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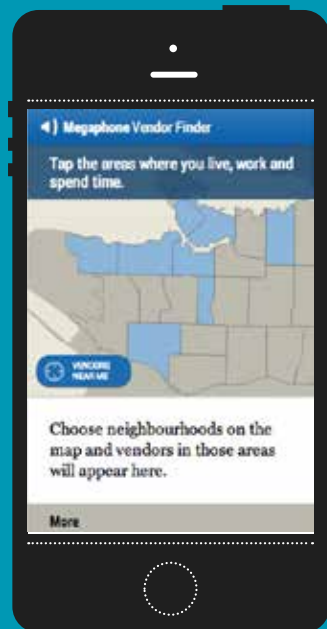
V A N C O U V E R ' S S T R E E T P A P E R

ISSUE 149 | FEB 28, 2014

\$2

CHANGING CHINATOWN

As Chinatown evolves, who gets left behind?



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Thank you supporters & partners



Cover photo by Jackie Wong

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Megaphone
is published every two weeks by
the Street Corner Media Foundation.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER MEGAPHONE 149

HARM REDUCTION — Safe injection sites, crack pipe machines and teaching alcoholics how to make their own booze. Over the past month Vancouver received national and international press for how its harm reduction models are helping drug users get healthy. Controversial to some, it reminded me both of how innovative and courageous health care workers and community advocates have been in Vancouver.

By **Sean Condon**
Executive Director – Megaphone
Photo by **Drug Users Resource Centre**

The recent harm reduction hoopla started when local media discovered that the non-profit organization PHS Community Services Society had converted two sandwich and candy machines into crack pipe dispensers in the Downtown Eastside a few months ago.

They're colourful machines that operate on an amazingly simple process: for just 25 cents, crack-cocaine users can get a pipe kit that includes a push stick, Brillo pad, screen, mouthpiece and alcohol swab. These are tools to help keep people healthy and alive as they work to try and get the treatment they need for their addiction.

When news of the machines started circulating, reporters found out PHS had been running another innovative program out of the Downtown Eastside's Drug Users Resource Centre—a homebrew program for severe alcoholics and illicit drinkers (*Megaphone* first ran a feature article about the PHS harm reduction strategy for illicit drinkers in 2012).

Members pay \$10 a month to brew their own beer and wine. It provides them a much healthier alternative to extremely dangerous and toxic drinks they might otherwise consume, and allows them to start managing their addiction so they can get healthy

enough to get the treatment they need. This is another program that is saving lives.

Lastly, the West End's Dr. Peter Centre, which has been running a safe-injection site for its clients since 2002, applied for a formal federal exemption to run the site. If approved, it would make it Vancouver's second officially sanctioned site.

Where there was once fierce opposition to Vancouver's Insite, which is currently Canada's only safe-injection site, the statistics (there have been 1,400 overdoses there, zero deaths) have proved that this harm reduction approach saves lives.

While critics of safe injection sites in Vancouver are in the minority, the crack pipe vending machines and alcohol managed program received public backlash (both the federal Conservative government and Fox News took shots against the crack pipe machines). Critics seem intent on ignoring the evidence that harm reduction strategies such as these stabilize users while connecting them to addiction treatment, reducing the risk of transmission of diseases like HIV and hepatitis C, and saving thousands of dollars in related health care costs.

Vancouver has been at the forefront of harm reduction strategies in North America for the past decade. I'm proud that this city continues to push the boundaries on how we can find innovative programs to help



A crack pipe dispenser in the Downtown Eastside's Drug Users Resource Centre.

support people who are suffering from addiction.

Repeated evidence shows that harm reduction strategies work. The critics will continue to be pushed to the margins. ◀)

MEGA NEWS

Rents rise beyond welfare rates

Stories by **Katie Hyslop**
Photo by **Morgan Schmorgan/Flickr**

For the first time since the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) started annually surveying single room occupancy hotels in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), there were no rooms available for rent at the \$375 provincial welfare shelter allowance.

CCAP’s 2013 Hotel and Housing Report is its fifth report since 2009. It includes data from 64 of the 81 privately-owned hotels in the DTES and found average rents increased to \$469/month from \$452 in 2012. In addition, there were 236 rooms that previously rented at the \$375/month shelter rate that had rent increases.

The main reason for increasing rental rates is gentrification, says CCAP researcher and organizer Tamara Herman.

“For the first time now there are artists and students and other people who want to live in the Downtown Eastside. So there’s incentive for hotel owners to raise the rents and to target people who can afford to pay more,” she says, adding wealthier tenants increase property taxes, which also raises rents.

Herman says gentrification isn’t a natural process for a growing city, calling on the city to put pressure on the provincial and federal governments to fund more social housing affordable to people on welfare or old age security pension in the neighbourhood. She says the city’s Local Area Plan for the neighbourhood, which promises 1,467 new units over 30 years, isn’t good enough.

“The market just doesn’t take care of people on its own,” she says. “So we think that it’s the government’s responsibility to make sure that every human being has a decent place to live.” ◀▶



Proposed Missing Persons Act grants police more power

The B.C. government says its proposed Missing Persons Act will help protect vulnerable populations.

The act, introduced on February 13, aims to meet recommendations in the final report of the Missing Women’s Commission of Inquiry released in 2012.

It is designed to determine a missing person’s vulnerability by considering their age, physical and mental capabilities, and the circumstances

surrounding their disappearance.

It will also, with a judge’s permission, provide access to records about the missing person, including health, education, and employment records. Under the new act, police will also be able to obtain phone, text, email and video footage of the missing person.

Kate Gibson, executive director of the WISH Drop-in Centre for female survival sex workers, says she is heartened by the bill, especially because built into the act is a judge’s discretion on the degree of police access into an individual’s personal records.

“I think there should be some limitation on how far back you delve into that personal information of them, and who else is affected by that personal information. There should definitely be a benchmark there that you only go back so far,” says Gibson.

But Bruce Miller, an anthropologist from the University of British Columbia with an expertise in systematic racism and stereotypes of indigenous people, says the bill misses the point that the issue of missing and murdered women rests with attitudes of police towards indigenous people.

“The problem was, in my opinion, that there’s already systemic racism in the police force—we know that. And they haven’t addressed that, and until they get to the root of this, these are technical policing issues,” Miller says.

“I’m always worried about additional authority given to police, anyhow. We all should be worried about that.” ◀▶

MY JOB, YOUR JOB



Megaphone vendor Bob and Benton Brothers Fine Cheese co-owner Patricia

Patricia is a small business owner. So is Bob.

Like thousands of small business owners in Vancouver, Megaphone vendors are entrepreneurs.

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VANCOUVER’S STREET PAPER



VENDOR VOICES

Hendrik Beune on the permaculture transition to a more equitable society

Canada had progressive political and social policies prior to the neo-liberalism of the 1980s. Our country was respected internationally, primarily because of its great natural beauty, beneficial social policies and commitment to peace-keeping. This was not so long ago. When I immigrated here in the early '70s, Canada was a land to be proud of, and the country was trying to correct the mistakes of the past by implementing sound environmental laws and constructive social practices. Certainly this was influenced by a younger generation who had basically given up on working with the status quo and rejected most of what they saw around them. They preferred to live in closer harmony with nature, much like the people who were here before them had done for thousands of years. Then people started working together with their governments to set things right and, as a nation, we set a conceptual and cultural example for the world. It just isn't so anymore; maybe these hippies were right, because governments changed and things got a lot worse in society. In a very short period of time we have moved towards a global economy, which is a rat-race for riches led by greed. And in their greed governments and corporations have eroded nourishing social and cultural systems not only here, but all over the planet, endangering the very survival of many species and upsetting the natural balance we all deserve and need. There is so much waste in this society that many survive on the margins by dumpster-diving through toxins and earning far less than a living wage.

But this is only a very temporary solution for some. Many suffer from family breakups, disease or addiction, while the gluttonous over-consume and ultimately don't fare much better themselves. There should be a lesson learned from such a system that bursts at its edges: the present inequitable system is simply not sustainable. Instead, we need to transition to a way of life which we already know works: a harmonious system with clean air and healthy waters and naturally productive lands, one where many creatures can thrive for all generations present and for many more to come. We've arrived at a pivotal point where transition is simply necessary and permaculture principles become paramount. What does that mean and what would it look like? There is not one simple solution, but rather a broader concept to be learned from how nature functions. This ties in with the unifying position of this issue: that not only do we all have a right to food and a safe food network, but we also deserve to live in a healthy environment, in a dignified and ecologically sound way. This, in essence, dictates a revision of our entire social fabric, and a lot of remediation, so we can have a future that works for us all. I have arrived at this point of view after some 40 years of observation, mapping of resources and survival in a debased culture. Now in my second year of permaculture design studies and involvement with the transition movement, I can finally say that I believe again that there is a solution. We can design this new system together, after careful observation, within a caring community. We will use sound place-based practices guided by wisdom and lessons learned from the past. We can continue redesigning in this way as necessary to survive as a species on a planet that evolves and regenerates, like nature does, with no

waste at all. Without this change we will be doomed to live in what has become a prison imposed on us by the indifferent wealthy. People of all ages around the world are rising in protest, realizing we don't have to live with poverty of spirit, imprisoned in a world we don't want. The real thieves of this planet, whose ideologies are imposed on us, have led us astray. Instead of following them into further destruction, we can work together to create a wholesome society. I wish all of us to believe in this possibility: a harmonious existence for all living creatures, great and small. So let's do it together and a Happy New Year to us all! ◀

This piece originally appeared in the Right to Food Zine published by the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House.

Hendrik sells Megaphone at the Winter Farmers Market outside Nat Bailey Stadium on Saturdays. During the spring, summer and autumn you can find him at the Trout Lake, Main Street Terminal, Yaletown and Kitsilano farmers markets.



Megaphone vendor Hendrik Beune envisions a more equitable society. Photo by Leigh Eldridge



The Long Walk Back

The buses stopped running,
so I started walking—

from telephone pole
to telephone pole,
timing my average speed,
with how many poles per city block
I can rush past.

Will I make it to that place
where the remedy waits?
I walk, transfixed
by the hope
he'll still be around,
holding the powder
that keeps me
marching fast.

I'm wet. I stink.
I'll smell worse
by the time I meet him
5 miles down
the wrong way.

I have his money.
He has my dope.
He better be there—
if he's not,
the agonizing walk back
will be so much
worse.

by **Kip**

*Kip participates in Megaphone's
creative writing workshop at Onsite.*

Photo by ecstaticist/Flickr



Shoddy Slip-ups

In spirit, I am more than willing
to take on the three R's to manage
my addiction to crack rock cocaine,
detoxify, let me tell you why
discover uncover Recover.

The first R is followed by Relapse
forgive yourself; stay in good grace
reason being old habits die hard,
tangled in sham, broke and in a jam,

The third R is Rehabilitate.

To have insight would be meaningless
if it is there without a function,
insight is good for many reasons,
the chief point being empirical
trial and error is okay, ay.

The fine arts field a soothing method
if it gets the desired results,
more power to your good intention
saving lives of those wanting saving,
extending the shortened life cycle.

Hope for the best, have faith in yourself,
there is no one else that will do it
a motif: easier said than done.
familiar to many a one,
to believe in each other have faith.

Faith is a form of moral support,
cooperating, we can build a fort,
it is not costing me but I lose
a long life, and extended lifeline.

In good time, we will heal, time will tell,
in good time, time will take us away.

by **Neil Benson**

*Neil participates in Megaphone's
creative writing workshop at the Drug
Users Resource Centre.*

Photo by colink./Flickr



CHINATOWN'S TOUGH EVOLUTION

Where do working-class ethnic enclaves fit into our future cities?

The Vancouver Second Mile Society's Chinese Seniors Outreach project coordinator, Cindy Pang (left), walks with 93-year-old Gai Li Lin inside the May Wah Hotel in Chinatown.

Story and photos by Jackie Wong

“Ni hao,” says a red painted wall on the southwest corner of Main and Keefer. The enormous particle board inscription is an English phonetic spelling of “hello” in Cantonese, part of an advertisement for a coming condominium development in the rapidly upscaling Union-Keefer-Georgia radius between Main and Gore streets in Chinatown. The inscription has the unintended effect of mocking the people crowding the bus stop below. Most of Chinatown’s Chinese residents can’t read or speak English, nor can they afford what the developers call “achievable home ownership” at 1888 Keefer St. Obviously, the condo advertisement is not for them, though it pretends to speak their language.

What gets lost in translation is that despite the new condo towers, restaurants and coffee shops catering to a new class of English-speaking residents and workers in the neighbourhood, Chinatown’s longest-standing residents are barely holding on to their homes in a part of the city that has been central to their lives and family histories in Vancouver.

Recent flashpoints, like the city-ordered demolition of the Ming Sun Benevolent Society headquarters in December and the 30-40 per cent rent increases served to elderly residents of the Chau Luen Tower on Keefer Street earlier this month, are signs of the precariousness facing Chinatown’s predominantly elderly Chinese-speaking residents. The population is already on the margins because of their poverty, their language and their age.

The B.C. Residential Tenancy Branch recently ruled against the landlord’s attempts to raise the rents at the Chau Luen, marking a victory for the renters who would have otherwise been priced out of the building and, ostensibly, the neighbourhood.

But with recent reporting from the Carnegie Community Action Project that there are no more rooms renting for the monthly \$375 shelter allowance rate for people on income assistance, and with a 30-year Local Area Plan to be passed for the Downtown Eastside (DTES) next month, Vancouver’s Chinatown persists as a contested space.

The neighbourhood lies at the nucleus of the city’s ongoing tensions around housing affordability, racialized discrimination, access to services and questions about who has the right to the city.

Changing neighbourhoods, unchanging attitudes

The cost to rent an office or retail space in the east side of the city is more affordable than renting spaces in the central parts of downtown or the city’s west side. So it makes sense that Chinatown, a historically working-class ethnic enclave, is sought-after territory for Vancouver’s creative class and upmarket professionals. The change in the neighbourhood is a hot conversation topic among Vancouverites, but the experience is not this city’s alone. Chinatowns across North America are undergoing similar transformations. In the United States, particularly, community organizers are raising concerns about the impacts that gentrification will have on Chinatowns’ original residents .

Last year, New York City’s Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) embarked on the United States’ first multi-city Chinatown land-use study to compare Chinatowns in Philadelphia, Boston and New York City. The results, published in a fall 2013 report, are strikingly applicable to Vancouver: “Recent luxury and high-end developments in each city’s Chinatown have directly and indirectly threatened both current residents’ and future immigrants’ ability to live, work, shop,



Gai Li Lin has lived at the May Wah for eight years.



Rosesari Rosesari in her room at the May Wah Hotel, a privately owned single room occupancy hotel in Vancouver's Chinatown. She pays \$320 a month. Her neighbours on the same floor pay \$200 to \$290 a month



The group of Chinese female seniors meets regularly on Thursday afternoons at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.



Jay Gnun Foon, left, and Sum Chew Gnun, right, have lived in Canada for 20 and 31 years, respectively. They became friends through their mutual involvement with the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.

and participate in the community and cultural life of these historic neighbourhoods,” reads the report. The result, report co-author Andrew Leong told the BBC earlier this month, is “a sanitized ethnic playground for the rich to satisfy their exotic appetite for a dim sum and fortune cookie fix.”

Chinatowns across North America are facing similar uncertainties. But cities differ in their responses to the concerns raised by community organizers about gentrification and its related evictions, affordability and accessibility concerns. That the AALDEF exists at all is evidence of a robust culture of multi-ethnic community organizing in major American cities that we don’t have in Canada.

In San Fancisco, hundreds of housing rights advocates, spurred by the outreach work of the influential Chinese Community Development Center, threw their support behind an elderly Chinese couple threatened with eviction from their home near San Francisco’s Chinatown last fall. Community action against the eviction delayed their move-out date. And while the family eventually lost the fight to keep their home, a robust community of bilingual housing advocates worked with them to find them a new affordable rental apartment, a rare treasure that is arguably even harder to find in expensive, tech-booming San Francisco than it is in Vancouver.

Here at home, Vancouver’s lack of strong ethnic community organizing is evident in the relative invisibility of non-English speaking citizens in public conversation. That invisibility has consequences everywhere in the community, from the widely felt and seldom-documented racism and discrimination experienced by Chinese-speaking seniors in DTES food line-ups to the quiet resignation with which many will submit to circumstances that English speakers, or people who are able to leverage more capital in society,

would refuse to accept without a fight.

“Perhaps because of history, or because of the lack of community activism for the Chinese community and with the Chinese community, it plays out in terms of their response,” says King-mong Chan, a researcher and organizer for the Carnegie Community Action Project. Chan is one of only a handful of Chinese- and English-speaking bilingual outreach workers in the DTES. His work includes connecting with Chinese-speaking elders in the DTES and Chinatown to learn about their living situations, their housing needs and how they can be better connected to community services that will benefit them.

Chan says he observes a disturbing complacency among the Chinese-speaking population that he doesn’t see as frequently among English-speaking residents of the DTES. “When I talk to them, they don’t have the money to buy certain food. So they buy cheaper food,” he says. “They’ll just sort of accept the fact they have less and less money to buy food as opposed to speaking out.”

I was told similar stories of the quiet resignation that comes from learning, over the span of a life, to live with less and ask for little while writing a series about Chinatown seniors last year for Vancouver’s Tyee Solutions Society. “They’ll force a smile to cover the pain and overcompensate for it, to reassure me that things are fine when I know they’re not,” Deanna Wong, the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre’s Chinese seniors’ outreach coordinator, told me. “They have my contact information. But a lot of times they won’t want to trouble me for it.”

To live with the assumption that there are no supports available is also historically rooted. The legislated racial discrimination that many Chinese citizens faced in their first years in Canada is still alive in the memories of the seniors who now live in Chinatown. Many of them still have racial epithets hurled their way on the

streets; of the little research conducted on the Chinese-speaking seniors community in the inner city, racialized discrimination is a top challenge facing the population. Frontline workers like Wong, Chan and others are well aware of it. The challenge, however, is creating action from awareness.

Creating a new sense of community

“Despite government considerations on how best to reconcile historical wrongs and discriminatory laws faced by Chinese-Canadians in the past, there remains a Chinese-Canadian population that currently experiences discrimination and neglect.”

So says a proposal co-written by Doris Chow, a frontline worker in the DTES. In collaboration with other community service organizations in the neighbourhood, Chow submitted a proposal to the provincial government in January to create a legacy fund to re-invigorate the Chinese benevolent associations that used to play a stronger role in contributing to Chinatown’s social fabric.

The benevolent associations were originally established at the turn of the 20th century “to safeguard Chinese-Canadians from discriminatory legislation,” Chow says. Today, she says, “there’s this gap in services the associations can fill—and quite [culturally] appropriately, too.” She’s talking about gaps in housing services that could potentially be filled by benevolent associations that currently own Chinatown property but lack the capital to renovate it for community use.

Community organizations serving both the Chinese- and English-speaking populations of the inner city supported the legacy fund proposal, including the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, MOSAIC BC, the Dugout and Union Gospel Mission.

The wide-ranging support speaks to a growing appetite to think

about the DTES and Chinatown in more integrated terms; a lack of coordinated service provision keeps the communities away from each other, even though its members rub shoulders all the time.

“There are Chinese seniors living in the same buildings as Downtown Eastside residents. And they’re intermingling all the time. But our interventions are completely separate,” Chow says. “So the services that are available in the Downtown Eastside can be sometimes one-dimensional and they don’t have the capacity to take into consideration the Chinese seniors that come to the Downtown Eastside to access the food, housing, health and mental health services.”

Change is happening quickly in the DTES and Chinatown. Next month, Vancouver city council will pass the 30-year Local Area Plan for the neighbourhood. And the city is already considering leasing the site of the former Vancouver police station at Main and Cordova streets to a California tech firm, despite interest from community groups to use it as a hub for social innovation that serves the Downtown Eastside community.

These changes, of course, are not Vancouver’s alone. They are, as the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund calls them in its Chinatown land-use report, “government policies accelerating gentrification.”

Even so, its authors acknowledge, “Chinatowns have persisted as havens for low-income immigrants and workers, not only because of the continued need for affordable and culturally appropriate services and goods, but also because of the many people fighting to maintain their existence.” ◀▶

OPINION



REJECTION OF HOUSING FUNDS IN ABBOTSFORD IS A LOSS FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Last week our municipal government here in Abbotsford said “no” to over \$15 million of provincial funding from BC Housing. The funding was earmarked to build and operate a 21-unit apartment on the edge of our historic downtown that would become home for 20 men who are currently homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. The land for the project was donated by Abbotsford Community Services (ACS). The funding was available. And they turned it down.

As many will know, Abbotsford’s struggle to address the issues faced by its most vulnerable citizens has been

well-publicized since city staff dumped a load of chicken manure on a homeless camp last June. In many ways, the chicken shit dump on a homeless camp was the best/worst thing that could have happened in this community. It has served as a catalyst to bring to light a number of ongoing atrocities and acts of violence the homeless face every day.

The list of actions taken against the homeless in Abbotsford is now well-documented and visible: the brutality of the local police destroying personal property with knives and pepper spray; the constant camp evictions leaving residents with no place to go; the failure to allow for the provision of adequate healthcare services. The ever-growing list of despicable actions by the civic government of Abbotsford seems to have no limit.

While this town has found itself shoved into the spotlight with its ongoing actions against our neighbours who live outside since the chicken shit

dump, it must be said that all these approaches taken by the city have been happening for decades.

The people living on the streets and in the bushes and alleys of Abbotsford represent a vast spectrum of narratives. Those who have found themselves roofless have included nurses, truck drivers, artists, pharmacists, social workers, welders and mechanics. There are grandmas and grandpas, mothers and fathers, prodigal sons and estranged daughters.

A predominant constant for most people who sleep on concrete beds is they are outside due to circumstances beyond their control that have cast them into a painful existence.

They, like you and I, long to be loved and accepted, to be a part of a community in which healing can occur.

Over the past eight months, the eyes and ears of many in Abbotsford have been opened to the harsh existence of people living outside right here in our

“The decision from the City of Abbotsford is quite likely to leave a wake of destruction that will take some time to clean up.”

own backyards. Public awareness and support has grown exponentially for the homeless in Abbotsford since then. Sadly, this fact seems lost on the half of our civic leaders who voted against the BC Housing/ACS rezoning application on February 17. This rezoning was and is necessary to bring to life a desperately needed supported housing initiative that would have used the housing-first model, which contends that until a person’s housing and basic needs are met, they cannot address other issues such as mental health and substance misuse.

It is not a completely bleak landscape in Abbotsford, though. There have been some valuable responses to the needs of those on the streets such as the Firth Residence operated by Elizabeth Fry Society, the Christine Lamb residence operated by Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley, the expansion of the Kinghaven Addiction Centre and the recovery house regulations adopted by the City of Abbotsford, to name a few.

However, even these great strides are not enough to cover all needs. Many in our city still lack adequate access to washrooms, showers, laundry, a drop-in centre that is available when they need it, and, of course, housing options.

This recent decision from the City of Abbotsford is quite likely to leave a wake of destruction that will take some time to clean up. It is unlikely that BC Housing will be eager to work with Abbotsford anytime soon. We’ve lost millions of dollars that would have helped to rebuild hundreds of lives over the 60 years of funding that was tied to project. All the political foolishness aside, my hope is we can use the passion generated over the last several months for positive, lasting change.

We need to develop and create solutions that address the many complex issues that stand before us. We must purge our civic government and fill it with fresh minds that listen to its community on all issues in the coming election. We must be brave enough to

take risks that are necessary for growth. I want a community centre for our friends open when they need it. I want public washrooms to be made available. I want dignity restored. And I want an apology for the violations the city perpetuates on homeless of this city. ◀

Ward Draper is pastor and founder of The 5 and 2 Ministries in Abbotsford.



Lung Butter

I am sitting in the designated smoking section of a building which I do not live in, trying to find my matches. I never misplace my cigarettes, but the matches are a different story. I do a routine check: shirt pocket, jacket pocket, pants pocket. Voila, I find them in the back pocket of my pants. Of course, the last place I think to check.

It’s three in the morning. Cars whizz by in random groupings—I wonder where they’re going at this hour. With a menthol already hanging from my lips, I light a match and inhale deeply. It’s odd to think that death costs \$11 a pack but tastes so heavenly.

Staring at the cherry of my lit cigarette, I begin to reflect. I think about quitting. This burden grows tiring some days; my

clothes stink, my fingertips and teeth are yellow, the cough, the phlegm, the frustration of rolling out of bed for a smoke and consequently staying up all night. The nicotine grasp is strong and my will is weak.

It’s in my best interest to drop this ghastly habit, but then I think about all the picture perfect moments in which smoking became justifiable.

Charlotte, my caramel girlfriend of the past, introduced me to cigarettes. When we were 17, she would sneak out of her parent’s home and crawl into my bedroom through my window. Between bouts of sexual rambunctiousness and pillow talk, she would use the opportunity to chain smoke. Laying on my mother’s lawn one night, she offered me a cancerstick.

When I think of quitting, I think of all the drunken conversations I’ve had over a few puffs in the back alleys of nightclubs. I think of all the black, tar-like saliva I’ve hurled off balconies, spitting competitions with friends. I think of all the peculiar people I’ve met who introduced themselves after asking if I had a lighter. I think of all my drug binges when I sat indoors, smoking and watching the sun rise from afar; an inexpensive ending to a high-priced night.

I think of giving up smoking, but then I think of giving up memories. I’m not quite sure if I’m ready to forfeit priceless memories—memories which seem priceless, but cost an arm and a lung in reality.

by Dominic Haye

Dominic writes at Another Slice, a program at Directions Youth Services.

Photo by Florian/Flickr

THE WHIFFING WELL
AN AROMATIC OXYGEN BAR

Cramming for exams? Driving test due?
Landed an interview? Marathon or two?
What's the first thing you should do?
Get your prongs on and prime your
performance at
The Whiffing Well Oxygen Bar & Vapour
Lounge!

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- Tickets to Cineplex International Village movie theatre
- Gift certificates to Havana's; Tangent Cafe; Nuba; and more!

Complete the survey online at MegaphoneMagazine.com

MEGA-ARTS LISTINGS



Superheroes on the Couch

Have you ever asked yourself what Comic-Con attendees whose enthusiasm for Batman is rivalled only by their enjoyment of French psychoanalyst and poststructural theorist Jacques Lacan might hope for in an ideal Wednesday night? Wonder no more. In the latest installment of the ongoing Lacan Salon at SFU Woodward's, four Lacanians—an existential-oriented psychotherapist! A PhD candidate! A Lacanian psychoanalyst! A social and cultural geographer!—explore how society uses and explores superheroism. Each panelist will give a talk based on one superhero of choice. On tap for the evening: the Hulk's anger management issues and the unknowable unconscious; PTSD and *Sin City*; gender politics and Batgirl; and a critical analysis of Walter White, Clark Kent and the fabrication of cosmic heroism in the digital 21st century.

Thursday, March 6, Djavad Mowafaghian World Art Centre, Goldcorp Centre for the Arts (149 West Hastings St.), 7pm. Free.



JD Samson and MEN

The Brooklyn-based musician, producer and DJ is also known as Jocelyn Samson, but best known for her work with New York City dance punks Le Tigre (we know it: y'all were dancing to "Deceptacon" in the early 2000s and probably as recently as this morning). These days, JD collaborates with MEN, an LGBT art and performance collective exploring the radical creative potential of dance. The collective descends upon the Colbalt for a Tuesday night performance and ensuing neck-cracking dance party that will a) knock your tube socks off and b) rekindle the long-forgotten neon strobe light installed inside your chest. Don't worry, it still works.

Tuesday, March 11, The Colbalt (917 Main St.), doors 8pm, show 9pm. Tickets \$15 via Ticketweb, Red Cat, Zulu and Highlife.



Comedy MIX showcase with Charlie Demers

The weekly showcase of local stand-up talent features a headlining set by beloved Vancouver comedian and author Charlie Demers, who recently had a baby and has been blowing up Twitter with a wondrous river of hilarious dad-tweets that probably foreshadow some of the jokes you'll hear from him this evening. The night also features sets by Andrew MacLachlan, Levi McCachen, Jacob Samuel and Carl Turnbull.

Wednesday, March 12, The Comedy MIX (1015 Burrard St.), 8:30pm (audience members asked to arrive at 7:30pm). Tickets \$10.



International Women's Day with Idle No More

The Vancouver & District Labour Council Women's Committee hosts an evening of food, community and music to commemorate and reflect upon the work of Vancouver's progressive leaders making change. Speakers include Idle No More founding member Sheelah McLean and activist Janice Makokis. Musical entertainment by Vancouver's No Shit Shirleys.

Friday, March 7, Fraserview Hall (8240 Fraser St. south of Marine Drive), doors 5:15pm, dinner 6:15pm. Tickets \$45/\$30. ASL interpretation provided. Tickets, childcare assistance available: contact Keziah, 604-254-0703, office@vdlc.ca.

MEGA-FUN

Aries (March 21 – April 19)

Some whip their hair back and forth, but you choose instead to slowly wave an enormous Canadian flag while standing just a few feet behind the object of your affection. Love forecast: still got it.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Your popularity soars this month, which is why your attention has turned to group activities where you charm roomfuls of people with your generous provision of Jarlsberg cheese and lacklustre grapes.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

It's the only time of the year when the sun is at the top of your chart, which means people are taking notice of you in new ways, constant public renditions of "Seven Nation Army" notwithstanding.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

You say "pecan," they say "pe-cahn." Truth is, you're looking for a change of scenery, so it's time to break free from the shackles of routine, go out on a limb and try a new nut in your granola!

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)

Whilst plumbing the depths of your psyche during a spate of relationship-induced journaling, you are embarrassed by the song lyrics that speak to your life circumstances, but honestly, not surprised.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)

Your web presence could use a pick-me-up in the authenticity department. Change every searchable photo of yourself to a shot of you on a roller coaster mid-ride, which best expresses your emotional state at all times.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)

Success and spiritual transcendence is more accessible than you think, and most notably appears in the form of a magical, transformative Jarritos tamarind soda and veggie burrito.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)

The firecrackers that you might be inclined to set off indoors on a particularly intense evening are a metaphor for what some call enduring effervescence, and what others call cray-cray scariness.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Get creative this month by becoming your own public space intervention! Who needs to be part of a parklet design team when you can just sit on the curb with an ice cream cone while it's still winter?

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

Waking up on the wrong side of the bed features prominently in coming weeks because you're sleeping head-to-toe, and who knows when that will end.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

Put yourself at the top of your list of priorities this week by treating yourself to a series of small kindnesses, like microwaving your sandwich before you eat it so the cheese melts just a bit.

Pisces (Feb 19 – Mar 20)

To let go of your sky-high standards is to wake up to the beauty alive everywhere in the world. So get out there on Tumblr and favourite everything indiscriminately. You won't regret it.

SUDOKU

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A "one-stop shop" service fair for people who are homeless or having a hard time in East Van. Come and connect with the services you need. Everyone is welcome!

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