



# Multiplicity

A bi-annual newsletter from the Adviser  
to the Provost on Equity and Diversity

Spring 2012



**University  
of Victoria**

Vice-President  
Academic  
& Provost

# conversations

*Critical Conversations: Living Social Justice –  
The Provost's Diversity Research Forum took place on January 23–24.*

The Open Space portion of the conference, entitled “Making Connections: What Critical Conversations Do You Want to Have?” was led by Dr. Will Weigler of our theatre department. This session provided an opportunity for participants to find others who shared their interest in a particular topic and to start critical conversations toward solutions. One of the conversations that emerged was the ongoing need to create more spaces to hear stories of lived experiences. As allies we can only interpret and reflect on our own socio-locations; we need more opportunities to hear and listen.

This year, the conference provided a space for women survivor testimonies. An interactive art installation piece entitled “Embodying the Sacred Geometry of the Circle: Feminist Praxis in Motion” included visual media, music, dance

and survivor testimonies. Other forums for hearing stories included a presentation in First Peoples House by Elder Sarah Modeste from the Cowichan Tribes. She shared teachings around concepts of human behaviour, self-esteem, human relations and values contained in Snuw'uyulth, the traditional teachings of her tribe. Her presentation is available on DVD as a resource for teaching and learning.

Our Community Building Fund supported several wonderful events described in more detail in this issue. One of those events was a commemorative symposium of the 70th anniversary of Japanese Canadian uprooting and an opportunity to hear survivors' stories as they shared their recollections of internment.

Three cross-campus roundtable discussions on mental health were sponsored by the Mental

Health Task Group. These panel discussions were lead by Cindy Player, chair of the task force, and provided a forum for information and discussion for campus-based experts on mental health and illness.

As many questions arose as did answers from our Open Space session at this year's diversity research forum. Where do we go from listening to lived experiences? How do we consider how different experiences are valued and privileged? What brought us here as allies? How do systems affect and extend to others?

We are interested in hearing your perspectives on these questions. Please feel free to contact us. Send your perspectives, comments, experiences and stories to [multi@uvic.ca](mailto:multi@uvic.ca).

Thank you to everyone whose commitment and creativity contributed to this issue of *Multiplicity*.

Grace Wong Sneddon,  
*Adviser to the Provost on Equity and Diversity*

## CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE



*Her Honour Gwendolyn Point*

We were delighted to welcome Her Honour Gwendolyn Point as the keynote speaker to the 2012 diversity research forum, *Critical Conversations: Living Social Justice*. An instructor in the School of Social Work and Human Services at the University of the Fraser Valley, Her Honour mesmerized her audience as she spoke of the necessity to have a conversation on social justice in Canada. She said that conversation is finally beginning after generations of challenges in First Nations communities. Her Honour told the audience that it has been a tough road for Aboriginal people to get this far and that “we have to listen to each other.”

# UVic one of Canada's top diversity employers

UVic has been named one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers 2012 by Mediacorp, Canada. UVic was the only local organization and one of only three universities included on the list of 50 organizations that led the nation in creating diverse and inclusive workplaces.

UVic's application was one of nine that were featured as models for employers interested in applying next year. The university was recognized for a variety of initiatives including maintaining a diversity and equity steering committee, hosting an annual diversity research forum, managing a mental health task force and launching the Positive Space Network to create a positive and inclusive environment for all staff and students.

On behalf of the university, Grace Wong Sneddon, advisor to the provost on equity and diversity, accepted the award at the Diversity Canada Conference sponsored by the BMO Financial Group in Toronto on March 5, 2012.

More details: [www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/top-employers/canada-best-diversity-employers-for/article2344657/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/top-employers/canada-best-diversity-employers-for/article2344657/)



*L-R Adviser on Equity and Diversity Grace Wong Sneddon with Associate Vice-President Human Resources Kane Kilbey and President David Turpin (holding the award)*



## Congratulations to the winners of the 2012 Diversity Writing Contest

By Scott Downing, UVic Libraries

The Diversity Writing Contest is an annual collaboration between the libraries and the diversity office that invites UVic students to share their writing on themes of diversity, equity and inclusion. Each year, the judging committee receives many excellent entries on a variety of diverse topics, and this year was no exception. Out of all of the student entries, six were selected as prizewinners. The authors were recognized for their outstanding work at the opening of the Provost's Diversity Research Forum.

The award winners were as follows: Aysia Law and Kathleen Murdock received first and second place respectively in the fiction category; Jerold Flexer and Natasha Clark received first and second place in the personal narrative category; and Kyeren Regehr and Michelle Zakrisson received first and second place in the poetry category. Michelle's poem, *On Paper*, was adapted and showcased in an applied theatre presentation performed after the awards ceremony. The winning entries as well as photos of the award-winning authors are available online at [library.uvic.ca/events/writingcontest](http://library.uvic.ca/events/writingcontest).

### Bittersweet Bean

By Kyeren Regehr (first place, poetry)

*The Aztec god, Quetzalcoatl, descended from heaven on the beam  
of a morning star  
carrying a cacao tree stolen from paradise.*

The boy cups the pod, chops the stalk with a machete,  
guides the fruit into his burgeoning sack. He's tall for twelve,  
so he picks while others his age squat till sundown. Slicing pods,  
emptying buttery white seeds into wide-rimmed bowls—  
the cuts on their hands licked with flies.

*In 1513, Hernando Valdez (future bean-mogul) bought a slave  
for 100 cacao beans, a prostitute for 10.*

During his first hour on the plantation the boy thought the pods  
were beautiful—

the way they clung to the trunks like inflated caterpillars,  
glossy as his sister's cheeks. Like the wax lanterns  
the village priest hung from strings at weddings—  
before the drought.

*In the 1930's Cadbury's began its "glass and a half of milk" marketing—  
the average North American child now consumes 11lbs of chocolate a year.*

He stumbles, spills his sack. And then the stick—  
cheeks, gut, all the soft places. Dozens of bare feet pad past his face,  
eyes to the canopy. The rough hand releases his head from the dirt  
long enough for him to scramble up. Same hand,  
the one with the missing forefinger, the one that dragged the body  
from the sleeping sheds, dumped it in the canal.

*In 1793 a Swedish naturalist, renamed cocoa "theobroma," Greek for  
"food of the gods."*

They were told it melts on the tongue, melts  
swifter than the ripest papaya, sweeter than the sweetest mango.  
Wrapped in shiny paper for fat white children— mouthfuls of happiness  
for children on the other side of the world, they were told.

*The first World Shop opened in the Netherlands in 1969, exclusively  
selling fairly traded goods—  
our fast-paced world moves too slowly.*

A while back, the boy escaped for a day. Recaptured,  
feet slashed, forced to drink urine.  
His mother always fretted he was never fully baptized—  
record number of dunkings, an elbow, a pink-heeled foot,  
a pinky finger breaching the surface. Body refusing submersion.

*Today, over 200,000 pairs of small hands (sold hands, stolen hands)  
harvest cacao on the Ivory Coast.*





L-R Kathleen Murdock, Aysia Law, Kyeren Regehr, Jonathan Bengston (University Librarian), Natasha Clark, Jerold Flexer, Michelle Zakrison, Shailoo Bedi (Library Client Services)

## On paper

By Michelle Zakrison (second place, poetry)

*On paper it seems so obvious,  
But how was I to know?  
Grew up thinking boy meets girl,  
Unaware there was more to the show.*

*Thought I was open minded,  
But laid with girl before guy,  
Then had a compulsion to tell the world,  
Did not want to lie.*

*Are you sure that you are?  
Maybe it's just a phase.  
Girls kissing girls, you know  
Is just the latest craze.*

*So nervous to share,  
But I just had to tell.  
Wanted to meet a pretty girl,  
Who'd make my heart swell.*

*After my first love,  
I had to figure it out,  
To marry a girl or guy, I'd ask.  
To whom my love will shout?*

*So nervous about girls,  
Not caring about guys,  
After years of not knowing,  
I realized that time really flies.*

*My mentor helped me figure it out,  
Without her unsure if I could  
Leaving guys behind that day  
Made me solid as wood.*

*Now it's just clicking,  
And I'm very happy so,  
I take each day as an opportunity,  
To let everyone know.*

*Suicide, verbal and physical abuse,  
Incarceration, lack of rights.  
In 2012 these things still exist,  
That's why we have to fight.*

*Hold hands, kiss, love,  
Every way in every place,  
We can't be invisible anymore,  
We must take up time and space.*

*It doesn't just get better,  
We have to make it so,  
I'm a lesbian woman,  
Normalize gay, now go!*

Michelle Zakrison, B.E.S., J.D.,  
is a Master of Laws (LL.M.)  
candidate (2012) at the  
University of Victoria.

She reflects:

*I was quite flattered when I was asked for permission to use my poem as part of the diversity conference opening reception. I had not heard of applied theatre previously and was excited to see my poem performed in such a manner. This curiosity was heightened when I learned that my piece was going to be interwoven with other performances of various entries to the Diversity Writing Contest. I did not know when or how my poem was going to be performed. After watching the performance I was able to reflect on the different interpretations individual artists can have on the same words. My poem was based on my story of coming out as a lesbian and the importance of continued gay rights activism. The more people that are exposed to my poem and other pieces of art whether it be written or performed, the more the message will be spread and causes advanced.*



Actor Meesh Beam  
performs in the opening  
night applied theatre  
performance of  
*On paper*



## Pursuing social justice in institutional contexts

By Bill Carroll, Chair, Social Justice Studies Program

Living social justice was the theme of this year's forum, and it's a challenging one. How can we bring the aspiration for a just world into our everyday lives, and into the institutional contexts in which we live those lives? This is a big question for each of us. In the session "Pursuing Social Justice in Institutional Contexts," we heard from four highly knowledgeable and seasoned activist intellectuals, experienced in different institutional contexts.

We began with an overview by Moussa Magassa, UVic's Human Rights Education Adviser on organizational initiatives at UVic to promote equality, solidarity, human rights and human dignity. Next, Pamela Brown, a former equity advisor at UVic, currently completing a graduate thesis in Studies in Policy and Practice, presented a framework for institutionalizing intersectionality, drawing on insights from cross-sectoral organizing in the labour movement and other examples.

Anushka Nagji, an activist with the People's Assembly/Occupy Victoria and a UVic candidate in law, took a more autobiographical tack, with a gonzo-style story about activism and activists – waking up and awakening



*Bill Carroll facilitating the session "Pursuing Social Justice in Institutional Contexts"*

in contexts that actively discourage dialogue and dissent. Finally, Jo-Anne Lee, Associate Professor of Women's Studies at UVic and a founding faculty member in Social Justice Studies, drew on student-produced digital videos and shared the highs and lows of teaching social justice to undergraduate students through engaged participatory action research.

Different contexts, different challenges, and much to reflect upon as we move forward.

## INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL WELLNESS

By Shailoo Bedi, Director, Library Client Services

It was an honour and a privilege to learn about Indigenous perspectives on mental wellness from our distinguished panelists: Elder Joyce Underwood, Sarah Adams, Sylvie Cottell and Dr. Jeff Reading. Drawing on their personal and professional experience, the panelists gave rich background and context to issues among Indigenous communities stemming from a long history of colonization, residential school trauma, marginalization and oppression.

Many of these experiences from the past live on through "blood memory" in Indigenous descendants today. As a result, support for Indigenous peoples must go beyond western techniques of healing to a holistic approach that incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing.

The panelists highlighted the importance of connections with culture, community, family and spiritual foundation. If these connections weaken or disappear, wellness is impacted. Together we can create a trusting, respectful community, open to diverse ways of knowing. This will be a starting place to build our discussions, and it is one thing we can all do to help break down the barriers regarding mental wellness. Ms. Adams called on us to become allies in support of Indigenous communities, remembering that our interconnectedness will help all communities to live with health, balance and harmony. I hope we can continue this conversation at next year's conference.



*L-R Shailoo Bedi, Sarah Adams, Sylvie Cottell, Elder Joyce Underwood, Jeff Reading*

## Congratulations to the recipients of the Community Building Fund

### **Dr. Will Weigler, Department of Theatre**

This project included three related events developed by the Chocolate Woman Collective, a group of senior Aboriginal artists, artist/scholars and their collaborators formed in 2007 to research and create the theatrical performance, *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way*. Events included a free participatory theatre workshop geared to the interests of Indigenous and Métis students, an on-campus public lecture and a hands-on, activity-based workshop at Craigflower Elementary School.

### **School of Child and Youth Care, Community Life Portfolio**

*Intergenerational Circle, International Feast, Intercultural Sharing* is an event that builds on an annual Pluricultural Potluck, which provides an opportunity for child and youth care practitioners to develop important community partnerships with Indigenous children, youth and families. This year the event included students, staff, faculty and alumni.

### **Tiffany Yu, Engineering Student Society Diversity Committee**

Leadership through Diversity in Engineering (LTD) is a student-run group offering engineering students a chance to get involved in leadership-building opportunities, practice networking skills, and promote self-development and faculty involvement. This project included an inspirational speaker, a student potluck and a first-year mentorship workshop.

### **Dr. John Price, Professor, Department of History**

This project, entitled *Symposium on 70th Anniversary of Japanese Canadian Uprooting*, consisted of two panels, one on the history of the Japanese Canadian communities who were interned during 1942-1949, and another developed to pay tribute to the elders of those communities. Undertaken with the support of the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society, these events made a significant contribution to building closer university-community relations.

To apply to the Community Building Fund, visit  
[www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/administrators/diversity/index.php](http://www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/administrators/diversity/index.php).

The next deadline for applications is October 31, 2012.

## WHAT'S NEW?

- Information on Indigenous programs, courses, researchers, services and community partners is now available at [www.uvic.ca/resources/indig-inventory.php](http://www.uvic.ca/resources/indig-inventory.php).
- Disability and Accessibility Resources Guide website: [www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/administrators/diversity/index.php](http://www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/administrators/diversity/index.php)
- Disability and Accessibility Resources brochure: [www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/faculty/diversity/index.php](http://www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/faculty/diversity/index.php)



# get involved

## National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

By Angela Bello, Equity and Human Rights Office

Traditionally, the University of Victoria has acknowledged the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (or December 6th) with an outdoor event held around noon on the last day of fall semester classes. The nature and focus of the event has evolved considerably since it began in 1991. The Anti-Violence Project's Clothesline Display has been an important part of the event for a number of years.

In December 2011, the day was acknowledged with two separate film screenings and the presence of the Clothesline Project outside the McPherson Library. Feedback has been conveyed to senior administration that this was not sufficient recognition of this important day.

It is important to many people from UVic's diverse communities that the university demonstrate a commitment to ending all

forms of violence against women. University administrators have held several consultations with students, staff and faculty who had voiced concerns, and a decision has been made to return to a public outdoor event with concurrent cancellation of classes for 2012.

The Equity and Human Rights (EQHR) Office will coordinate planning for the 2012 event. In addition, EQHR has agreed to initiate a broad-based consultation process to determine how the university can continue to commit to ending violence against women and how that commitment can be shared with the UVic community in the years to come.



**For further information or to contribute your ideas for this year's event, please contact Angela Bello at [abello@uvic.ca](mailto:abello@uvic.ca) or 250-721-8486 or Cindy Player at [cplayer@uvic.ca](mailto:cplayer@uvic.ca) or 250-721-7007.**

## SPOTLIGHT ON DIVERSITY

The University of Victoria will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2012-2013. What are your memories of diversity at UVic? Please share your stories by sending them to [multi@uvic.ca](mailto:multi@uvic.ca).

