

DREAM

HERE
MAGAZINE

WINTER 2020-2021

HOW TO MANIFEST A DREAM

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ON THE COVER

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*“Asking the proper questions is the
central action of transformation.
Questions are the key that causes the
secret doors to the psyche to swing open.”*

—CLARISSA PINKOLA ESTÉS

From the editor

Time of transformation

What a year 2020 has been, filled with such apprehension, anxiety, and change. Some changes were more visible than others, and still others were more impactful than the world was ready for.

This fall issue encapsulates all that this year has demanded of us collectively and individually: awareness, introspection, and action.

Dreams are what drive us as beings who have the ability to foresee a future that doesn't yet exist. This Dream issue of *Here Magazine* showcases people, communities, and events daring to push past the boundaries of current realities in hope of a reality that may inspire us to dig deeper and try harder.

Many have travelled far and wide in search of their dream, as we see on page 16, “In Search of the Canadian Dream.” We can overcome all obstacles and challenges and find the courage to manifest our dreams, as Danyelle's story shows us on page 20. We can learn to release fears and past hurts while coming together as a community to chart a new course, as the story of the One Wave movement illustrates on page 50. These stories, though very different from one another, demonstrate that even though we have diverse histories, we are a people seeking the same things: acceptance, respect, and love—as exemplified by Asiyah and Rose in their story on page 38.

As we know, change is inevitable. It is with this knowledge that we can harness the courage to take risks, venture out in faith, and rest in optimism, believing that no matter what, success is on the horizon. Mira's article on page 10 amplifies this truth. The miracle is that often the outcome of change cannot be predicted, and what unfolds is something so much more beautiful than could have been conceived. This beauty can be seen in the unselfish spirit of a young couple desirous of reconnecting spirit, soul, and earth through gardening, as we learn through the Palenke Greens story on page 62. “Caregivers” on page 48 introduces us to superheroes who show up for the most vulnerable in our community when they need it most. It is the catalyst of change that both excites and intimidates, and fills us with trepidation—but above all, this catalyst gives us the inspiration to try.

Courage, resilience, and hope ignite our will to speak up in the face of injustice, stand against discrimination, and ask ourselves the questions that open the secret doors of the psyche.

It is my desire that as you move through these pages, you tap into your own dream and embrace its possibilities. Together and independently, may we discover that progress requires change, which sometimes makes us uncomfortable but often also finds a way to make us **dream**. •

Kareece Whittle-Brown

BETTER TOGETHER GALA

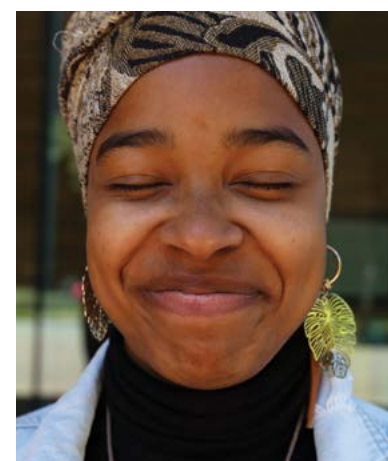
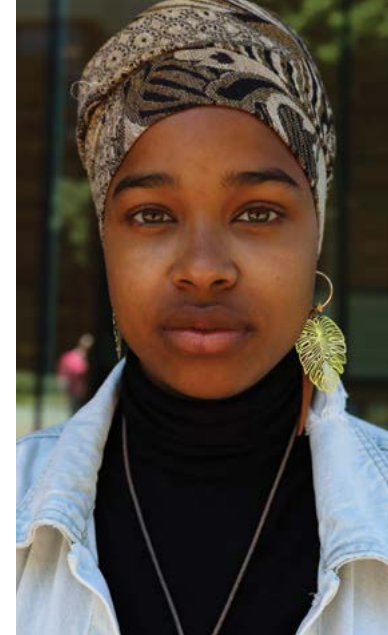
On January 11, 2020, the *Here Magazine* Family hosted their annual Better Together Gala in partnership with the Belfry Theatre.

It was a joyous celebration of food, art, performance, and best of all, togetherness. None of us could have predicted that evening would be our last large gathering for the foreseeable future.

Treasuring the memories, and honouring the friendships. We can't wait to be together again.

Photos by **John-Evan Snow**

Find us on Instagram
@heremagazinecanada
#BetterTogetherGala



Mira

Nomadic No More?

Interview by **Kareece Whittle-Brown**

Photography by **John-Evan Snow**

With Kazakhstan in her rearview mirror, Meiramgul (Mira) Nurgaliyeva embarks on a new professional journey in Canada. Recently graduated from Royal Roads University in Victoria BC, Mira strikes a balance between busy family life and seeking meaningful employment, the latter a challenge for many newcomers during Covid times.



Kazakhstan to Canada! Do you remember when you and your family first arrived here?

Certainly, I remember it very well: it was August 15, 2018. It was an over-thirty-six hour flight from Kazakhstan through Russia and the U.S. There was some anxiety and apprehension but mostly overwhelming excitement. We were all so excited! When I was a young woman, I always had a desire to come to Canada.

You had been to Canada before. Did this time feel different?

I had visited Alberta in 2009. I remember that it was extremely cold and the landscape reminded me a lot of my home country. The first emotion I experienced when I returned with my family was excitement because I thought *finally we made it*.

You left Kazakhstan—with four children!

I wanted to come to Canada to solidify my experience with specialized knowledge by earning a Master of Arts degree. I wanted new experiences. I wanted to explore new horizons, so I decided to study overseas. I applied to a Master of Arts Program at Royal Roads University in Victoria, and when it was approved I submitted the application for myself and my entire family.

What is your first language? What other languages do you speak?

My native language is Kazakh—it is a Turkic language. I am also fluent in Russian and English.

What is your educational and professional background?

My educational background is as an English Language teacher. I started as a trilingual translator, translating from Kazakh to Russian, then to English, for the oil and gas industry. During my career, I have worked as a public relations coordinator, serving in this role for over fifteen years. This was a very successful role for me that I enjoyed very much.

Can you describe your hometown in Kazakhstan?

Kazakhstan is located mainly in Central Asia and partly in Eastern Europe. It is the largest landlocked and ninth largest country in the world. My hometown where I studied, worked, and lived with my family is called Atyrau, and it is considered to be located both in Asia and Europe, as it is divided by the Ural (Zhayik) River.

What do you miss most about your home country?

Now that I think of it, I am quite accustomed to living the lifestyle of a nomad. Since my childhood, I have been used to moving here and there—first with my parents and my family, and then when I went to study overseas at my University. I then got married and moved away from my family and into another family. I also had my work assignment in the United Kingdom from 2013 to 2015, and now have relocated to Canada! Simply put, this has become a part of who I am.

I am not the type of person to miss stuff, but I do sometimes long for the moments

that I used to enjoy back in my home country: talking to my friends, relatives, colleagues, and socializing face-to-face.

How do you stay connected to people “back home” and to your own culture?

My culture is very important to me, and I do try to hold on to some of my cultural traditions and customs. However, we use technology to stay connected to our families and friends. Through digital media, we are able to maintain contact in a real way back home. I also keep special little treats from my home country that I indulge in sometimes, to savour bit by bit, if I happen to feel homesick. For my children it’s different because they quickly adapt and they don’t seem to get homesick as much.



Mira's family celebrates the youngest daughter Amal's walking ceremony, or Tusau Kesu, at Beacon Hill Park, Victoria BC in 2019

What has been hard for you here? What challenges have you faced, and how have you been supported?

The hardest thing when I started studying was reading all those academic texts in English, though I thought I knew English very well! Then there was also the challenge of balancing my study requirements with family matters and obligations.

As a newcomer, I was amazed that there were so many avenues that offered support—not-for-profits and different organizations that provided assistance. I am sure that as newcomers, we all bring a set of expectations with us on how we expect things to be. We carry some beliefs and values, but we also gain different ones while we are here. I always remind myself that Canada did not come to me; I chose to come to Canada for growth. That means that I have to keep my eyes and heart open, and even if I have challenges, I will work through them.

What advice would you give to someone about to immigrate to Canada?

Research before you leave your home country. Do proper research and learn about all aspects of the country, not only about the current experiences of immigrants, or the job market, but even the history of the Indigenous cultures that form a major part of Canadian history. The most important thing is that you must be ready for many changes to occur in you and possibly your family members.

You celebrated your youngest daughter's walking ceremony here in Canada. What was the significance of that?

It is a tradition in our culture to celebrate the important stages of our life. Taking the first steps is one of them. It is called the ceremony of “Tusau Kesu” or cutting the rope. The meaning of this ceremony is to celebrate the first signs of a child’s independent steps into a bigger life ahead. And we want to make sure that a positive, strong, and respected person cuts the rope. Even the way the rope is tied around the baby’s shins is symbolic, as it is tied in the symbol of infinity.



There are many other traditional customs from my home country that I intend to uphold and pass down to my children. For example, the celebration of New Year’s Eve. On December 31st, everyone prepares to meet the new year as happy as possible. Everyone dresses in their finest outfits, gifts are placed under the tree, and the door to our home is open to allow anyone to stop by for a visit. There is also the International Women’s Day celebrated on March 8th each year. On this day it is a celebration for any woman, of any age, or any social status, to show appreciation for being a woman. There is also “Nauryz,” the Spring Equinox celebration which can be traced back to Islam.

Do your children see Canada as their home?

Maybe you should ask my children about it, but I dare to say that as a family we do feel like Canada is our home. I have four children, ages fifteen, thirteen, eleven, and two, and they all love living in Canada. We miss seeing and visiting our dearest relatives and friends back in Kazakhstan; however, Canada is our home today. •



PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY SO FAR

I would say that is difficult for newcomers and international students to find a good job in spite of years of past experience and successes. I came to Canada with so many dreams, aspirations, and a purpose. Having lived here for a while, I am not quite certain how things will work out for me and my family, but I am encouraged to keep going.

Honestly, I have not had professional challenges yet because I am just completing my studies. I recently joined the Inclusion Project, led by Ruth Mojeed. I chose to volunteer and offer my skills and knowledge to this young but promising organization because I believe I can contribute to their mission.

COVID-19

The early months of the pandemic and the changes we had to make were uncertain for us all—for example, staying at home all the time when everything was closed. With countries and cities on lockdown, not being able to socialize with friends, it was an uncertain time. While I enjoyed spending time with my family, I did miss hanging out with friends like I used to.

What was important for me was the sense of community that I experienced from organizations like *Here Magazine*. Even though we were isolated, I knew I had a group of people, the Here Family, on WhatsApp that were looking out for me and my family. The Here Family assisted many of us with finding support for what we needed during the pandemic. One instance I remember clearly was a box of grocery items being delivered to my

home to help with the demands and uncertainty that many people were experiencing.

CANADIAN CULTURE

It is such a diverse country, but bit by bit it all comes together. What I find interesting is how many people I have met since coming here; the diversity of this country amazes me. Everyday, I can meet people of so many different nationalities and interact with different cultures. This has raised my level of awareness and acceptance of the diversity of other cultures.

In the two years that I have been here I have met a minimum of forty-six people from my class, and maybe another forty to fifty people that I have come in contact with outside of school. Before coming to Canada, I didn't know much, nor paid attention to the Indigenous people and culture. However, after living for almost two years in Canada, I find myself wanting to raise my awareness of Canadian history.

HELPFUL CANADIANS

What was noticeable was how helpful the people around us were. Everyone was so helpful towards us—obvious newcomers and immigrants to Victoria. When we asked questions nobody told us no; someone was always willing to help wherever they could.

FAVE ACTIVITY IN VICTORIA

My favourite thing to do in Victoria is to find time to get outside with my family and to socialize with other people. This is the beauty of living here in Victoria. •



IN SEARCH OF THE CANADIAN DREAM

Words by **Chandrima Mazumdar**

Illustrations by **Salchipulpo**

Question: *Where is the safest place to have a heart attack in Canada?*

Answer: *In the backseat of a cab—because the driver is likely a foreign-born doctor.*

After arriving in Canada, I heard this joke often, and at the time, I laughed about this strange reality for immigrants who had come from far and wide to make Canada their home.

Every year, skilled immigrants arriving in Canada fail to get employment in their field of expertise despite being qualified in their home country. Employers cite a lack of “Canadian experience,” which becomes a barrier for new immigrants obtaining employment commensurate with their education and prior experience. Immigrants often find themselves in a Catch-22 situation: Their lack of Canadian experience prevents them from getting a job, and they continue to lack Canadian experience because they can’t get a job without Canadian experience.

Immigrants who arrive as permanent residents encounter this obstacle, as do international students who graduate from Canadian universities. Foreign experience is often devalued, despite the fact that diversity is proven to boost productivity. This is of even more importance in Canada, which has one of the world’s largest per capita immigration rates and a systemic governmental plan to admit a million immigrants between 2019 and 2021.

“It’s very sad that we get all these talented people and we don’t use them well,” says Amarjit Bhalla of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS), an organization that helps immigrants settle down and build community ties in Victoria.

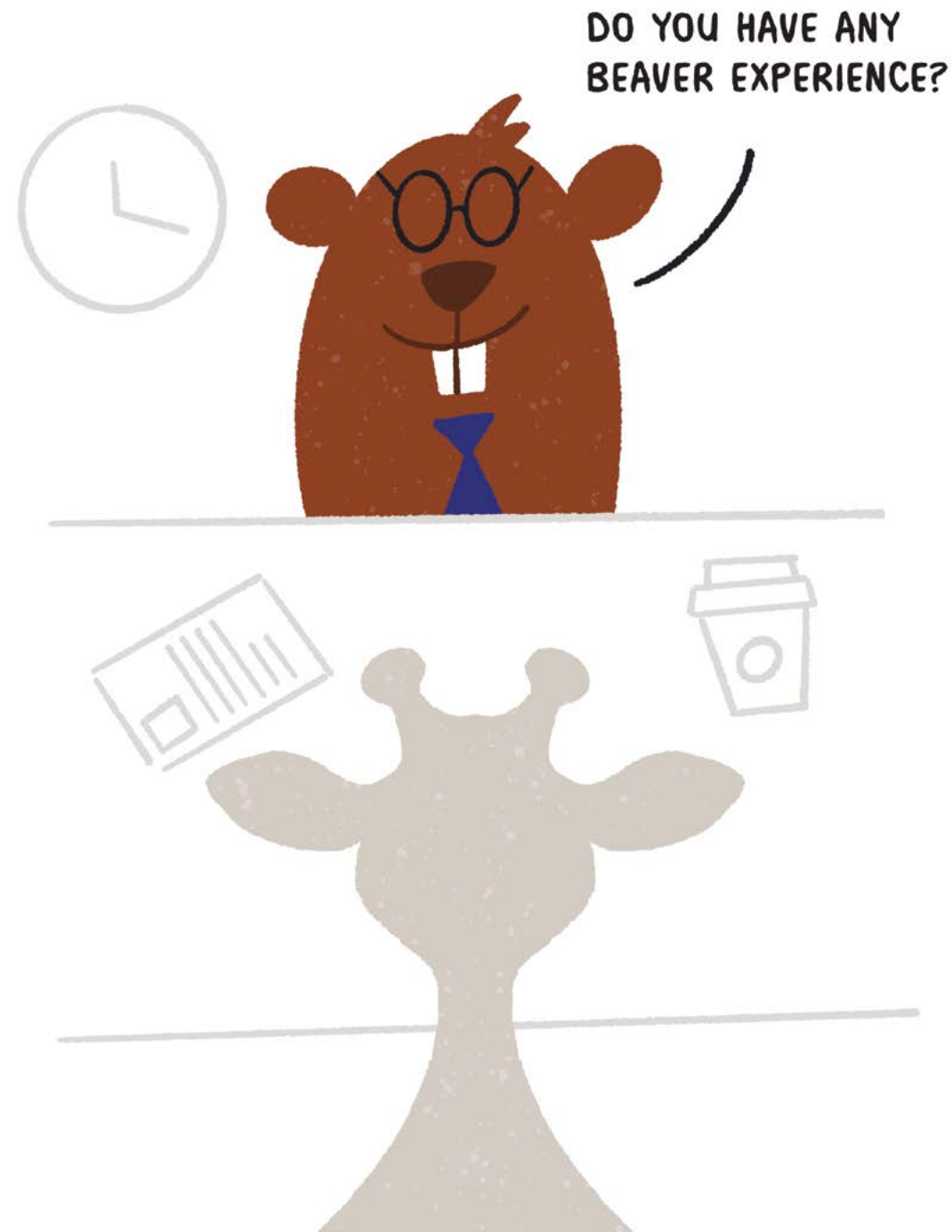
Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world, but do Canadians accept diversity?

Building community ties is a struggle for many immigrants. Despite being largely friendly, Canadian social circles are

not easy to break into. The lack of social acceptance leads immigrants to become socially insular, which emerges as cliques and neighbourhoods that consist overwhelmingly of specific nationalities. Out of a natural desire to feel connected and safe, immigrants seek out housing near those who share their cultural background, those who do not find their cultural practices alien nor object to the smell of their cooking.

This further perpetuates the cycle of non-acculturation. Immigrant children also face microaggressions in their schools, where many assume that kids who moved to Canada from “developing” countries are poor or did not have basic amenities in their land of origin. Many marvel at their knowledge of English or are surprised to know that those from “developing” countries can afford an affluent lifestyle. This leaves immigrant children confused about their classmates, and they begin to feel the burden of representing their country or community to the larger world. It is something that immigrant parents are completely unprepared for and have no way of explaining to young children.

The acculturation process is further delayed when many qualified immigrants end up working in minimum or low-paying jobs that don’t reflect their potential. This process leaves them frustrated and disillusioned. Dismissing prior experience is equivalent to erasing one’s past, and suggests that everything one has accomplished before coming to Canada is unimportant. Immigrants who arrive with permanent resident status find the process contradictory. Why would they be selected because of their qualifications and experience when it doesn’t seem to matter when they are job hunting in Canada? Similarly, international students face another dilemma: Despite having a Canadian post-secondary degree and usually a few years of lived “Canadian experience,” they still struggle to find suitable jobs.



Daughter of immigrant parents from Taiwan, Bowinn Ma, the current MLA for Vancouver-Lonsdale, acknowledges the existence of racism within Canadian society and institutions; she remembers several incidents of both overt and covert racism from her childhood that her immigrant parents faced. Despite being qualified in her native country, Ma recalls how her mother's accent while speaking English became a barrier for her while job-seeking. She is not surprised to know that the situation hasn't improved vastly over the past thirty or so years. "A lot of challenges that new immigrants face when coming to Canada comes as a surprise to most immigrants; our public persona as a country is much more rosy than what our society is actually like." Even though there is racism present in Canadian society, Ma is hopeful that having honest conversations, and working to identify and eliminate unconscious bias, will make the future much more equitable than it currently is.

Where do we start?

It is important to acknowledge that Canada is a desirable destination for immigrants due to its policies, open-minded and diverse population, and multicultural society. It also offers immigrants from less-developed countries an opportunity to better their economic and living conditions. Political stability and low crime rates in Canada provide security and peace of mind to those fleeing unsafe environments and lack of opportunities in their home countries. However, for Canada to remain an attractive prospect for economic migrants, employers need to focus on offering well-qualified immigrants equal opportunities as Canadians. An immigrant population not well-integrated into Canadian society is more likely to be dissatisfied and thus not contribute to society according to their full potential.

A survey conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education among international students finds that 77% of students chose Canada as their destination due to its reputation of being a tolerant and non-discriminatory country. Most immigrants who arrive on Canadian shores every year stand testament to Canada's openness and opportunities. However, there is a big gap between the societal expectation and the on the ground reality. Many newcomers aren't fully aware of the impact of moving lock, stock, and barrel to foreign shores. Most arrive and expect a seamless transition to their previous lives, only geographically removed. Even though they may have received information about what they can expect or even gotten advice from people who know otherwise, they still believe things will be different for them and don't take the time to prepare themselves mentally.

A good place for immigrants to start their Canadian journey is on Google. Thorough research about the place they will soon call home will make the physical transition easier and help to manage expectations better. Even though Canada is full of many positives for immigrants, poor experiences in finding jobs, adjusting to society, or covert racism leave many with a bitter taste in their mouth. Retired citizenship judge Gerald Pash advises that though Canadian society is diverse, it is still learning to be more inclusive. He stresses the intersection of our work and social lives and explains that true inclusion is social acceptance. Having a fulfilling job makes it that much easier to become a positive contributing member of the community. Canada is, after all, a nation of immigrants; whether you are viewed as an immigrant or Canadian only depends on when you got here. •

Danyelle

Catini

“ We have so much more power than we imagine, and we normally don’t use it. So I do everything I can to manifest what I dream of into my reality. ”

Words by **Kareece Whittle-Brown**

Photography by **Fiona Bramble**

Illustrations by **Salchipulpo**



The caterpillar does not need a miracle to become a butterfly

—it needs a process.

Born and raised in Brazil, Danyelle Catini always knew two things for sure: she wanted to have a loving family, and she didn't want to raise her family in Brazil. She always knew she wanted to be a mom and eventually a grandma, and for her that meant she needed a husband.

Strong in her faith, Danyelle knew her husband was coming, so she prayed and waited for him to show up in her life. In 2003, at age nineteen, Danyelle met the man she would call her “Joseph,” and as it so happened, he was looking for his “Mary.” The two eventually became friends, and before long romantic feelings started to develop between them. As they saw the signs of a romantic connection blossom, they kept praying for God to remove temptation while they waited for confirmation that the other was the special person God had in mind for each of them. The more they waited, the more the signs revealed that they were each other's special person and were destined to be together. Eventually they decided to give a relationship between them a shot, and they started dating. After a week of dating, Danyelle was convinced he was the one that she wanted to make a family and grow old with. She was ready to get married almost immediately, but he wanted to wait until they had both graduated and had more stability in their lives.

Making the move to Canada

During the search for places to immigrate to from Brazil, Canada kept surfacing as a viable option for the young couple to explore in greater detail. Over many discussions, and with a growing young family to nurture, they concluded that Canada fit their vision of the place to live and raise their family.

For Danyelle, becoming a diplomat was a fail-proof means of achieving the dream to immigrate to Canada. It made sense as the job would offer stability, security, good pay—and she and

her family would be able to travel. Before meeting the man she would marry, Danyelle had pursued the path of diplomatic studies; however, the exam to become a diplomat is challenging, requiring proficiency in both English and French as well as extensive knowledge in international law and economics. After they began dating, the couple decided that their family was a more pressing priority, so any government job would have to do.

The family in a new country

Danyelle has a strong conviction that kids motivate parents to try harder, to be resilient, and to refuse to quit. However, for many newcomers to Canada, discouragement and hopelessness set in. Often this results in newcomers returning home because they are homesick. Sometimes they miss familiar food and a warmer climate, and the discouragement of having only entry-level jobs available to them can cause people to give up and return to their country of origin. For Danyelle and her family, returning to Brazil was simply not an option. At face value, relocating with children appears more difficult, but the truth is that children eliminate the option of quitting. Danyelle and her husband knew there was no going back, and they had to make it work—if not for themselves, then for the children.

“Having kids gives you that motivation to wake up. You can be desperate and tired from work, but then someone makes a joke, and then you're okay,” says Danyelle.

Manifesting dreams into reality

The resilience and determination of this Brazilian-born supermom comes from knowing exactly what she wants for herself and her family. “We have so much more power than we imagine, and we normally don't use it. So I do everything I can to manifest what I dream of into my reality.”





An avid believer in co-creation, Danyelle often visualizes what she wants and places visual cues all around her, whether on vision boards or computer screensavers. She recalls how, twenty years ago, she looked at pictures of Canada’s snow-capped mountains without any knowledge that the pictures were of the country she would one day call home. “At the time, I was like, that’s beautiful, I want to go there. And now, years later, here I am.”

Danyelle emphasizes that while waiting for your dreams to manifest, it is important to prepare for what you want—and, while preparing, to not get flustered when things aren’t going as expected. “I was, for a long time, doing everything I could to be prepared for what I want to have in my life. I want to be a business owner; I want to be an entrepreneur; I want to be a freaking millionaire—so as much as I can, I prepare for those things.”

Challenges are a part of life and outside of our control

One must understand that challenges are a part of life. Yes, life is challenging, and unfortunately there is no easy road or an easy way out. But Danyelle advocates that we can choose our challenges and how they affect us. “It can be very challenging going to the same job every day when you don’t like what you do, or when you know you have the capacity to do so much more. But you are just tired of arguing and fighting, and you have to pay your bills, so it is what it is.”

This means accepting the situation for what it is at a specific time. But problems arise when one gives up and sees the situation as permanent. “Giving up has a very high cost, emotionally, and it affects your health,” says Danyelle. “We can see that. Everyone who reads this article probably has one family member or friend who is in that situation . . . the usual culprit is fear . . . and the desperate need for control. There are many things completely outside of our realm of control, and we need to be okay with that. If you can’t do anything about it, then why cry about it? It is what it is—that is something I learned in Canada. And I love that.”

A cause greater than self

Danyelle is confident that she has a larger-than-life purpose. “My goal and my calling, my vocation, my purpose, is doing something bigger than myself—doing something not only for my kids, but for other people’s kids, and for other people’s grandkids.”

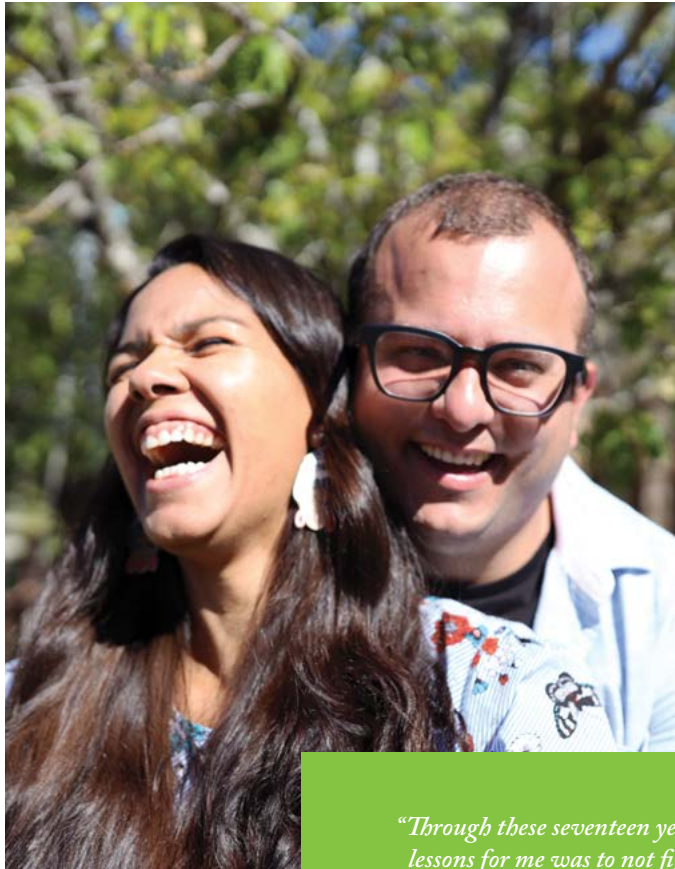


From top: Giovanna (7 years), Davi (8 years), Isabella (5 years).

Determined to leave a legacy, Danyelle began working with Ariel Reyes Antuan, co-founder of Palenke Greens, which provides burlap sack gardens to communities (see page 62). She and Ariel connected through a passion to give the best foods to their families by growing it in burlap sacks. Ariel also believes the work they are doing is not for this generation but for their grandchildren and generations to come.

Danyelle believes it is important to listen to and see the signs, to understand and respect your calling, and follow what you are inclined to, what you like. “When people show up out of thin air to help the cause, it is a sure sign that the work you are doing serves a higher purpose.” Danyelle currently holds down three jobs, each connected to food and nourishing others in some way. One of these jobs—at a Mexican restaurant—she loves to go to, and will bring her best self there “no matter how exhausted” she is.





“Through these seventeen years, one of the biggest lessons for me was to not fight it, not fight him. Or his energy, or his personality, or his dreams —and to understand my own dreams.”

Balancing the equation

Married for seventeen years, Danyelle understands her strengths and those of her husband, Juliano. She is the workaholic of the two of them, full of energy, love, and ideas. Juliano balances that out and keeps her calm.

The differences in their personalities complement each other in all areas of their lives. Their years together have taught them that marriage is partnership, which includes support of the other person’s dreams. Otherwise, she says, the relationship doesn’t work.

Embracing cultural identity: the reflection in the mirror

Danyelle is intentional about embracing her cultural identity and passing her knowledge to her children as much as possible. “I am actually Indigenous, from Brazil, from my father’s side; my great-grandmother was Guajajara [which refers to the Indigenous people of Brazil’s state of Maranhão]” she says.

However, she is missing a great deal of knowledge about her cultural heritage because it wasn’t taught to her. While growing up, Danyelle lived close to her grandma, Olga, who had a small farm and garden. She wishes that she had learned more about how the elders gardened or cooked. But as a child she was always encouraged instead to go play, which caused her to miss out on integral knowledge of tradition and culture.

In her role as a parent, she doesn’t want to omit or neglect these critical connections to heritage and the land in her teachings to her children. Gardening, using plants to heal, cooking healthfully, being financially literate—all these are skills she wants to pass down to her children. “Places like Brazil are good with passing on culture and traditions. Canada is great for different things.” But in spite of the differences of each country, Danyelle is happy she has chosen to make this country home for herself and her family. “Canada is very good at building community spaces—wonderful playgrounds for kids, city spaces. I chose to come to Canada with my family, and I am very happy I did.”•

Olga Duarte Brandão, 1928–2016. With Davi.



Echoes Of

Our Ancestors

The Lək'wəḡən
Traditional
Dancers

“
*It is a medicine to sing and dance and
be together doing what we love along
with representing our own Songhees
Nation. Our culture is a gift, a blessing.*”

Words by Lyla Dick

Photography by John-Evan Snow

We were initially taught by our late uncle, Ray Peters, at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) back in 1978. Our uncles Skip and Butch and our late dad Jim were all a part of the group, and their children as well. Songs like the Prayer, the Girls' Honour Song, Remembrance, and Finale all came from Uncle Ray. Our Paddle Welcome is from one of our late Elders, Flora Joseph. Having been gifted the Paddle Welcome Song was a great blessing because it came from our Nation.

The impact of our sharing with other Nations has become more accepted as time goes on, compared to when we first started. Back then it wasn't overly accepted; however, as years pass, our dance group has become frequently requested and accepted with more enthusiasm. People have shared with us how our songs and dances have left them feeling emotional, especially The Prayer Song.



Top, l-r: Mike Thomas (Esquimalt), Beth Dick (Songhees), Dell Dick (Songhees) at the BC Legislature; bottom, l-r: Aaliyah Joseph (Songhees), Cyrus George-Fisher (Songhees), and Claudette George (Songhees)



Being able to have these songs means we are doing all right in sharing a little of our culture for all to see—showing who we are as a Nation, performing with pride and honour and hope that our ancestors are pleased with how we carry ourselves.

L-r: Garry Sam (Songhees), Eugene Sam (Songhees), and Cyrus George-Fisher.



When I see our youth involved, I am beyond proud of them all. I imagine it's a pride our late uncle and father had when they would see us as kids wanting to learn songs and dance.

Our youngest is Aiyanna, who was born this past April. Not long after her birth, her parents Phil and Lauren George had an outfit on her and brought her out to introduce her as our next generation. Our oldest in the group is our mom Dell, affectionately called Momma. She has been with this group as long as we have—forty-two years.



L-r: Garry Sam and Cyrus George-Fisher.

Top, l-r: Beth Dick, Dell Dick, Gina George (Songhees); bottom: Dance Group (DG) and Canada Women's Rugby Team at Bear Mountain. DG: Back row, l-r: Gina George, Beth Dick, Lauren George (Songhees), Talia George (Songhees), Aaliyah Joseph, Cheryl Joseph (Songhees); middle row: Philip George (Songhees), Dell Dick; front row: Claudette George, Cyrus George-Fisher, Garry Sam, Angela Joseph (Songhees).



The materials we use are velvet, often put together with paddles and some sort of trim.

Our young men wear deer hooves and eagle feather bands, both of which offer protection to the one wearing them. All our regalia is worn with respect, especially [elements] from the eagle and deer who have given up their life for us to use.



It is our feel-good when we are together. No matter what kind of day we've had, once we get together all the negative disappears. When you create a comfortable energy it shows to those we perform for and gives a good feeling.

COVID has made for a new experience of Zoom or video recording for events in town. It has also made for a quiet year for sure. We are so used to being together almost every weekend from April to October that we miss being with each other and really don't know what to do with our free time.

My hopes and dreams are that the group carries on for many more years to come, just like our dad wanted it to.

It's because of him that the group moved from the VNFC to our Lekwungen Nation. When the Centre's group stopped, our dad didn't want it to end. With the kids from around here, he started the Songhees Nation group. After he passed, it was hard to carry on, but my sister and I—with the encouragement from Momma—have kept it going. I'm happy to say we have been going strong for the last five to six years.

Reflecting on the memories I have from the years of being a part of the dance group, I will forever cherish this time with my awesome family doing what we love and being able to share a little bit of ourselves, with pride in our hearts and hopes that our ancestors are pleased. •

This page, l-r: Garry Sam and Cyrus George-Fisher; opposite, clockwise from top: Eugene Sam; Garry Sam; Angela Joseph. At the Belfry Theatre.





L-r: Lyla Dick (Songhees), Dell Dick, and Beth Dick



Top left: Aislin Murphy ('Namgis); top right: Gina George; bottom, l-r: Lauren George, Philip George, and Talia George.

A WAY FORWARD

Asiyah Robinson and Klasom Satlt'xw Losah centre friendship,
purpose, and hope for these times
—and beyond.

Words by **Fiona Bramble**

Photography by **John-Evan Snow, Amus Beast0, & John Robertson**

Illustrations by **Salchipulpo**



#242ToTheWorld

It's an early September evening in 2019, and Asiyah Robinson is moving lightly and purposefully through a crowd of friends and supporters. In the wake of Hurricane Dorian, the Bahamas Relief Fundraiser, held at Klub Kwench in Victoria, BC, is not simply another of the countless community events that Asiyah organizes or participates in—Dorian, as Asiyah later states, was the most devastating hurricane in the history of her country. On the night of this fundraiser, Asiyah has only just learned that her missing father has been found and is now safe, though the damage to her island homeland is catastrophic. With a mixture of relief and grief, Asiyah smiles, hugs those around her, and presses her hands into others' hands in gratitude.

"Hurricane Dorian hurt so many. It took lives. Destroyed homes. Broke spirits."

Fast forward to a year later—2020, which seems oddly unframed by a January-to-December parenthesis. 2020 is indeed something concrete and ethereal all at once. Much like Asiyah. The twenty-four-year-old possesses a heightened self-awareness and an emotional maturity that belies her age. These qualities are coupled with a relentless optimism and a super-charged energy that seems barely contained in her petite frame.

Born and raised in Freeport, Bahamas, Asiyah made her way from her home island of Grand Bahama to Vancouver Island in 2014 to undertake post-secondary studies in biochemistry and chemistry at the University of Victoria. Last month, on the first anniversary

of Hurricane Dorian, Asiyah remembered there were some hours when she genuinely thought her father had passed away. She shares how terrifying that was for her and how the anniversary brought those emotions rushing back. Feeling the weight of separation from her Bahamian family in these COVID-19 times, Asiyah longs for physical reconnection with them. *I know you are okay*, her heart whispers, *but I haven't touched you or felt you.*

COVID-19, however, has not prevented Asiyah from connecting meaningfully with her vast Victoria family, nor has it slowed her volunteerism and activism in the wider community. One might even argue that the so-called Great Pause has further galvanized Asiyah as she transmutes loss and uncertainty into focus, compassion, and action. This type of community engagement comes naturally to Asiyah, as does gathering people around her. Recently, a mentor-friend of Asiyah's, activist and educator Klasom Satlt'xw Losah (known to some as Rose Henry) of Tla'amin Nation referred to Asiyah as her daughter in a Facebook post—much to the surprise of Asiyah's mother, Alisa. Asiyah is quick to put it in context: "I build relationships very fast, very easily. I can now say I definitely have an energy that feeds others, and I'm bubbly. Honestly, since I was a kid, people have been claiming me as their daughter. Listen, my mom is my best friend. My best friend. I have many people in my life who are very much like mother figures. My mom wasn't upset, but she was very funny, asking: 'Who is this woman claiming to be your mother?'"



Who is this woman claiming to be your mother?

When asked about Asiyah, Klasom Satlt'xw Losah—fondly and respectfully called Grandma Rose or simply Rose by many—leads with “Asiyah? Asiyah is awesome.” She then humorously references Asiyah’s trademark energy, wondering out loud what she’d be like “on caffeine.” Rose also acknowledges that it was precisely this energy that made her want to get to know Asiyah better. Rose can’t recall exactly where or how they, the young Muslim student and the Elder, first met, but she is certain it would have been in a space that championed social justice. Rose shares that as she got to know Asiyah “during walks at different events like Black Lives Matter, or when [they] were feeding the people of the streets, her energy just kept escalating.” Rose wishes she could have “just one ounce of her energy.” But there is a more poignant connection for Rose, a stronger thread that pulls her to Asiyah: “She is living the life that I had been denied. Through the foster care system and through the Sixties Scoop, I was never allowed to express the joy of being who I am.”

The Sixties Scoop—a misnomer, as apprehensions continued well into the 1980s and arguably continue to this day—oversaw, through provincial policies, the apprehension of an estimated 20,000 Indigenous children from their homes to be placed in the Canadian child welfare system. Most of these babies and children were ultimately adopted into mainly non-Indigenous families without the consent of the parents or band. Rose, like other survivors, suffered the irreparable separation from and loss of family, a painful legacy further compounded by the tearing apart of the cultural and linguistic fabric of her own Indigenous identity.

“The transferring of our energy, passing on the torch to the next generation . . .”

These two women are transferring energy to each other in an ongoing mutual exchange of love, respect, and teachings. Mother, daughter, sister, friend.

“In our culture,” says Rose, “when we decide you are our family, we give you a position—you’re my niece, my daughter, my granddaughter; you’re my family now.” Rose may sometimes doubt her deep well of traditional knowledge, but for those who

have spent any time with her, it is immediately apparent that every encounter and conversation is seized as an opportunity for knowledge transfer through storytelling steeped in Indigenous mythologies, natural histories, and lived experience. Rose is clearly making up for lost time.

As for Asiyah’s mother, Asiyah admits that, beyond the playful jabs on Facebook, her mom “treasures very deeply and truly honours” Rose and the other mother and father figures in her daughter’s Canadian life. The hard work of activism and community-building exacts a toll, and Asiyah has begun to recognize that her self-care regimen is lacking. “The ways I currently find value are through other people, through helping others, and not so much in myself, which is why it is very easy for me to go days without eating or drinking water or exercising or doing anything that feeds anything other than the work or the emails or the assignments. That’s my contribution. That’s the way that I give. And I sometimes don’t see my value outside of that.”

Who is Asiyah?

When asked this question, Asiyah responds with laughter. “Oh, gosh. Who is Asiyah? The one thing I don’t want to talk about. Thank you for the offer, though. Great question. When I figure it out, I will let the rest of you know.”

“I am really trying to figure out who I am,” says Asiyah, “and recent events have made that a process that seems to need to happen faster because I need to be in a position to take a leadership role. Not to know who I am, but to know certain parts of me and believe that of myself. When it comes to me, the biggest part isn’t knowing who I am but believing I am who I think I am or I am who other people think I am. In my work, I’m either surrounded by youth who are interested in what I am doing and want to get more involved, or adults who want to know what’s going on in my head. And everyone in between. That terrifies me because I don’t know where I am sometimes. I also sometimes don’t even think that my voice needs to be heard at a particular moment, and yet people are asking for it. And so, for me, a big part of this journey is trying to figure out who I am, and what my value is to the things that are happening right now. And how I can prove, well, not prove that to myself, but let myself remember that I am worthy of being heard and that my ideas are worth it.”



Photo credits: John Robertson (top), Amus Beast0 (centre and bottom)

By “recent events” and “right now,” Asiyah is referring to the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement that rose up and out of many shocking and incendiary racist crimes, not least being the killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020. The global reaction to Floyd’s murder was overwhelming and complicated.

Parsing the multiple, nuanced layers of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is arguably unique to a geographic region, a city, a family, even an individual. For Asiyah, it became personal in a way she hadn’t anticipated.

“The Bahamas is a predominantly Black country—Black and Christian,” Asiyah says. She goes on to explain that she saw “Black people and Black excellence” everywhere in the Bahamas, and so it wasn’t an identity she “thought [she] had to think on, or really construct or deconstruct because [she] was just Black; it was what it was.” For these reasons, she had “always identified being more Muslim” than Black. And yet Asiyah became one of the trio of core organizers for Victoria BC’s massive Black Lives Matter peace rally on June 7, 2020. When asked what the rally meant to her, she responds, “It was the first time that I ever consciously acknowledged and accepted my Black identity.” The statement is profound enough that an extended silence follows its utterance. Until, however, a rush of other thoughts bursts forward: “The rally forced me to hold myself accountable to the awareness that I had awakened in myself. What the rally has also done for me is send me into many spirals and brought more questions, millions of questions. For about a month now, I’ve asked: Have I been called to witness? Have I been awakened to witness? Have I been awakened to the level that I think I am to simply perceive and understand what is happening around me, but not actually have the vision, the power, the impact to be able to change any of it? It’s been very terrifying for me to unpack.”

This new acceptance of her Black identity is also creating space for Asiyah to explore her intersectionality as a Black person, a Black woman, and a Muslim Black woman. She admits that intersectionality is not something she commonly sees embodied; she feels she is writing her own “how-to manual and figuring out [her] own steps because [she doesn’t] know who else to follow.”

Black and Indigenous Lives Matter

What may separate the BLM movement of the United States, and perhaps even global BLM protests, from the Canadian BLM movement is the visible and meaningful solidarity between Black and Indigenous activists and communities. Asiyah says that the June 7th rally cemented key relationships for her, from both “Black and Indigenous sides,” people she calls her “Black brothers and sisters and Indigenous cousins.”

It might seem obvious that systemic racism, discrimination, and racial inequity affect not only Black individuals and communities, but also other so-called racialized communities, including First Nations. However, many newcomers to Canada—and even those Canadian-born—have little knowledge of Canada’s dark history as it relates to Indigenous peoples, nor any understanding of Indigenous histories, languages, or cultural practices. For Asiyah, that awakening did not come until her second year of university.

Participating in an Indigenous Acumen Training program at the University of Victoria, she learned for the first time about the horrors of residential and day schools and the Sixties Scoop. Asiyah calls the learning experience “heartbreaking and gut-wrenching,” but mostly she was shocked and frustrated, asking herself, *Why doesn't everyone know, and why didn't I know when I first came to Canada?* Asiyah acknowledges that the last residential school was closed in 1996, and says sadly, “I was born in 1996. That is a fact I quite literally will never forget.”

Naturally, Asiyah’s relationship with Rose is also helping her deepen her knowledge and connections to Indigenous culture. In some ways, Rose sees these strengthened ties across cultures, including across First Nations, as a new dawn—what she calls “the cultivation of hope.” Rose believes all oppressed groups are now uniting and crossing “colour barriers” because they are “seeing with the *tth'elé*, the heart.”

Give my heart

“It is actually Islam that took me to Indigenous culture and understanding,” reveals Asiyah. She reflects on “walking with

intention on the land” and on what Islam says about being on the earth, protecting the earth, protecting the animals and the plants, and the trees and water. She shares that “in the Quran, the Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon him) has been known to say in a Hadith that the earth is like our mother because, in Islam, we believe we were all raised from the earth and to the earth we shall return, and that water is sacred, as it is the source of life for all.”

This is not the first time Asiyah has recognized the link between her faith and Indigenous culture and practices. She once took a beading workshop at an Indigenous Art Symposium at the Royal BC Museum called Making as Medicine. Asiyah found something “so mindful, grounding, and beautiful about creating something from such small little pieces.” She adds that “it was medicine” for her in a way she didn’t even fully understand. She was also smudged that day and was awestruck by the similarities of an Indigenous smudging ceremony to the cleansing practices of making *duā* in Islamic ritual; she sees it as a mirror of her own faith practices.

This mirroring, or perhaps the seeing and feeling oneself in others—one form of empathy—can be a double-edged sword. In the context of anti-Black racism and violence, Asiyah shares that “for any Black person, when someone is murdered, it hurts on a deeply personal level. You recognize that person, you recognize that person in your cousins, you recognize that person in your friends, you recognize that person in yourself, and you recognize that person as a person. So, just on a simple human level, it hurts.” However, the sheer magnitude of historic and present-day systemic anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and violence, combined with the relentless and graphic reporting and sharing by news outlets and social media channels, inevitably and unfortunately can lead to desensitization. Even this is a burden, Asiyah says. “I do sometimes feel guilty that when something happens I don’t feel as sad as the last time I heard it, or the first time I heard about a murder, or a killing, or a death. I feel guilty, like, *Why does this life matter less?* And it’s not like it does matter less, it’s simply that I’m trying to protect my emotions and not give my heart every single time something happens.”



We are all connected

“In [Japanese] anime,” says Asiyah, “people are connected by a red thread, like a thread of faith or something. You’re connected to this person, who is connected to this person, who is connected to this person.” This analogy illustrates her growing awareness of the profound connections she has made.

“For those of us who are Indigenous and are very visual,” Rose describes this same notion as parallel train tracks. “The train tracks will never show how our lives connect until we reach the next town, the next intersection of hope, social justice, our past generations, and our strength.”

“Core to Black peoples,” says Asiyah, “is the fact that all of us bring our dialects, our food, our culture, our being and our mindset, and our colour in and of itself—the different spectrum of who we are. We really all need to genuinely talk about lateral leadership; we need to define what that looks like, what that means, and how we can raise each other up. There are so many intersections that make up me; there are so many intersections that make up you. We need to recognize that we can’t attack things in silos.”

Klasom Satlt’xw Losah, Grandma Rose, calls for all of us to “join forces together so there is no more violence, and no more missing and murdered Indigenous people. If we’re going to change, we need to feed the people nutritious food and positive thoughts, and offer emotional, spiritual, and mental supports.”

Together, over this past difficult year, these two collaborators have demonstrated commitment, patience, and curiosity—all of which are vital to building meaningful relationships that transcend differences of every kind, and that recognize and honour the complexities of every being. We stand at this intersection of hope together, and the example of Rose and Asiyah’s friendship and work offers a promising blueprint for a re-imagined future that is still ours to co-create. •



Rose’s Cedar Hats

“The cedar hat, for us Indigenous people of the Coast Salish, or anywhere on our territories, symbolizes the medicine of the cedar tree. Cedar is our medicine. The cedar itself comes from culturally moderated trees (CMT). Only specific trees from the cedar family are stripped of their bark, and that bark is what we use to make hats, braided bands—anything to do with cedar comes from the trees that have been picked by the Elders, and only picked a certain time of the year. And never, ever have we stripped a tree to the point that it will die. It’s supposed to be a great honour for people to receive cedar hats and eagle feathers and different traditional things. So, the cedar hat is for the Elder who is willing to share their wisdom. I didn’t know I was doing it, but I guess I am! I have been given three cedar hats. The first cedar hat that I was given was by the medicine man from Nitinat. I refused to take it the first three or four times even when he kept saying *It’s yours, it’s yours*. He said he had a dream that the hat was supposed to come to me, but I also understood that when

people start giving away their precious items, that means they are getting ready to go on the journey to the spirit world. So I refused. I didn’t want to lose him. I didn’t want that to happen, so I refused and refused and refused. He finally said, *Take the hat*, so I did. I think the hat must be seventy or eighty years old, maybe even older.

I was given another hat from my home territory because of my willingness to share my experience about growing up in the foster care system and how I not only identify the negatives, but I am also prepared to deliver the solution. The third hat was given to me by a very well-known artist. He said, *You are seeing the world very colourfully, very bright, like it’s alive—in the middle of a pandemic!* I told him, *Because it is alive!* If we go down into the darkness all the time, we are going to kill ourselves. The Creator has no intention for this to happen now. We’re supposed to learn our lessons from this pandemic.” •

Filipino Caregivers: Superheroes

Words by **Meyen Quigley**

Illustrations by **Salchipulpo**



You see them on Victoria's buses—some dressed in hospital or care home scrubs, some looking like they are out for a day of shopping. Those who have done the work of getting driving lessons and the much-coveted driving license drive, more often than not, cars sporting a license with the name of a second-hand car dealer. If you happen to be on a bus with two or more of them, you will hear the lilting sounds of a foreign language, and laughter—much laughter. They are very likely Filipinos who are part of the backbone of frontline workers who have supported the Victoria community through the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Long-term care homes and assisted living facilities have been the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak in British Columbia. Filipinos comprise a large number of care aides—mostly women, although a small number are men, who came to Canada under the federal Live-in Caregiver Program. The program was designed to help Canadian families and companies hire applicants from overseas to provide care to children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The program attracted many applicants from different countries because it allowed live-in caregivers to transition from temporary workers to permanent resident status after two years' work experience in Canada. In Victoria, there are enough Filipino care aides that they have formed their own organization: the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Caregivers Association (VFCCA), one of the organizations under the umbrella of the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (www.bayanihan.ca/vfccca).

The joy and the sense of community that Filipino frontline workers project when they are together is compelling. Their laughter and free-spirited nature belie the challenges that they face daily—and their very hard work.

Many of them would have had to raise significant amounts of money back in the Philippines to pay for application fees and airfare. In many cases, families would pool their resources together to help a sister or daughter realize their dream of working in Canada, even mortgaging or selling what land they have to make this happen. Once in Canada, Filipino caregivers have to deal with the demands of adjusting to a new culture and conducting the majority of interactions in English—not to mention the weight of homesickness.

Much of the education in the Philippines is in English, so the language barrier is easily overcome. Many caregivers had professional status in the Philippines as teachers, nurses, laboratory technicians, a status they give up in Canada unless they go through a new round of courses and certifications. As caregivers, they earn much less than they would as teachers and nurses.



But for many, the low pay is not a deterrent. Most caregivers feel grateful for the chance to live and work in Canada and earn more than what they would earn back home. For many, sending money back to family in the Philippines is a given. Most Filipino caregivers know the locations of Western Union and Moneygram, and other cash remittance services. Cargo companies serving the Philippines thrive in Canada, with Filipino-Canadians regularly sending boxes of goods and treats called “Balikbayan” (returning to the home country) boxes. The sting of losing one's professional status is made up for by the camaraderie and support among fellow migrants.

Maria (not her real name) works for a seniors' home in James Bay. She works five eight-hour shifts each week, and is happy to take on additional hours at overtime pay. “I often get called to do overnight shifts. Those are not easy to fill. As long as I feel I have the energy, I like doing overtime work. It is more money in the bank.” Maria has a husband and two children in the Philippines that she sends money to.

Diana is sixty-three years old. She has worked for a group home for persons with disabilities for years. She got permanent resident status and then became a citizen, and was able to sponsor her son and his family to come to Canada. “I got a second mortgage on my condo so I could help my son get their own place. This is the reason I am still working. I would like to work as long as I am able. Besides, I really love the people I care for.”

“There are a few of us Filipinos in the agency that I work for. We often get compliments for our strong work ethic. I think most of us go beyond the basics of what we are expected to do, and go the extra mile—whether it's providing one-on-one time to the people we care for, or taking care of the facilities and the premises,” says Lia, who now also is a permanent resident and on her way to citizenship.

“It can be hard and tiring work, caring for people. But we have the skills, and we have the qualities that many families look for when it comes to caring for their family members. Families appreciate kindness and cleanliness and attention,” adds Rose.

And so they soldier on—Filipino women and men, uprooted from their homes and families in the Philippines, sharing the skills they learned and what they know of providing care and support, even as they work to make Canada their new home.

“The most difficult thing about being in Canada is the loss of our communities and extended families. It can get very lonely here,” reflects Mely. “Most families we work with appreciate our work, but some difficult people talk to us as if we don't understand English, or talk down to us as if we were servants. I think because we do work that is low on the income scale and work that not many people are willing to do, it is as if we are a lower class somehow. The general public needs to know that we bring a lot of skills and new perspectives that contribute to a kinder Canada, and we deserve to be seen.” •





Victoria Peace Walk-Nuclear Free Pacific, 1987

Photo credit: Jurgen Pokrandt

Pacific Peoples' Partnership

Forty-five Years of Resilience

Supporting Pacific Dreams and Aspirations

Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP) is celebrating forty-five years of resilience, collaboration, and partnership with Indigenous and South Pacific partners in supporting their aspirations for peace, environmental sustainability, social justice, and community development. Situated on Lekwungen territories in Victoria, British Columbia, we are Canada's only non-profit organization that focuses specifically on the islands of the South Pacific.

The history of PPP

Our organization was born during a time of widespread social concern over nuclear testing in the Pacific. A small group of North Americans were motivated to act in solidarity with Pacific Island communities. They came together in 1975 to establish the South Pacific Peoples' Foundation (SPPF), which would one day be known as Pacific Peoples' Partnership. A Canadian solidarity partner of the Independent and Nuclear Free Pacific Movement, SPPF's relationships in the South Pacific accelerated with anti-nuclear activism, Indigenous empowerment movements, and the beginnings of environmental awareness building. SPPF carved out its niche at the forefront of a movement toward placing Indigenous community knowledge and leadership at the centre of development efforts.

SPPF became just what it set out to be: a well-informed Canadian organization connected with the Pacific Islands. At the same time, SPPF was also situated in the territories of Lekwungen-speaking Peoples, now known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. Over many years, the remarkable similarities between the pressures on Indigenous communities in the North and South Pacific became increasingly apparent.

After much reflection, the more inclusive name Pacific Peoples' Partnership (PPP) was unveiled, embracing our unique emerging role as a leader in North-South Indigenous linking. Since then, many cross-cultural exchanges of artists and youth have helped articulate a wider and more participatory

vision in the development of Indigenous and South Pacific communities. The name also speaks to our organization's fundamental understanding that the Pacific Ocean is a binding and connecting entity, rather than a dividing body of water.

Our approach and work

"Quam Quam tun Shqwalawun: Make your mind strong and use the best of both worlds."

—Coast Salish Elders' advice

Through both domestic and international programming, PPP places Indigenous knowledge exchange at the centre of all our work and emphasizes the respect of Indigenous protocols, priorities, and values across the Pacific. The PPP approach is a reflection of our commitment to rights-based development which above all else recognizes that communities have the knowledge and local understanding to tackle issues related to poverty, environmental degradation, and social injustice.

For too long, large-scale institutions and governments have defined poverty as an absence of something material rather than an obstacle to achieving a dream or aspiration. Through our decades of engagement, Pacific Peoples' Partnership has deconstructed this approach and has instead built meaningful and equitable partnerships with communities in over twenty countries. We continue to adapt our programs and approaches to best support the aspirations of the communities we work with. Recently, PPP has concentrated our efforts into two key focus areas: gender equality and climate action.

Our work in gender equality

Women in the South Pacific Islands are among the most vulnerable groups in the world to the effects of gender inequality. Indigenous women in Canada also suffer from disproportional incidents of violence and face considerable barriers, from a lack of economic opportunities to under-representation in leadership roles.

Traditional gender roles in the South Pacific have at times excluded women from attaining positions in politics and have complicated efforts to improve their status in society. PPP has taken on some of these issues through partnered programs which have included supporting women working in informal economies in both Papua through the Women’s Development Network and in Papua New Guinea through the Vendor’s Collective Voice program. Recently we expanded our partnerships into both Samoa and Tonga in support of healthy communities and for women experiencing violence.

The most urgent issue of our time

The South Pacific and Coastal British Columbia are focal points for global climate change. Rising sea levels have already taken devastating tolls on the Small Islands in the South Pacific. Destructive storms have also become more frequent and have caused enormous amounts of human suffering and damaged important infrastructure in both the South Pacific and remote Indigenous communities in British Columbia. Indigenous Peoples in both these regions will continue to suffer the worst of climate change effects if efforts are not made to mitigate and adapt to these impacts. Indigenous and traditional knowledge has an enormous role to play, and PPP strongly believes that Indigenous knowledge and local community empowerment are fundamental to catalyzing climate action. We are actively engaged in supporting communities and building networks by developing educational programming and curriculum and by convening forums for cross-cultural knowledge sharing, such as the RedTide: International Indigenous Climate Action Summit.



Photo credits: John-Evan Snow(top); Mark Gauti



Theatre Inconnu Youth Actors animate Roy Henry Vickers' reading of his book *Peace Dancer*. Photo credits: Jeff Nichols (top); John-Evan Snow



This work is complemented by the development of our Pacific Resilience Fund, which is designed to proactively support Pacific Island grassroots organizations that are assisting communities in building resilience, and working to adapt to and address the climate crisis.

Global leadership

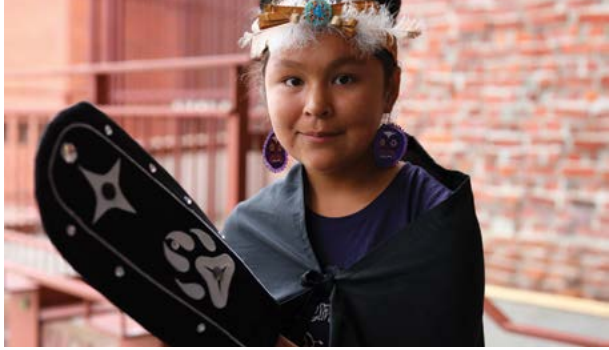
Informed by the communities we serve, PPP provides global leadership and promotes linkages across the Pacific. We advocate for policy changes that benefit Indigenous peoples, working at the grassroots, national, and international levels to advance global instruments such as the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and ensuring Indigenous voices are uplifted and shared through our communications platforms.

Localizing our mission through the One Wave Gathering

The One Wave Gathering is a multifaceted, award-winning arts and culture event series on Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ territories in Victoria, BC. Since 2008, Pacific Peoples' Partnership has been organizing this free local gathering to advance understanding, dialogue, and respect for the cultures, arts, and experiences of Pacific and Indigenous peoples. This yearly event series provides a welcoming and accessible space for community members to engage with topics relevant to Pacific communities, including ecological stewardship, cultural preservation, and Indigenous rights. One Wave is an important way of contextualizing our overseas work within our community, supporting Indigenous and South Pacific knowledge sharing, and strengthening North-South Pacific connections on a local level.

“One Wave Gathering is a historical and transformative opportunity for guests of all ages to learn and interact with

This page, from top: Muavae Va'a (Samoan), Rena Owen (Maori), Penina Va'a (Samoan), Janice Pelky (Cowichan and Tsawout),
Photo credit: John-Evan Snow

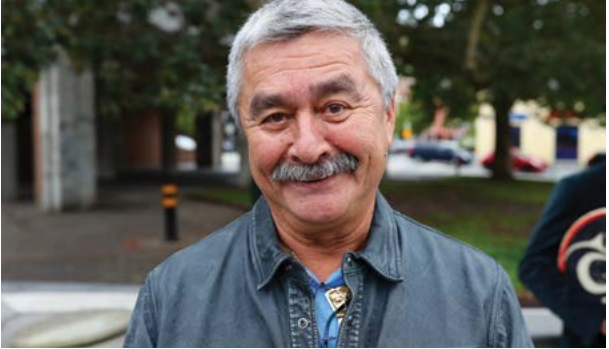


Pacific knowledge keepers and artists,” says PPP Arts and Culture coordinator and Nuu-chah-nulth youth leader Tana Thomas. “It’s a true honour to witness the stories being told and to gain insight into the deep-rooted connection between our lands and peoples. As communal people, it’s a vital responsibility to our spirit to reform connections and participate in meaningful circles of dialogue.”

Over the years, One Wave has grown into a thriving local gathering and has hosted artists and speakers both local and international. Powerful stories have been shared by Indigenous artists and knowledge keepers such as master carver Joe Martin, visual artist Roy Henry Vickers, and from emerging filmmakers like Tiffany Joseph and Sarah Jim. Local cultural dance groups such as the Lekwungen Dancers, Esquimalt Singers and Dancers, and Pearls of the South Pacific have often graced the gathering, along with countless local partners including theatre groups, emerging artists, youth groups, and NGOs. In 2019, we hosted representatives from Vaka Taumako, a Melanesian and Polynesian team working to preserve traditional Polynesian canoe-building, voyaging, and navigation. We also had a special guest visit from Maori actor Rena Owen!

In 2017, Pacific Peoples' Partnership presented one of our most impactful One Wave programs to date: the Longhouse Project. Under the direction of Nuu-chah-nulth artist Hjalmer Wenstob, four youth designed and painted temporary longhouses which were raised and programmed directly with their communities on the lawn of British Columbia's Legislature. Through this gathering, thousands of members of the public had the opportunity to build meaningful connections with Indigenous and Pacific Islander families in authentic cultural spaces. “All that was taken away from us was given back today,” said Joan Morris, Songhees Elder, speaking after the 2017 One Wave Gathering.

This page, from top: Claudette George (Songhees), Roy Henry Vickers (Tsimshian, Haida and Heiltsuk), Savea Loli (Samoan), Rebecca Neepin (Tahitian)



This year’s One Wave Gathering was focused on the themes of resilience and allyship and features arts and culture events, including Indigenous opera, digital media, theatre, film screenings, workshops, and more. Highlighted events include Together / As One, a FLUX Gallery exhibit featuring Roy Henry Vickers’ “Peace Dancer” with Theatre Inconnu and Story Theatre, as well as Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas’ “Flight of the Hummingbird” with Pacific Opera Victoria and Opera Vancouver. Other virtual or small in-person events include the unveiling of the Pacific Peace House Post, the culmination of a two-year collaboration between local Lekwungen and Solomon Islands carvers Bradley Dick and Ake Lianga, at Macaulay Point.

Looking ahead

In these challenging times, our team at Pacific Peoples’ Partnership feels it is more important than ever to make space for cultural connection and learning. While we need to take precautions to keep one another safe, it is vital that we find ways to share special moments, listen to one another, and engage with the issues facing the Pacific. From Samoa to T’Sou-ke, from Viti Levu to Lekwungen territory, Pacific communities are working to preserve and revitalize culture, pass on knowledge, and ensure a healthy future for all. At the One Wave Gathering and in all our work, we invite people from all backgrounds into the circle to hear Pacific stories, be inspired, and find ways to move forward together in a good way.

Our dream is a healthy Pacific for all peoples, from the small islands of the South Pacific to our coasts here in BC. It is a dream of thriving Indigenous and Small Island communities, of climate justice, gender equity, and kinship between Pacific peoples of all ancestries. Through empowered partnership and community-led stewardship, we continue to pursue this vision. We hope you will support our work and join us in solidarity, allyship, and resilience! •

Learn More

Find more information on the work of Pacific Peoples’ Partnership on facebook.com/pacificpeoples and at pacificpeoplespartnership.org



Above: The three fish symbolize the Pacific island archipelagos of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.



Solomon Island carver Ake Lianga with the ten-foot yellow cedar Pacific Peace House Post at the Songhees Carving Shed.
Photo credit: Lara Costa



The Post honours Hereditary and Elected Lekwungen Indigenous leaders.

Without Saying Goodbye

Words by **Naji Yazdi**

“A bundle of belongings isn’t the only thing a refugee brings to his new country.”

In my first days in Canada, this quote got my attention. It is credited to Albert Einstein and hangs on a wall at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS). We immigrants and refugees bring a backpack full of stories to our new home, in addition to our bundle of belongings. This story is one of many in my backpack.

He was a Farmer. Both his last name and his profession were “Farmer.” He was our neighbour, too.

My deceased father never irrigated our garden “legally,” either because Mr. Farmer had convinced us that it was impossible to buy a share of the Shared Water, or because my dad didn’t want to pay for his portion of the sharing fee.

Every fifteen days, when it was Mr. Farmer’s turn to use the Shared Water, he would allow us to use thirty minutes of his “time share” for irrigating our garden. This thirty minutes had caused him to develop a sense of ownership, not only of our garden and its fruits, but also of the property and the building on the same land. There were a few times that he even mentioned it: *I give it water, but someone else takes the fruit!*

Mr. Farmer’s steps in the garden were like those of a landlord, and our feeling was that of a subjugated tenant.

My father, however, was a man of forbearance, not only with Mr. Farmer, but with everyone. Even so, my father suffered from this situation. He was always annoyed by Mr. Farmer’s actions, words, and behaviour during the entire twenty-two years we owned that garden. I was

suffering too, asking myself why we had to pay a bribe for something that we didn’t even know the value of.

Later on, as I grew up, I realized that we had sold our pride, sense of decency, and self-esteem too cheaply! Maybe for only five dollars a month—the membership fee of the Shared Water. That unpleasant feeling finally exhausted us, and eventually we had to sell the garden at a very low price.

When I think about it, there are two reasons why this still upsets me. First, because we sold it for such a giveaway price, and second, and more importantly, because of my childhood memories and the closeness and attachment that I had, and still have, to that garden.

The last time that I saw the Farmer, it was a few months before his death, but about ten years since I had last seen him. To refresh my childhood memories, and because I had missed our garden so much, I went there to see the garden for the last time before my move to Canada.

As usual, I drove and stopped the car in front of the gate, when, suddenly, I remembered the garden was no longer ours. I backed up the car and parked on the roadside instead of in the driveway.

I went to have a look at Mr. Farmer’s garden, though I didn’t expect to see him at all. He was, however, standing near the water canal gate, near the same water-latch he had opened to us for half an hour every fifteen days—petty restrictions that had taken away our garden from us. He had become skinny and weak. He had on a shabby black suit and a brightly coloured striped shirt. I don’t

Photo credit: Lara Costa

exactly remember the colour of his shirt. That day he had apparently not come out to work as he had no work clothes on.

I had prepared myself for a relatively long and detailed conversation. I had a lot to say. A lot. I wanted to tell him about my deceased father’s feelings, and how he had made life miserable for him and us.

I wanted to tell him that the main reason for selling the garden was because of him, his actions, and words. I wanted to tell him that life is too precious for us to be unkind to others. But our talk, to my extreme surprise, took no longer than a few seconds. I do not know why. I really didn’t understand what happened.

I mustered all my courage, and with a voice filled with anger, I said, “Hello, Mr. Farmer!” I saw the fear in his face. I am not sure if it was because he didn’t recognize me or because he didn’t expect to see me, but he was scared. With a sense of shock, he said, “You?”

“I am Naji, son of Mr. Yazdi. How are you doing?” I replied.

“I’m not bad; how is your father?” he said. “He died three years ago,” I said. I saw the shaking of his body.

For about twenty seconds, without blinking, he looked in my eyes and didn’t say a word. For about twenty seconds, without blinking, I looked in his eyes and didn’t say a word. He was still looking at me when I turned around and left, without saying a word, without even saying goodbye!

I thought then that maybe someday I would write the story of leaving Iran without saying goodbye.

I want to tell you this: You only leave without a word when there is no word left to say, or when you have said all the words that could have been said and you have heard all the words that are said, and nothing is left to say, and nothing remains to be heard.

Like with the story of Mr. Farmer, sometimes you choose to just leave and go, without saying goodbye. •

Here in Canada

The Pandemic and Changing Priorities

Words by **Jefus Godwin-Enwere**

If there is anything that the coronavirus pandemic has taught the average person, it is that we are in an evolving world where the securities of today might not be adequate to allow for sudden unexpected changes. This is irrespective of one's placement in society. Different sectors in the world have been forcefully thrown out of their comfort zones, so much so that even if companies decide to settle into a new comfort zone, it won't be long before they realize how far behind and irrelevant they have become.

We have all observed the sudden, huge shift in activities: Jobs and schools have moved online, and the relevance of individuals and organizations alike is being judged by how much one can adapt to this new operational system. The truth is that human activities need to continue to thrive, and solutions must be provided for the problems this pandemic has created.

Overcoming the pandemic's challenges starts with individuals who are the immediate beneficiaries of this development. There must be a willingness to see through the pandemic to notice the opportunities it has created. While companies should make efforts to keep their profits up, they must be willing to promote societal survival through their services.

It is an awakening—not rude, in this case, but enlightening; it is one that keeps change-makers on their toes. While the pandemic brought a wave of shock, it has also created room to see things in a different light. Choosing to ignore this is like walking in front of a moving train.

In all of this, I have chosen to think about how the few skills and talents I have can be channelled towards a good cause. As a newcomer to Canada, I can say that the awkwardness of lockdown and consequent isolation has given me zeal and determination to pursue my goal to be relevant for the long-term in a country with different cultures, and to make the most of opportunities as they present themselves.

It would be foolish for anyone to deny the effects of the pandemic and to say this is a global crisis only because of how the world chooses to handle it. It is, in fact, time to figure out ways to sustain the progress of our environment. There is now no profession that is irrelevant, if only we take the time to identify and acknowledge the societal gaps that have been exposed by the pandemic—acknowledge them and be innovative in providing solutions.

This article has one key message: be open to the reality of using your position as a platform for change. For instance, if your skill would benefit children, then now would be a great time to impact them with solid gems for the world that has been presented to them, using this pandemic as a teachable moment. Why focus on the “spare the rod and spoil the child” mentality when we could put these kids on the right paths to communication, expression, and leadership, and never have to worry where the rod is?

It is time to open up streams of creativity, encourage ideas that are out of the box, and promote a vision upgrade! •

Te Quiero

[Not found in English]

Words by **Alberto Cortes**



In Mexico, we have many romantic songs; we have some of the best soap operas, and we love drama. Well, maybe we don't love drama, but the drama is always there. We drink and listen to a lot of romantic songs; we scream and we cry for love. We have mariachis singing outside of a lover's balcony, waiting for her to turn on the light to signal *yes* to her man. We also have fireworks—a lot of fireworks.

You might be wondering, *What is he talking about?* To put it simply, you can't write about Mexico and love without fireworks in the background. So put your dogs in another room, away from the noise, and keep reading.

I moved to Canada ten years ago to learn English. I came here because I needed to find a place where I didn't know anyone. I needed to move to a place with few Spanish speakers so it would push me to speak with strangers and learn the language. When you are learning a new language, it is always a challenge to express your feelings. You are adapting to a new culture as well as standards and values that you didn't even know existed. If you go to Google Translate and type the words *te quiero*, you will get *I love you*. If you Google the words *te amo*, you will get

the same: *I love you*. (Thanks for nothing, Google!) But in Spanish, *te quiero* is so much different than *I love you*.

If you say *te amo* to someone that you like, you are expressing a very strong feeling. Saying that means you want to “Netflix and chill” with that person for the rest of your life. But if you say *te quiero*, it means you care about that person, with no strong feelings attached. On a scale of one to ten, I would say *te amo* is a ten, and *te quiero* is six.

Here is another example: If someone says *I love you*, you would feel Monarch butterflies in your stomach. If someone says *te quiero*, you will crave some taquitos and move on. *Te quiero*—we will be friends, *Te amo*—I want to be more than your friend.

So, the next time you see the person that you love, picture yourself in a soap opera: You are moving slowly, your name is Julio Hector or Estefania Patricia. Keep moving, Estefania Patricia. Grab your lover, surprise him, look him in his eyes, say, “Te amo,” and kiss him like it is the end of the world. (Insert the sound of fireworks and mariachi here). I told you we were going to need fireworks! •

Community

Growing Palenke Greens

by Ariel Reyes Antuan

Our collective response to COVID-19 has given us an opportunity to withdraw from the hectic pace of modern life and turn our attention inward to the self. This season of inward reflection has allowed many to rekindle creative connections. During this time, I have reflected upon how our culture's predominant patriarchal and colonial structures and ways of thinking have created a distraction that disconnects us from ourselves, from others, from community, from the land.

As I contemplated the effects of such distraction and disconnection, I felt an internal fire—what the ancient Chinese called *chi*—flowing through my whole body, igniting me to do something simple to support our community: gardening. Learning about land stewardship and how to reconnect to the land showed me that my relationship with plants was not very well-nurtured. My partner, Jess, and I recognized that gardening was a way to heal our souls, and out of this recognition the Palenke Greens initiative was born.

Palenke Greens uses the African method of plotting burlap sacks to create vertical gardens. The idea to do this on Vancouver Island came out of conversations with Marie-Pierre Bilodeau, who leads REFARMERS, a non-profit organization focused on permaculture projects in East Africa.

Through this process, we came to see more clearly the inequities in our current society, and more importantly in our food systems—how eating well is a privilege, and how many newcomers like me do not understand the art of gardening and management of this land. Jess and I felt so humbled and driven to raise consciousness around eating nutritious food; we felt a deep desire to equip others with tools for their own liberation journeys, specifically in households facing food insecurity, those who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and anyone who has an interest in growing food.



"Tiny Palenkes" —specialized versions of Palenke Greens.



To accomplish our goal, we require engagement strategies at local, provincial, and federal levels through a myriad of vital avenues for change, including: direct action; direct service; pressure on elected officials for policy change; midwifing sovereignty from systems of harm; healing and transformative justice; education; media making; and collaborating with the earth to cultivate resilience.

Over summer and into fall, we drove more than three hundred kilometres around the Capital Regional District and provided accessible installation in thirty-five households. We prioritized the stories and voices of Black, local Indigenous, and other marginalized groups



to centre them as key actors in vertical growing methods. We also realized the importance of involving younger generations, and we were able to give them the tools for food sovereignty while raising awareness around nutritious foods, land-based practices, and the cultural significance of Afro-Indigenous regenerative agriculture.

We're so grateful for those who answered our call to inspire people in our community to do better and eat better. Together, we're planting seeds of communal abundance while preparing the next generation for a more inclusive and sustainable future. Learn more and connect with us on Instagram: [@iye.herstories](#) •



Palenke Greens participants and gardeners, previous page: Salma. This page, l-to-r: Sarai Gómez and Matty Cervantes; Daniela Pinto. **Photo credits:** Ariel Reyes Antuan and Jess Reyes Barton

Community

From the Belfry Theatre

by Michael Shamata and Mark Dusseault

Hello. Goodbye. Welcome. Last August, Taiwo Afolabi joined us as our manager of Artistic and Community Connections, while completing his PhD in Applied Theatre at the University of Victoria.

With his thesis complete, Dr. Afolabi and his family are heading to the University of Regina, where he has been hired as an associate professor and a candidate for Canada Research Chair in Socially Engaged Creative Practices.

With his energy and enthusiasm, Taiwo strengthened the Belfry's existing partnerships within the community, created new ones and, together with artistic director Michael Shamata, established a host of new initiatives.

"Prior to the murder of George Floyd and the re-energized Black Lives Matter movement, Taiwo and I had begun examining all of our activities—both onstage and within the community—with the goal of integrating the diverse and non-diverse segments of the population. The COVID-19 shut-down gave us time to pursue these goals, the BLM movement gave us urgency, and our community partners and colleagues in the arts community gave us encouragement," says Michael Shamata.

This past June, Taiwo facilitated a virtual meeting for IBPoC artists and arts administrators, providing a safe forum in which to voice concerns and needs. They then organized a July meeting for senior management of arts

organizations in the CRD, during which they discussed where these institutions hope to be in five years with regard to the IBPoC community—and how they plan to get there.

During Taiwo's time at the Belfry, they brought a record nine projects into Incubator—the development program for new work; initiated the Creators' Circle—a playwrights' group facilitated by Kevin Kerr; and created a program called IGNITE!, in which three pairs of artists from different disciplines were invited, including four IBPoC artists; they were given "seed money" and no guidelines other than to throw ideas around and see what creative sparks arose.

With his departure close at hand, Taiwo and Michael sat down for an in-depth interview about this past year at the theatre. We invite you to watch the **interview** at vimeo.com/belfrytheatre.

Though Taiwo will soon be far from the Belfry, he leaves a lasting impression on this theatre and this community. Nascent plans for an Arts Leadership Training Program may very well see collaboration with Taiwo and the University of Regina. We at the Belfry wish Taiwo and his family all the best as they embark on their new adventure. Thank you, Taiwo! •



Outgoing manager of Artistic and Community Connections Dr. Taiwo Afolabi
Photo credit: John-Evan Snow



IBPoC Artists

We would love to hear from you! Please drop us a line at nida@belfry.bc.ca



*I know you are okay, her heart whispers,
but I haven't touched you or felt you.*

WORLD PARTNERSHIP WALK VIRTUAL VOYAGE



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION CANADA
FONDATION AGA KHAN CANADA

The Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) is mounting a coordinated response to **COVID-19**, providing urgent humanitarian assistance, while also working to address the long-term consequences of the pandemic.

This year, the campaign will take Canadians on a Virtual Voyage with weekly stops in Asia and Africa to learn about AKFC's development programs and its response to the pandemic.



Welcome
Exchange
Workshops



Employment
Opportunity
Exchange

CONNECT TO LOCAL CULTURE,
COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT
WITH WELCOME EXCHANGE.



CULTURAL SHARING WORKSHOPS

Participate in cultural sharing workshops led by local First Nations artists.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EXCHANGE

Develop your professional network and connect with local employers.



PERSONALIZED SUPPORT & REFERRALS

Access a variety of online tools and connect one-on-one with an advisor.

The Welcome Exchange community is made up of people and organizations who are committed to building and supporting a welcoming world.

The cultural sharing workshops and employment connection events are available at no charge for eligible newcomers.

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