come forward with accusations of non-consensual sexual violence.

Four women takes this incident from a "he said, she said" scenario to a full-blown pattern of "she said, she said, she said, she said..." sexual aggression. What could the motivation be for four women to lie about something like this? For the chance



Jian Ghomeshi, former host of the popular CBC Radio program Q, was fired from the CBC in late October. He's since launched a \$55 million lawsuit against his former employer. Photo: Brenda Lee / flickr

# The passion play

Following your heart, according to Devon Lougheed and Leigh Eldridge

Story and photo by Jackie Wong

Follow indie music and arts events in Vancouver, and chances are high that you've crossed paths with Devon Lougheed, Leigh Eldridge, or both. From their basement apartment off Commercial Drive, the couple houses a motley alchemy of creative endeavours that touch virtually every corner of the city. Eldridge is a photographer, an event planner, a makeup artist, a writer, and holds a part-time gig at Parallel 49 Brewing. Lougheed is, in his own words, "a lapsed academic who has fingers in many musical pies." He's best known for his current work with the nostalgic '90s throwback band Altered By Mom, and he formerly helmed a post-pop band called Beekeeper.

Their work ranges in scope and shape, but it's united—and guided—by a relentless pursuit and articulation of their passions. "We really enjoy working on projects together," Lougheed says. "I think our best, most fun times are where we can both be actively engaged in something. We like doing things together we can both be active in. Which is why Then and Now is so fun."

Then and Now is an annual music showcase that the pair founded in 2012. The concept is simple: local musicians perform one song they wrote in their youth ("then"), and one song they're performing currently ("now"). Proceeds from ticket sales benefit Megaphone, and the most recent iteration of the show took place last month. "The format fits well with Megaphone," Lougheed says, "the telling of stories, hearing stories you might not otherwise hear."

Eldridge, who has taken hundreds of photographs in her life, never tires of taking pictures of Lougheed. She has this to share about taking effective photos of loved ones: "the most important thing for taking photos is that they [the subjects] are comfortable," she says. "It doesn't matter if you are comfortable as a photographer! It really helps if they are relaxed and can laugh a little bit. In a relaxed, non-posed atmosphere, you can get a lot of real genuine emotion."

In hyper-expensive Vancouver, it doesn't always seem easy to follow passions over the promise of regular paycheques. But to Eldridge and Lougheed, doing so is worth the risk.

"It's so cheesy, but sometimes with the things that seem to make the least sense, your heart is telling you to go for them," Lougheed says. The former PhD candidate in political philosophy was six months away from completing his dissertation when he decided to pursue music full-time. "We get precious few opportunities to actually do that, and they're always less permanent than they feel. [Those passions] are worth pursuing."



## Young artists move Indigenous conversations forward

By Jackie Wong

At Toronto's Polaris Music Prize Gala in late September, Tanya Tagaq delivered a powerful performance that marked a shift in a contemporary independent music landscape which, for all its creative boundary pushing and experimentation, is often strikingly homogenous. For the eight years that the annual \$30,000 Polaris Prize has been awarded to a notable full-length Canadian album the winners have never featured Indigenous representation, or even people of colour. Tagaq, who won for *Animism*, her fourth album that Six Shooter Records released this spring, broke the dry spell by beating out the likes of the Arcade Fire, Basia Bulat, and Mac DeMarco to take the prize this year. In her Polaris Prize performance, Tagaq projected a list of names of missing and murdered Aboriginal women onstage while she sang. In her acceptance speech, she told the audience to "wear and eat seal as much as possible," stirring controversy when she finished with an F-bomb-laced message to the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). She wished to make a point, she told reporters later, that Indigenous communities should have the right to hunt and harvest seals, particularly in impoverished First Nations communities in Newfoundland, where the hunt takes place. But the fact that her PETA



"What's astounding to me is the general lack of empathy when it comes to Indigenous issues," says Tanya Tagaq. Photo: Sarah Race via Six Shooter Records.

# New frontiers

statement caused such a stir and the list of missing and murdered women didn't is an indicator, she says, of a widespread and sinister, willful ignorance. "It's exhausting to have people dismiss it," she says. "I got tired of people thinking of the missing and murdered indigenous women as something that's happening to somebody else because it's not just somebody else. These are sisters and mothers."

Tagaq, 40, was raised in Nunuvut and is Inuk. Her musical practice draws from Inuit throat singing, a practice usually done by two women. After actively performing and recording for nearly a decade, the Polaris distinction has provided a new, necessary platform to speak publicly about gender equality, indigeneity, and de-colonization—the issues closest to her heart.

"It's something that I live with every

day and that we talk about around my dinner table every day. I'm thankful for the opportunity to be able to bring these issues up because it's not something I study from far away: it's something that I live," she tells Megaphone on the phone from her home in Brandon, Manitoba.

"What's astounding to me is the general lack of empathy when it comes to Indigenous issues. Now, it's time for people to bring awareness so that there can be an attitude change."

### "Like waves against the rocks"

The process of undoing a colonial legacy that spans centuries and generations isn't happening quickly. "It's like waves against the rocks. It's going to take a really long time for people to understand why they think that way about us," Tagaq says.

"People don't understand that there had to be this attitude towards Indigenous people in the first place in order for colonialists to ethically take the land and do what they did to us. They had to think we were inferior and they had to think we were savage animals and they had to dismiss us. Because you wouldn't ever do that to an equal."

From where she now stands as one of the major players in Canada's independent music landscape, Tagaq is working to make public what she has been experiencing personally for years. Last month, she was sexually harassed while walking through downtown Winnipeg in mukluks.

"It was racially specified, what happened," she recalls. She Tweeted about the incident, which was both taken seriously and reported on by national media—an event that's still shamefully rare when it comes to the way

we treat sexual harassment and assault.

"If I Tweeted every single time some asshole said something to me, it would be a lot!" Tagaq says. "It's become a thing that has become normal and people accept it. And I just am finally powerful enough in myself that I can go, why the hell do I have to accept that? I don't have to accept that. Nobody should have to accept that."

We've reached a moment, Tagaq says, where what have been previously understood as exclusively Indigenous issues—issues of equality, of colonial violence—should move to a wider audience.

Tagaq is working to move the conversation forward through her music, and so, too, are a number of younger Indigenous artists whose work is breathing new life into how the Indigenous experience is articulated, presented, and shared.

### Taking back the land

In early October, 29-year-old Nisga'a poet Jordan Abel launched his second book, *Un/Inhabited*, at the Vancouver Art/Book Fair. The book of conceptual poetry features appropriated text from 91 western novels. The novels, most of them published in the early 20th century, tell traditional western tales of the frontier, of the pioneer, and the relationship—problematised in Abel's work—between "cowboy" and "Indian."

"Depending on who you ask, [the western] seems to be this innocuous, antiquated form that we used to write and engage with, but it also seems to persist. People still write westerns, people still watch westerns. It's still there. There's kind of a romantic interest in the western as this kind of foundational pulp genre that is part of how we imagine North America as a

whole and part of how we think about our contemporary societal structures," Abel says. "There's a real impulse, for me, to interrogate our foundational beliefs and those invisible structures of colonization that we don't necessarily tend to think about very often, but are nonetheless present."

Though the novels he appropriates in *Un/Inhabited* are fiction, those fictions did a lot to influence public consciousness about land use and who has the right to it. "I think they were really integral in creating a national fiction around these spaces, just the common understanding and belief that there were these blank spaces that were there," Abel says, "and that the pioneers and the settlers were the ones taming it and shaping it and founding cities."

### A process of reclamation

In appropriating western novels and interrogating them—Abel digitally searched the texts for colonial language and ripped those words out—he re-territorializes a set of colonial narratives with a voice of his own.

"Processes of de-colonization often require similar or parallel moves as processes of colonization," he says. "So in this instance, if I'm wanting to talk about spaces that have been appropriated, taken over, stolen, it actually makes a lot of sense to me to work backwards and steal and appropriate and re-adjust however I see fit in order to comment on those techniques and on the material itself."

Abel is one of only a handful of B.C. Indigenous writers working in poetry. "I went into the particular niche and field because there were books out there I wanted to read that weren't written," he explains. "I think it's very beneficial to have as many voices as possible contributing to any kind of conversation surrounding indigeneity."

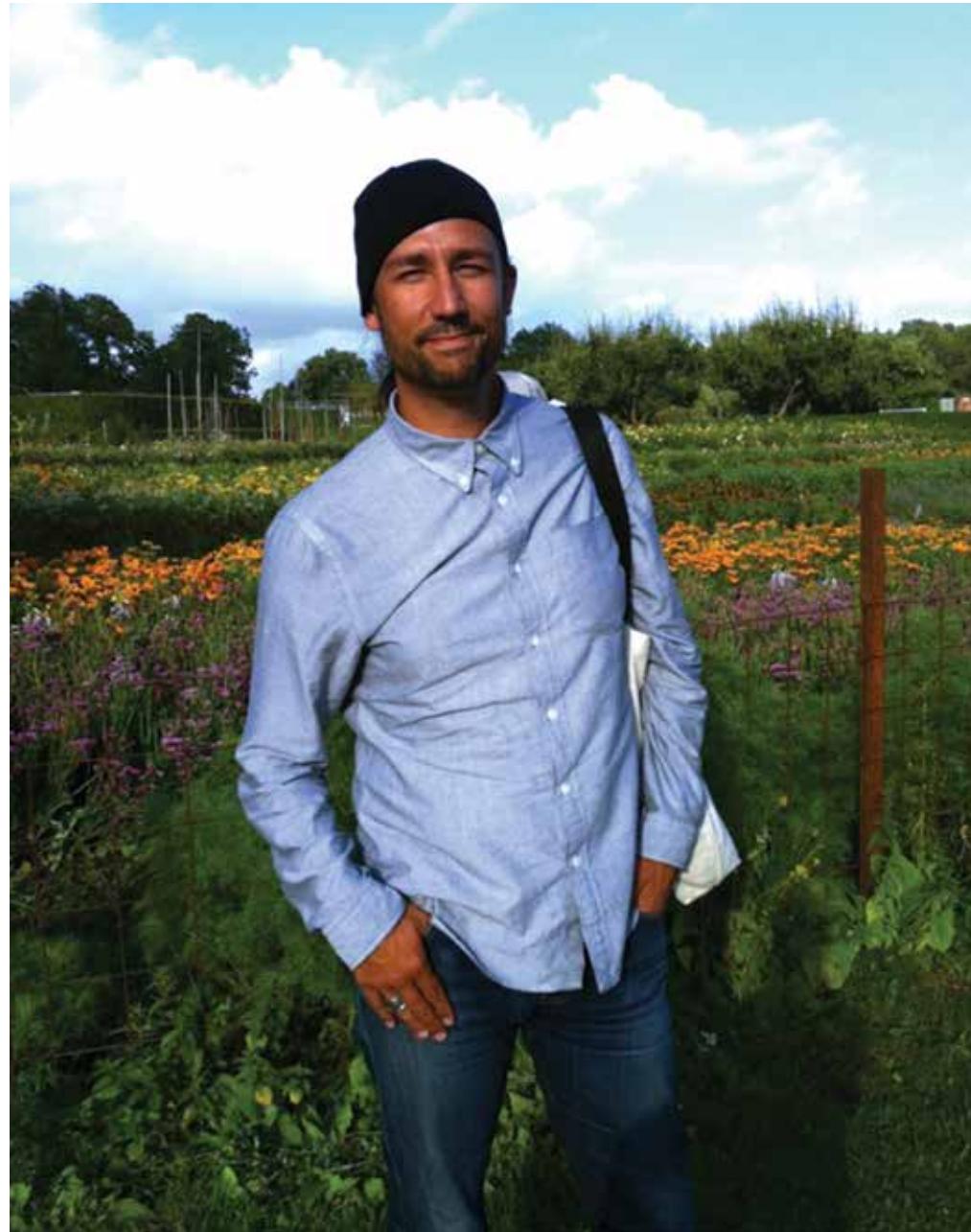
His next book, *Injun*, will be published by Talonbooks in 2016. Between now and then,

Abel will continue his PhD work in Simon Fraser University's English department. His work appears in the forthcoming "Futures" issue of Poetry is Dead magazine.

"One thing I love about poetry is it allows me that space to deal with difficult subject matter," he says. "Because of its limited mainstream appeal, [poetry] is capable of doing things not possible in other genres."

### A different temperature in the water

Late last month, Jarrett Martineau participated in a sold-out book launch and panel discussion at SFU Woodward's in downtown Vancouver. The 37-year-old Cree/Dene hip-hop artist came to town from Victoria to support the launch of noted political theorist Glen Coulthard's latest book, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the*



Victoria academic Jarrett Martineau is working on a PhD in Indigenous Governance. The hip-hop artist is working to articulate the intersections between art and social change. Photo: supplied.

*Colonial Politics of Recognition.* Megaphone caught up with him the morning after the talk. Reflecting on the unprecedented attendance at the launch and what feels like a growing public appetite to publicly address Indigenous issues, Martineau feels a shift in public mood.

"There's a different temperature in the water, to my knowledge and perception," he says. "I don't attribute it exclusively, but I think a lot of it is an outgrowth of what happened with Idle No More as a really important intervention into broader public discourse. I feel like that interjection, if you will, was a really important one because it said, 'No, we need to be having these conversations. We don't have a lot of opportunities to even get together and talk about this stuff.'"

#### **Cultural change precedes political change**

Martineau, who was a key community organizer with the Idle No More movement, is currently at work on PhD in Indigenous Governance from the University of Victoria. When he started his doctorate work, he also co-founded Revolutions Per Minute (RPM), a digital music platform to promote contemporary Indigenous music culture.

The site, RPM.fm, intends to introduce a general-public audience to contemporary forms of Indigenous music. Martineau has done extensive work with Tanya Tagaq and Ottawa's Indigenous hip-hop group A Tribe Called Red. "People have no idea there are Indigenous musicians making this diversity of music," he says. "It's also about building

community from within. A really big part of what we do is try to get people who are recording in their bedroom and who don't have access to maybe a bigger community of people to get their work out." Martineau is a former CBC television and radio host who formerly performed with Vancouver musical outfits The Front and Damage Control. He occasionally raps and samples under the stage name No-1. His current academic work brings together his personal experiences as a media artist and musician to investigate how art can be an instrument of social change.

"There's an author, Jeff Chang, who wrote this great book called *Can't Stop, Don't Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. He says cultural change precedes political change. I really think that's true," Martineau says. "Looking to art as a way of anticipating the kind of changes we want to realize in these other ways, I think, is really useful." A Tribe Called Red, he says, is a strong example of that. Their music "ended up opening up this space for engaging all these questions around cultural appropriation, representation, the politics embedded in them. All of this stuff that came out of the productive confluence they made through their artwork and through their music." Acts like A Tribe Called Red create space that provide, as he puts it, "a line in for people who wouldn't otherwise be engaged in these kinds of questions. A hell of a lot more people, at this point, are finding their way to that music than they are going to search out the latest academic text or directly engage the politics. For me, it's about creating spaces and openings that way."

What's happening among younger Indigenous artists and thinkers now, Martineau says, builds hopeful momentum that he expects will grow. "The violence is ongoing, so the need for that ongoing engagement is very real," he says. "We need more ongoing spaces for these conversations. They don't have to be formal or institutionalized or affiliated—it doesn't have to be through a university or any kind of thing. I feel like the work that's happening now is setting the stage for that: moving from reactive, spectacularized forms of big, public attention to a more ongoing process of engagement."<sup>41</sup>

#### **◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19**

denied. On Thursdays, they offer a free tax clinic, and this year they launched an Employment Standards Project to help non-unionized workers whose employers violate the Employment Standards Act. Hilary Marks joined the TAPS board two years ago, after receiving help with her income taxes, tenancy and income assistance issues.

"They are so valuable, a very essential and much-needed service," Hilary says. "It's awful that the government puts people into danger by not allowing them to be self-sustaining. How do people live on [a single person's income assistance allowance of] \$610 a month? It really is an infringement of peoples' human rights! I do it, but I am always lacking."

Even though he'd lived at View Towers

for 16 years, West Sea denied Tataryn a reference, claiming they don't know enough about him. It took him eight weeks to finally find reasonable housing. "It's better," Tataryn says, of the apartment he now rents for \$695 a month. "It's not hard to be better than View Towers, but of course it's also \$160 more a month."

Though he's happy in his new home, Tataryn questions whether his and others' displacement was truly necessary. He questions the official story that the building has irreparable fire damage with ceilings and walls caved in. After he'd worked with TAPS to gain access to his apartment, he felt the damage wasn't nearly as dramatic as had been reported.

View Towers, he estimates, is now two-thirds empty following the fire, marking

a loss of sought-after affordable rental housing in Victoria. He continues to support TAPS in its work at advocating for marginalized people, something that feels rare these days.

"In a situation with a lot of people shutting you down, or shutting you out," Tataryn says, "at least I didn't get that from TAPS."

Tataryn was one of the approximately 6,000 people TAPS serves each year. "We fundamentally believe that we shouldn't exist," says interim executive director Stephen Portman. That TAPS' client numbers are growing, he says, marks a grim reality. To him, it's "a reflection that things are getting worse for people living in poverty."<sup>42</sup>

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# Rolling like thunder

## Meet Harrison Lee, yo-yo wizard

Story and photo by Carlos Tello

I have always believed that what makes a performer great is not just talent, an almost obsessive attention to detail and a flawless execution. To me, the best performers are the ones who can convince audiences that there's no effort involved in what they're doing—that they, too, could be charming spectators onstage if they decided to. When I saw 15-year-old Burnaby-based yo-yo prodigy Harrison Lee perform, I instantly believed that the only difference between him and me was that he owned a yo-yo.

But as with many other great performers, Harrison has worked hard to hone his craft. When the 15-year-old first put his hands on a yo-yo three-and-a-half years ago, he struggled. He watched countless YouTube video tutorials. He practiced tirelessly. Now, he's a yo-yo master. And he's constantly working to improve his skills.

"I yo-yo whenever I'm not sleeping, eating or doing my homework," he says, smiling.

Harrison became interested in yo-yos while watching a friend yo-yoing at school. Mesmerized by the skillful, complex tricks he saw, he went to his father and asked him to get him a yo-yo. Harrison's dad, Harry Lee, was baffled.

"When he asked me he wanted to buy a yo-yo, I thought: 'That's an old-school toy that I used to play with,'" he says. "I never thought kids played with yo-yos anymore."

The kinds of yo-yos Harrison uses to perform are not the wooden or plastic ones

common among schoolchildren. Harrison's professional-grade yo-yos are made of aluminum, which allows for stability, balance and high speed.

Unlike wooden and plastic yo-yos, which can be purchased at dollar stores, professional ones range from \$30 to \$300, he says.

Harrison didn't realize the depth of his skill until he and some friends decided to participate in the Western Canadian Yo-yo Competition. He finished in second place in the junior division, far ahead of most of his pals.

"I really didn't know what I could expect going into this competition, because I had been only yo-yoing for six months," Harrison recalls humbly. "So, I guess at that point I was like: 'Yeah, I'm pretty good at yo-yoing.'"

After the Western Canadian Competition, nationals and World Yo-yo Contests followed. He won the 2013 Canadian Yo-yo Competition and has competed in the last three world championships. Harrison now ranks 26th in the world.

Yo-yoing has earned Harrison international accolades and it's also boosted his personal development. He has become more self-confident and has learned how to perform in front of large crowds. It has also helped him manage stress while dealing with schoolwork.

Harrison's newly gained abilities have

encouraged him to try teaching and giving motivational speeches, too. He now gives lessons on how to yo-yo to other kids at his school. Earlier this year, he gave a talk titled "Life is like a yo-yo" at a TEDx conference.

High-profile gigs also accompany the hardship of funding travelling and equipment. A sponsorship allows Harrison not to worry about the price of yo-yos, but he and his family still have to find ways to pay for travelling costs when he participates in world championships. Two months ago, for example, he flew to Prague, in the Czech Republic, for the 2014 World Yo-yo Contest. Harrison's family was able to pay for the trip by turning it into a family vacation. But if he plans to continue yo-yoing professionally in the future, he will have to find ways to make it sustainable.

He's still in high school, so there are years before Harrison must decide whether to turn yo-yoing into a full-time job. For now, his chief concern is the challenge of generating fresh material: he's constantly working to come up with new tricks to keep audiences at the edges of their seats. □

*Harrison's next performance takes place at TEDxKids@BC on November 16 at the Michael J. Fox Theatre (7373 Macpherson Avenue), Burnaby, B.C.*

# What's on



### Portraits of Brief Encounters

// Wednesday, November 12, 6-11pm  
// thisopenspace, 434 Columbia St., Vancouver

Join writer Cole Nowicki, curator Elfiat Albrecht, and event producer Yashar Niljati to play a game at thisopenspace's one-night show in which 15 artists visually interpret 15 new encounters written by Nowicki. Attendees will purchase a storybook with 15 stories and will be tasked with matching each story to the artists' 15 different visual representations of them. You'll have a chance to talk, collaborate, hypothesize, and even connive your way into winning up to \$75 off the price of each piece of art for sale at the show. Featuring work by Justin Longoz, Sophia Ahamed, James Knight, Andrea Taylor, and more.

### Juxtapose: Links Between Loneliness, Engagement, and Housing Affordability

// Sundays through November, 2:30-5pm  
// Museum of Vancouver, 1100 Chestnut Street, \$15

Juxtaposition brings seemingly distant ideas together. In the 2014 edition of the Museum of Vancouver's Design Sundays series, the museum teams up with the Laboratory of Housing Alternatives to convene a participatory dialogue connecting the dots between housing, affordability, and community engagement. Featured guests include Paul Kershaw, founder of Generation Squeeze, local architect Marianne Amodio, the Vancouver Design Nerds, and more.

### Wes Borg's Cavalcade of Whimsy!

// Sunday, November 9, 8pm  
// Victoria Event Centre, 1415 Broad St.

In the second installment of a new monthly show hosted by Canadian Comedy Award nominee Wes Borg, the Cavalcade of Whimsy brings the noise. And by noise, we mean live television dubbing, sketch, music, improv, and assorted hilarity which, until now, young grasshopper, existed only in your dreams.

### Poetry Is Dead's 10th Issue Launch

// Thursday, November 13, 8pm-late  
// The Cobalt, 917 Main St., Vancouver

Poetry is Dead magazine, helmed by longtime Megaphone friend and creative writing workshop founder Daniel Zomparelli, launches its 10th issue. Ten! The theme? Future.

The night features readings by contributors Jordan Abel (see story, page 24), Ben Rawluk, Elena Johnson, Leah Horlick, Chris Gilpin, and more. The readings will be followed by a dance party convened by DJs Jef Leppard and That's So Raven (actually, that's so Daniel). The lights will be low. Your spirits: through the roof.

### Meatdraw, Bonehoof, DJ Duke

// Saturday, November 15, 9:30pm  
// The Copper Owl, 1900 Douglas St., Victoria, \$10

A night of dark pop, psych rock, and heavy soul descends upon Victoria with Meatdraw, in town for the first time in almost a year, on the eve of releasing its third album featuring dark New Orleans twang and catchy pop hooks. Bonehoof, meanwhile, bring new material to the evening, merging Michael Jackson-esque dancefloor beats with the heft of Black Sabbath. Sound good? It is.

### Social Justice Film Night: Greedy Lying Bastards

// Thursday, November 20, 7pm  
// 2994 Douglas St. (BCGEU Hall), Victoria, admission by donation

A monthly film screening hosted by the Victoria Friends of Cuba, the November edition of Social Justice Film Night is a documentary investigating the stalled efforts to tackle climate change despite consensus in the scientific community. From the Koch Brothers, ExxonMobil, oil industry groups, to prominent politicians and judges, Greedy Lying Bastards unravels the layers of deceit threatening the ability for future generations to survive on planet earth.

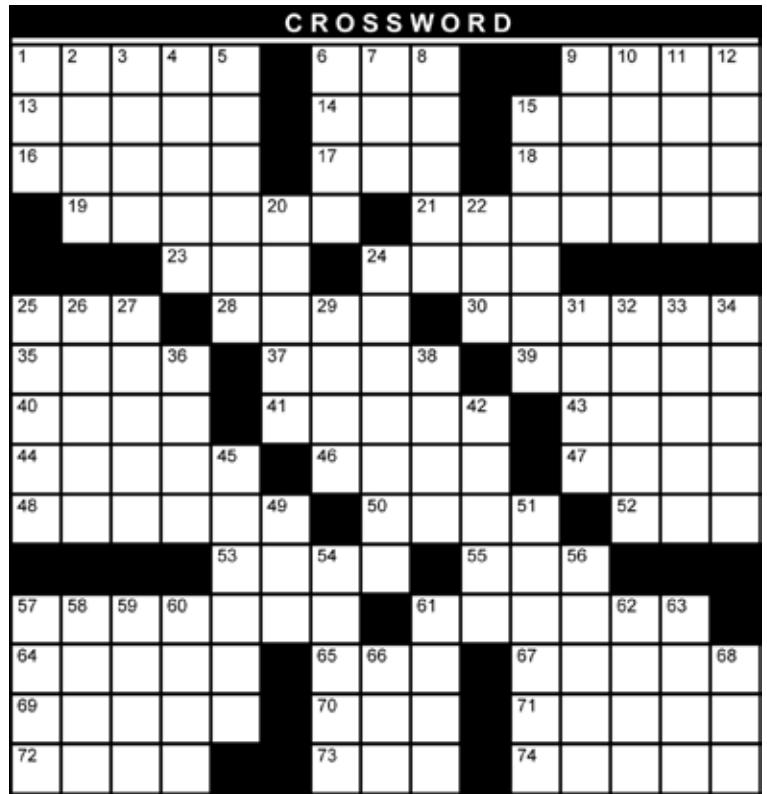
### Secret Cinema

Thursday, November 27, 6:30-11pm  
Victoria Event Centre, 1415 Broad St., \$30 general/\$25 student

Secret Cinema is an interactive movie experience where audience members become the characters in the movie they've arrived to watch. Once you've purchased your ticket, you'll be given clues about which movie will be screening, and which identity you'll be asked to dress up as for the night. By the night of the event, the plot will thicken and the cinematic experience will come to life with in-the-flesh scenery, characters, food, and movie-related activities.

# MEGAPHONE: CHANGE THAT WORKS

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ANSWERS OCTOBER ISSUE



## MONTHLY CROSSWORD

### THEME: DANCE DANCE DANCE

#### ACROSS

- 1. \*Hula dancers wear skirts made of this
- 6. Automated teller
- 9. Grain in "The House That Jack Built"
- 13. Send in payment
- 14. Indochinese language
- 15. Juan or his wife Evita
- 16. Administer oil to, often in religious ceremony
- 17. Make a choice
- 18. Fancy tie
- 19. \*Big band music dance
- 21. \*Distinctly urban dance
- 23. Do needlework
- 24. His alter ego was a doctor
- 25. Ship pronoun
- 28. "I'm \_\_\_ you"
- 30. Rubber gaskets
- 35. \*Dance to a ballerina
- 37. Chows down
- 39. Motionless
- 40. Aware of
- 41. \*Tony Manero's dance
- 43. Purse to go with evening gown
- 44. Searched, often used with "around"
- 46. \*Ballet move
- 47. Well-deserved reward
- 48. Matured
- 50. Lend a hand
- 52. "The Catcher in the \_\_\_"
- 53. "\_\_\_ we forget"
- 55. Beluga yield
- 57. \*Montparnasse dance
- 60. \*May Day dance prop
- 64. Fair market \_\_\_
- 65. \*Meryl Davis' and Charlie White's turf
- 67. Lowest deck on a ship
- 68. Real estate broker, e.g.
- 69. Driving hazard
- 70. Upholstery choice
- 71. Nessie's Loch
- 72. Drug approver
- 73. \_\_\_ or a spy

### People-powered NOT developer-powered



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#### DOWN

- 1. Tennis great Steffi \_\_\_
- 2. She is a former U.S. Attorney General
- 3. Used for charging
- 4. River clay deposits
- 5. Three-dimensional sound
- 6. A bunch
- 7. \*Soft-shoe
- 8. Like an eaten blanket?
- 9. Mosquito net fabric
- 10. a.k.a. Atlantic Richfield Company
- 11. \*Ice dancer's jump
- 12. Dynamite
- 15. School assignments
- 20. Had title to
- 22. Altar avowal
- 24. Uncomfortable position
- 25. \*East Coast or West Coast dance
- 26. Kind of roll
- 27. Having an irregular edge
- 29. Peacock's pride
- 31. Bookkeeping entry
- 32. Fertilizer ingredient
- 33. Sticky
- 34. \*Electric \_\_\_
- 36. Was aware of
- 38. Healing sign
- 42. Performed at Teatro alla Scala
- 45. Pleasing to the ear
- 49. Cause of fairytale princess' downfall
- 51. "Let's Go Places" vehicle
- 54. Use nose as detector
- 56. Erasable programmable read only memory
- 57. \*Where dancer performed in Whisky a Go Go
- 58. Guinness and such
- 59. Women in habits
- 60. Large, prefix
- 61. Assortment
- 62. Take it easy
- 63. "All for one, one for all" sword
- 64. \*MGM song-and-dance star, \_\_\_ Johnson
- 66. Atlantic catch

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Please keep me informed with updates about Megaphone by email!

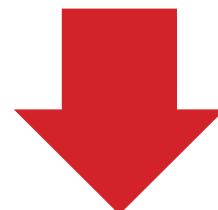
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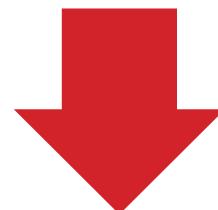
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