



# Multiplicity

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

Spring 2010



University  
of Victoria

The *Critical Conversations III: International, Indigenous, Intersectional* diversity research forum took place February 11-12 in the Student Union Building and First Peoples House. The panels were thought provoking, the critical conversations were challenging and the participants were amazing. The success of the conference was due to the participants, who came prepared to challenge themselves, each other and the institution.

The goal of the diversity conference is to recognize and acknowledge scholars who are engaged in diverse research and to provide a forum for them to share their passion with the community.

It was a pleasure to partner with Fran Hunt-Jinnouchi and Jim Anglin, who shared their wisdom, their experiences and knowledge.

I was honoured to work with this year's dedicated committee: Paula Ceroni, Pat Chirapant, Melanie Groves, Jo-Anne Lee, Maxine Matilpi, Hiroko Noro, Christine O'Bonsawin, CindyAnn Rose-Redwood, Kathy Sanford, Leah Staples, Will Weigler and Jin-Sun Yoon.

At the end of the conference, I said that my wish was for the University of Victoria to take on this conference as its signature conference. I am pleased

to announce that next year's conference will be rebranded as the Provost's Diversity Research Forum. I look forward to seeing you on February 10 and 11, 2011.

Grace Wong Sneddon

Adviser to the Provost on Equity and Diversity



## Pushing the boundaries of inclusion: The role of students with intellectual disabilities in the university community

By Jessica Humphrey | STEPS FORWARD

Why include individuals with intellectual disabilities in an academic institution? How can staff and faculty be supported in such a way as to make this goal feasible? How does going to university change the lives of young adults with intellectual disabilities? How does it change the lives of other members of the university community?

During the 2010 diversity conference the Learning and Teaching Centre and STEPS Forward Inclusive Post Secondary Education Society brought together faculty and staff to describe their experiences including individuals with intellectual disabilities as students in the university community. Panel members said that an open and ongoing relationship with STEPS Forward inclusion facilitators is key. STEPS Forward helps design strategies that not only

benefit students with intellectual disabilities in the classroom but create more accessible learning and work environments for all students.

Participants felt comfortable asking questions and engaging in honest discussion. One UVic staff member talked about her four-year relationship with a student with an intellectual disability. She had watched the remarkable growth in confidence and independence of this student during those years on campus. Another member of the audience asked questions about how to make academic accommodations for someone who does not meet university eligibility requirements. STEPS Forward staff clarified that students with intellectual disabilities do not compete for grades, nor will they receive degrees. Rather, they are "participatory

auditors" whose experience parallels the experience of an undergraduate student. Like others, they develop career paths and will be recognized for their accomplishments.

The session took time to acknowledge the historical and present-day segregation and marginalization of people with intellectual disabilities. Within this context it is significant that the UVic community is taking leadership to push the boundaries of inclusion for everyone.

*In May 2009 the University of Victoria acknowledged the first student with an intellectual disability for completing four years of audited studies. She finished her coursework within the Faculty of Education and is now pursuing a career in recreation and leadership.*

## Conference reflections

By Janine Mayers | Student Admissions

As a first-time participant and volunteer at the conference I didn't really know what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised that, from intimate roundtable discussions to large keynote addresses, there was something of interest for everyone.

I was particularly drawn to the presentation facilitated by Jin-Sun Yoon and Maxine Matilpi, *Intergenerational and Intercultural conversations: Elders and Youth*, a roundtable discussion with female members of the community of a variety of ages and cultural backgrounds. Among the participants, many were prominent community members, including elder Marie Cooper from the Tsartlip Nation in Saanich, Leatrice Lam and Michiko Midge Ayukawa, the child of Japanese immigrants. Their insights into how Canada and British Columbia have changed over the decades and how much work still needs to be done in the race towards gender and cultural equality was remarkable.

What made the discussion most interesting was the juxtaposition of youthful enthusiasm with the calm reflection of the elders as they relayed their experiences.

Marie Cooper gave a heartfelt account of her life as a young Tsartlip child and her struggles with segregation in the school system. What was most interesting was how her stories from the past connected so well with Rakiya Larkin's stories of her present struggle as a 17-year-old in the school system. They both shared their sadness about the loss of the language of their ancestors because their people were forced not to speak it.

To see how the struggles and ideals of the elders had directly influenced the lives of the younger panel members illustrates how important it is for all of us to engage in conversations with different people.

This newsletter is dedicated to presentations and perspectives from the 2010 conference.

Podcasts of the keynote addresses and some panel sessions are now available at <http://web.uvic.ca/vpac/diversity/forum2010>. Check them out!

Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter. If you wish to submit an article, comment or question, please email [multi@uvic.ca](mailto:multi@uvic.ca).



Janine Mayers (left) takes a break from volunteering at the closing session of the forum in First Peoples House

## Relational Theatre in the spirit of witnessing

By Will Weigler | Applied Theatre



When participants at the third annual diversity research forum entered the room for a workshop called *There's Something I'd Like You to Know...* they found different styles of chairs in the middle of the room arranged on a variety of rugs in a circle facing outward.

They were set up in pairs either facing each other or side by side—along with stools, a bench, a café table and something that looked like a transit bus seat. The stage was set for an experiment in a new form of theatre designed to engage people in the spirit of witnessing.

Relational Theatre Performance is a concept devised for this year's program by three members of the conference planning committee: Will Weigler (Applied Theatre doctoral candidate); Hiroko Noro (Pacific and Asian Studies); CindyAnn Rose-Redwood (Curriculum and Instruction and Geography); and local theatre artist Lina de Guevara of Victoria's Puente Theatre Society. The workshop also brought together eight people from the UVic community and the greater Victoria area.

The workshop was based on a simple idea: that real dialogue begins only when we are able to listen and be fully present with the other person in a dialogue. It requires that we set aside the habits of casually making judgments while listening, becoming defensive or formulating potential responses according to our own frames of reference. It involves quieting the chattering mind by making a conscious effort to attend fully to what the other person in the dialogue is saying. Lina and Will began the workshop by introducing the concept of what is sometimes called Active Listening—what Kelly Oliver (2001) calls “witnessing.”

To demonstrate what Active Listening looks like, Lina volunteered to tell a brief story about something that has meaning for her as an immigrant who came to Canada from Chile 30 years ago. She told her story twice as Will listened. However, before she had a chance to begin, Will reached into his pocket, pulled out a bright red clown nose, and put it on. It would, he said, help him voice all the things that are likely to run through a person's mind when NOT actively listening. “The nose lets everyone hear what is going on in my head,” explained clown-Will, tapping his temple emphatically. “It's all very *postmodern!*”

As Lina told her story, describing her struggle to find ways to communicate when both English and Spanish fail her, Will kept up a constant chatter, revealing a head too full of its own thoughts to listen. When the story was finished, they tried it a second time, but now without the red nose. This time, Will was silent and attentive. Afterward, he shared with the audience the experience he had witnessing Lina's story with an open and receptive attitude: he reported all that he noticed about what she was saying and how it affected him as he listened. The goofy red nose had a purpose deeper than adding a bit of fun. It embodied a belief that a chattering mind is not a permanent fixture of our personalities. It is only a habit, something we can notice we have adopted—like a bright red clown nose—and then choose to set aside.

The Relational Theatre Performances were designed to give audience members eight chances to practice Active Listening. If, during the course of a two-minute story, they noticed their minds start a-chattering, they were encouraged to recognize it as the equivalent of a goofy red nose, to forgive themselves and to try again to become present.



At this point in the workshop, the performers stepped forward and each took his or her place in the grouping of seats in the centre of the room. The ensemble of eight, which included members who have a disability, are immigrants or international students or First Nations, had all been asked to consider the following question:

*If eight people from mainstream Canadian culture were to give you their undivided attention for two minutes, and be willing to suspend judgment and just hear what you said, what would you want to tell them to help them understand something they may not know about your cultural perspectives?*

Eight volunteers from the audience were invited to take a seat opposite one of the performers while the rest of the audience members were asked to gather around a storyteller of their choice, close enough to listen in without crowding the speaker and the designated listener. The volunteers in the seats were advised that this would not be a conversation. They were not to greet or introduce themselves, nor be concerned with signalling that they were listening by nodding or saying “uh-huh” or “mmmmmm.” All they had to do was sit and listen.

The performance began. The stories were rich and remarkably diverse, not only in content, but also in style and in the manner of delivery. The one unifying element was the high degree of risk that each storyteller took. All opened their hearts to explain to complete strangers very personal experiences, and to tell their stories with grace and vulnerability.

Each story began in the same way. The performers said, “there’s something I’d like you to know.” And when the telling was done, they all ended by saying, “you may now go on to the next person.” On that cue, the designated listeners moved one step around the circle and sat to hear another story. And then again, and again, a total of eight times while the onlookers (on-listeners) were free to move around the room as they pleased.

In the final portion of the workshop, performers and audience gathered together in one large circle of chairs to reflect on the experience: to share what it felt like to hear and to be heard. There was a discussion of individual and collective revelations, frustrations and mutual delight in the invigorating power of simply being open to one another’s experiences. By the end it was our (perhaps Utopian) wish that this kind of encounter could become the norm in our Canadian society.

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The eight storytellers in the workshop were Kyla Berry, Tanja Guven, Junko Ishikawa, Jasmine Kivari, Moussa Magassa, Romina Miranda, Amisha Parikh-Friese and Danny Tes.

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Oliver, Kelly. (2001). *Witnessing: Beyond recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

See also

Robertson, Kathryn. (2005). Active listening—more than just paying attention. Reprinted from *Australian Family Physician* 34(12), 1053-1055.



“What would you want to tell them to help them understand something they may not know?”

## Congratulations to the winners of the 2009 Diversity Writing Contest

The winners of the first annual Diversity Writing Contest sponsored by UVic Libraries and the Adviser to the Provost on Equity and Diversity were presented with their cash awards at the diversity conference.



L-R Yukari Tanji and Amanda Jardine accept their awards from UVic Libraries staff David Brown and Vici Nielsen



**Yukari Tanji** was the winner in the poetry category. Yukari was born in Japan and recently finished her women's studies degree as an international student at UVic. She has enjoyed writing poems and short stories since second grade, when she started her first journal.

### My Name is Yukari

*I like my name  
I like it when you call my name  
I like it when you try to call my name  
I like it for every way it's pronounced  
I like it when you apologetically say  
"I hope I'm saying your name right"  
I like it when you try to memorise my name  
"Eucalyptus, Ukraine, you-carry, you-curry. . ."  
I like it when you ask what my name means  
"It means 'good reason of the universe'"  
I like it when you try to spell my name and get it almost right  
"It was very nice meeting you, Ukari"  
I like it when you know how to say my name in Chinese  
"You-Jia-Li"  
I like it when you try to learn how to say my name in Japanese  
I like it when it's called in a Spanish way  
I like it when it creates a conversation  
"YUKARI. . .Is this a Japanese name?"  
I like it even when you try to figure out an easier way to call me  
I like it when you try to get away with it by trying to call my middle name  
"Japanese people don't have a middle name."*

*The truth is, though, my name is troublesome sometimes  
A typical name in Japanese  
Now I have to spell it out all the time  
But I've never liked my name like this before  
It makes me feel special  
It reminds me of who I am  
It reminds me of my dad who gave me this name  
It connects me to people I meet every day*

*My name is Yukari and I like my name every day*

## Queer Soup

**Amanda Jardine** was the winner in the non-fiction category. Amanda was born and raised in PEI, completed her undergraduate degree in English literature in Fredericton, and is currently a UVic masters student studying creative non-fiction. She has many creative accomplishments under her belt, including radio, poetry and writing for the stage. She is currently working on a creative non-fiction memoir about her experience as a same-sex columnist in a Maritime town.

*I was born with a labia, it's true. But it's longer on one side. My lopsided labia would not pass medical inspection, but I'm not INTERSEX.*

*I've been told I'm female, but not from birth. You see, my parents let me pee standing up and they practiced pitching with me in the backyard. They nicknamed me Man because it was quicker to say than Amanda. Occasionally, when people died, my parents asked if I would mind wearing a dress. I chose the pink one because it came with a jacket (even if it did have flowers).*

*I'm considered pretty too, which is a whole other mess. When I got to school, I heard lots of people call me the 'f' word and when I filled out forms I had to check that box: FEMALE. When I was seven, I accepted my new identity but I never left the field or grew out my nails or made friendship bracelets.*

*In grade six, I found sticks of makeup and a different way to perform. One-inch thick onyx eyeliner, strategically shooting from the corners of your lids, can say 'fuck off' better than any middle finger. I was a bitch in high school, but still there was nothing clearly FEMME about my constant costume: a grey hooded sweatshirt and unisex jeans.*

*During my undergrad, I chopped off all my hair and called myself BISEXUAL so I could suck on my best friend's tequila lips without questions and fall in love with a professor. At the end of my second year of university, I realized that I didn't like dick altogether, unless it was interested in other dick or not BIOLOGICAL.*

*I came out to my family one at a time starting with Mom. On Christmas Eve, amidst coffee and floating halos flying off our matching cigarette tips, I felt my stomach sink into the cushy grey carpet where we sat in my old basement bedroom.*

*"Mom, there's something I got to tell ya."*

*"Let me guess. You're gay?"*

*"How did you know?"*

*"You told me when you were five. We were watching the Smurfs. You said: 'Mom, I'm a lesbian.' And I said: 'Do you know what that means?' And you said: 'Yep, it means I'm a GIRL who likes girls.' Ever since that day, I've just been waiting."*

*Mom hugged me and told me to tell my father. Another time. Alone.*

*I told Dad, over the phone, when my best friend asked me to pack up my crap and get out. She didn't need a mountaintop love or live-in girlfriend anymore. During this delivery, my mind snowed all over our bedroom, falling like party confetti. I told Dad he needed to come and collect the shards of my sense off the floor. Like always, just hearing his voice gave me the strength to stuff boxes and start over.*

*I got a job spinning bottles as a star flair bartender at the local QUEER club. Every Friday and Saturday I fastened up my corset (usually red or black) and pulled on a skirt (always absurdly short). My muscular legs made fantastic prisoners to fishnet stockings and four-inch platforms gave me a world to explore. With the sidewalk sun on my skin, I danced up the main street of Fredericton. Almost naked. I was a chance burlesque performance for children and adults and friends of all ages. My secret talent was that I could smell their fear. Mostly the MEN. No whistles all bells. My confidence pushed their heads down. I'm not a LIPSTICK LESBIAN, but I played one on weekends.*

*I'm chesty and I didn't bother taping down 'my girls.' Except for when I did drag at pride celebrations and local shows. I only queered myself up this way twice a year so I can't call myself a TRANSVESTITE even if I do look like a hotter Johnny Depp.*

*Most times I stick to the plastic plan, but sometimes my invisible penis slides into my girlfriend. It goes back into my abdomen when she's done getting off on cosmic consciousness. Usually, there's an orb of light where my genitals should be. I wish I could call myself TWO SPIRITED, but I'm some-kind-of-white.*

*I thought for awhile that my strong jaw would get me in with the BUTCH LESBIANS, but I couldn't stomach beer and*

*they often scoffed when I talked about Dante. I liked skinny jeans and lash flash mascara, which usually didn't fly. Plus, there was a rule about hair; the ruler said mine was five inches too long. My surprising upper body strength didn't matter.*

*Next, I moved to the WILDERNESS LESBIANS. Minus the dreads, I looked almost the same. I could buy some extra sweaters, I thought, and try on tights for a change. But I liked eating chickens and I could never remember which berries were poisonous. Not to mention, I killed my trial fern and didn't dance to Mother Nature like a dandelion dream. Plus, my need to curse was usually an issue.*

*I took a chance, at last, and settled for the fact that I didn't have a home and might have to create my own space. I wanted to trace my shadow outside of these binaries.*

*With a female face and ANDROGYNOUS clothes, I looked like an angry seventeen-year-old who listened to Avril Lavigne and got kicked out of school. Hung Up. Held Over. Removed.*

*I'm a suspender. A word bender. I'm whatever YOU want I to ME. Been quiet? Break rules and make room for anyone's someone and no one. We're all at the same table.*

*Suspender-freedom means I can travel through all of these imaginary places and stay for a bit without pitching a tent or starting a fire. There's no paperwork, no standards to fit, no trial. I don't need one strict community. I wade in all different kinds, from time to time, when diversity gets lonely. I find community in misfits. If you want to be a suspender with me, I'll take you in. We will start a commune and live away from that chatter. We will ban words that split hairs. We will roll our lives out, against the grain, and make plain decisions based on the way the fog moves or by how much coffee we have left.*

*Our world tells us to pick an identity and to make it political. Our ambiguity is power. I like the fact that I'm a gap in knowledge. What you see is never what you get. I'm a Lesbian Harry Potter.*

## Representing intersectionality through pick-up sticks

By Helga Thorson and Tamara Tobler | Germanic and Slavic Studies



After we were invited to be a part of the 2010 diversity research forum, we asked ourselves, “what is the best way to explain intersectionality?” We were looking for a visual way to express this concept, one that would be accessible to everyone—not just those who were familiar with

the term. During our first meeting with Sarah Hunt, the facilitator of our session on intersectional research teams, she referred to the concept in terms of a three-dimensional model. In this model, each axis of our identity intersects with other axes to create the whole. This visual reference inspired us to incorporate the children’s game Pick-up Sticks into our presentation.

When reflecting on our own identities, we began by focusing on each individual pick-up stick to represent all of the various components (such as race, class, ethnicity, biological sex, gender, sexuality, etc.) that come together to make up who we are. However, viewing these components

separately does not reflect the complex nature of our identities. Therefore, we found it more helpful to look at how all of these individual elements come together in various contexts and situations. The game of Pick-up Sticks represents the multi-dimensional and constantly fluctuating positions of our sticks; in fact, it depends on it. Each time the sticks are dropped, they fall differently, constantly changing their configurations, and thereby metaphorically illustrating the dynamic nature of intersectionality.

Intersectionality is *not* the sticks in and of themselves—it is how they fit together.

## International global mixing: Building diverse social connections at UVic

By CindyAnn R. Rose-Redwood | Geography

As a member of the diversity conference organizing committee, I put together a session that brought the international student voice into the spotlight.

I had the opportunity to work with five amazing international students, and all of them openly and honestly shared their personal experiences and observations of how well they thought international and Canadian students were socially interacting with each other on campus. The conference provided an opportunity for them to voice their concerns about the current climate of diversity at UVic.

For some of the students, UVic was indeed a place they felt welcomed. Two of the students, for

instance, talked about playing sports and getting involved with different organizations on campus, which allowed them to diversify their friendships and build social connections across national lines. For others, however, negative experiences with respect to racism and uncomfortable encounters made them steer away from interacting with the majority Canadian student body. Socially interacting with other students of the same nationality was a social support system for some not who did not feel as welcome on campus.

The session was quite provocative and it accomplished what it was intended to do—

engage in critical conversation. The session left me thinking about a couple of things. First, we cannot simply generalize that all international students engage in self-segregation on campus. Second, both individuals and the institution need to communicate and be proactive in making the university a diverse space that fosters academic and social connections. If the university’s aim is internationalization, then this session opened up an opportunity for policies to be implemented that can help achieve such a goal.

To listen to a podcast of this session, visit [web.uvic.ca/vpac/diversity/forum2010](http://web.uvic.ca/vpac/diversity/forum2010).

### Spotlight on diversity

*Hate messages against groups of people written on walls, stalls and furniture are a form of ambient violence. If we see these hate messages we need to say or do something. If you see ambient violence on campus, you can report it to Campus Security at 250-721-6683 or Facilities Management at 250-721-7591. Suggestions or ideas? Please send your comments and feedback to [multi@uvic.ca](mailto:multi@uvic.ca).*

