



# Multiplicity

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

Spring 2011



University  
of Victoria

Each of us has a role to play in building a welcoming and inclusive community. A welcoming community is one where each of us feels and believes that this is a place where we belong and where we are able to participate fully in all aspects of community life. An inclusive community is one where each of us feels valued for who we are and where all voices are heard, listened to and valued. An inclusive and welcoming community requires that we all bring a willingness to be engaged with each other, to learn and to

share. Community is about all of us learning, teaching, living, working and playing together with respect for one another.

In the words of Buddha, "Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by sharing."

Together in diversity,

Grace Wong Sneddon  
Adviser to the Provost on Equity and Diversity

Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter.

If you wish to submit an article, or share your feedback on this issue, please email [multi@uvic.ca](mailto:multi@uvic.ca).

## Diversity-based framework for Community Relations

By Grant Hughes | Director, Community Relations

The University of Victoria's Department of Community Relations supports the goals of integrating and including diversity in our work by fostering community engagement with diverse internal and external communities.

Community Relations is a cornerstone between UVic and individuals, community associations, agencies and local governments. We build positive relationships to support the social, cultural, educational and economic health of UVic and the wider community.

The Community Relations portfolio includes supporting non-profit associations that assist our community. We are conscious of the diverse nature of our community and our sponsorship policy states that, where possible, sponsorships will be balanced between social, cultural and economic needs in the community.

We provided 26 community sponsorships last year. These included:

- The African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island, which sponsored the 2010 African Eloquent Youth Pageant. African Eloquent supports youth of African heritage to realize their full potential and raises awareness of Africa as a continent of rich and varied cultures.

- The Victoria Chinatown Lioness Club, which organized The World of Suzie Wong fundraiser. Proceeds from the event went to non-profit agencies in the region.

- The Victoria Youth Empowerment Society, which provides a continuum of care that empowers positive choices in the lives of multiple-barrier youth.
- Latin American Film Week at Cinecenta, which showed five engaging movies to foster knowledge about this region of the Americas among students, faculty and the community at large.

By consciously thinking about the diversity of our community UVic is able to support a wide variety of community agencies. For more information see the website at [web.uvic.ca/extr/community/index.php](http://web.uvic.ca/extr/community/index.php).



Kade Hardy-Agueh, African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island

## African eloquent

By Alison Stockwell  
Office of International Affairs

Drums, dancing, singing, poetry, spicy samosas, dashikis, caftans, kufis, artwork, storytellers, laughs and tears... bundle them all into one evening, and you're in for a great show.



Kade Hardy-Agueh presents the first prize to Aliya Mitchell.

Also pictured are 2009 winner Sudie Momoh (left) and first runner-up Gina Swasisa.

Over 200 students, faculty, staff and community members packed into the Harry Hickman Building on Saturday, Oct.23 for an evening of African music, dancing, food, performances and cultural celebration. The second annual African Eloquent Pageant was an overwhelming success, bringing together African youth from Greater Victoria to celebrate their heritage and show off their talents, smarts and public speaking skills.

The event was organized by Kade Hardy-Agueh of the African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island (AHAVI). Founded in 2004, AHAVI is a non-profit cultural organization whose mission is to connect Africans, people of African descent, and friends of Africa on Vancouver Island to build a strong community, promote cultural awareness and celebrate diversity.

"As much as African Eloquent is for leading awareness and educating the public about the continent of Africa, it is also to build self-esteem, confidence and eloquence in our African youth. We want to reinstate their sense of African identity with this program," says Hardy-Agueh. "It's something that can be lost when immigrating or living as a minority in a country." Hardy-Agueh started African Eloquent three years ago in Vancouver as part of a conference on engaging youth in world peace issues. This year, the event featured ten talented contestants aged 12-18, and attendance was nearly double that of 2009.

"The university is proud to be a sponsor for this cultural outreach program that supports African youth in reaching their full potential," said Grace Wong Sneddon, adviser on equity and diversity, adding that the event complements UVic's goal of creating a diverse and welcoming environment. The competition's three rounds challenged contestants' knowledge of Africa, research and public speaking skills, self-confidence and ability to engage the audience. Grand prizes were awarded to Aliya Mitchell (first place), Gina Swasisa (second place) and Joel Kwanda (third place).

As the 2010 winner of African Eloquent, Aliya will accompany Hardy-Agueh and other members of AHAVI on school visits that will educate youth in greater Victoria on African culture and the value of diversity. It is AHAVI's hope that all contestants walk away from the competition with enriched self-esteem and confidence, and an appreciation for their vibrant heritage and the power of cultural awareness.

*African Eloquent 2010 was made possible through the generous support of the University of Victoria Alumni Association, Adviser to the Provost on Equity and Diversity, Community Relations, Office of International Affairs, Student Transition Services, Corporate Relations and local sponsors including Afro Diva Salon.*



## Too Asian? Talking back to *Maclean's*

By John Price | Department of History

A storm of criticism hit *Maclean's* magazine after it published a feature article, "Too Asian?" in its widely read, special university rankings edition that went on-line Nov. 10, 2010. The article suggested Euro-Canadian students were avoiding certain universities that had a lot of Asian students because the competition was too tough.

Community organizations, students and faculty members—mainly but not exclusively from Asian Canadian communities—responded quickly. UBC professor of history Henry Yu pointed out that *Maclean's* had drawn on "over a century of racist politics using the term 'Asian' to flatten everyone who looks 'Oriental' in a single category, which is somehow threatening to 'white' Canadians" (*Georgia Straight*, Nov. 16, 2010).

Others criticized the article as an example of racial profiling and creating misleading racial antipathies.

*Maclean's* added insult to injury when its print edition (Nov. 22, 2010) featured the same article accompanied by a giant photograph of

two students waving a giant People's Republic of China flag. This indelible graphic fed fears of a "Chinese" fifth column in Canada, a claim earlier advanced by the head of CSIS, Richard Fadden, who suggested that some municipal and provincial officials were acting as agents for a foreign power, alluding to Chinese Canadians on Vancouver city council, among others.

For those with a longer memory, the *Maclean's* affair was a repeat of the notorious 1979 W-5 program *Campus Giveaway* that racialized Asian students in a similar way to *Maclean's*. The CTV network president finally apologized for that program's racist content, but only eight months after it first aired.

The Chinese Canadian National Council, an organization formed as part of the struggle over the W-5 program, met with *Maclean's* on November 12 and 17 in an attempt to have the magazine's editors rectify the problems, but talks broke down after *Maclean's* refused to apologize for the offensive article.

In the Senate, Vivienne Poy declared the article "a blatant attempt to create divisions in Canadian society."

As debates raged in the media, students, faculty and community organizations from Victoria to Hamilton organized to exert pressure on

*Maclean's*. A Facebook wall, 'Too Asian'? Talk Back quickly attracted hundreds of fans, and organizations across the country signed an open letter to *Maclean's* criticizing it for stereotyping people of Asian heritage as "perpetual foreigners" and creating racial antagonisms. The open letter called for *Maclean's* to make amends and for universities to take measures to address racism and promote Asian Canadian studies (see sidebar p. 5).

*Maclean's* responded to the criticism by threatening a lawsuit against the CCNC Toronto office as a signatory of the open letter. It also modified the on-line edition of the article and published a justification of its approach in its Dec. 6 edition. On Dec. 16, senator Vivienne Poy wrote the Heritage minister, James Moore, demanding an end to \$1.5 million in public funding for *Maclean's*, citing its "divisive" and "unprofessional" journalism. A petition to the same effect is now circulating.

On Nov. 25, Victoria City Council unanimously adopted a motion, submitted by councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe, criticizing the *Maclean's* article as "offensive and intolerant" and "propagating a litany of racial stereotypes." Vancouver and Toronto city councils passed motions similar to the Victoria motion and other cities are now contemplating doing the same.

The closing plenary at the 2011 Provost's Diversity Research Forum, *Talk/NoTalk: Who Determines Critical Discourse*, engaged with the controversies surrounding the *Maclean's* article. Pictured right (l-r) are facilitators Mary Sanseverino (Learning and Teaching Centre) and Jo-Anne Lee (Women's Studies) with The Honourable Vivienne Poy (Senator for Ontario), Shelly Chan (Pacific and Asian Studies), Adam Gaudry, Métis (doctoral candidate, Indigenous Governance), Jaraad Marani (UVSS Board of Directors/undergrad student) and Rebecca Johnson (Law).



The University of Victoria Students Society adopted a motion on Nov. 29 to begin a consumer boycott of *Maclean's* within the Student Union Building if *Maclean's* did not apologize. Introduced by director-at-large Jaraad Marani and supported by a number of groups including the Students of Colour Collective and UVic Pride, the resolution has spurred other student groups across the country to take further actions.

Over 150 students, staff, faculty and community members participated in a teach-in, "Understanding Difference, Challenging Anti-Asian Racism" on Dec. 1. After Shelly Chan provided a critical analysis of the problems with the *Maclean's* article, the session heard moving testimony from students, faculty and staff about the effects of racism. A documentary narrated by Steven Lewis about the *W-5 Campus Giveaway* was an eerie reminder of the power of racism to reproduce itself. Jo-Anne Lee warned the activist crowd that this was not the time to "wrap ourselves too tightly in the cloak of victimhood" and that something new and better was to come from this moment. She suggested the *Maclean's* story "distracts us from real ones that cut across race—how to

ensure that our students can afford and find value in education, think and communicate clearly and learn to live with others respectfully."

A backlash also emerged, particularly in the anonymous comment sections of on-line journals, in which critics of *Maclean's* were assailed for trying to censor the press. Ryerson University Senate discussed the article and in January wrote to *Maclean's* stating, "The Senate believes that the articles contribute to the racial stereotype of Asian Canadians as perpetual foreigners in Canada and thus reinforce anti-Asian resentment." The magazine failed "to examine critically the anti-Asian attitudes being reported."

The petition calling for an end to the *Maclean's* subsidy continues to circulate and further events and actions have been held or are planned for the spring.

View the video recording of the plenary session *Talk/Don't Talk: Who determines critical discourse?* at the 2011 Provost's Diversity Research Forum (Feb. 11, 2011) at [www.uvic.ca/diversity2011](http://www.uvic.ca/diversity2011).

## More info

"Too Asian" *Maclean's* article: [www2.macleans.ca/2010/11/10/too-asian/](http://www2.macleans.ca/2010/11/10/too-asian/)

Facebook *Too Asian? Talk Back* page: [www.facebook.com/TooAsianTALKBACK](http://www.facebook.com/TooAsianTALKBACK)

*W5 Campus Giveaway—a Rebuttal*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CS-PBKXJbhs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CS-PBKXJbhs)

Prof. Shelly Chan's article in *Times-Colonist*, Dec. 1, 2010: [www.timescolonist.com/news/Victoria+leads+dialogue+about+diversity/3909498/story.html](http://www.timescolonist.com/news/Victoria+leads+dialogue+about+diversity/3909498/story.html)

An open letter, "A Call to Eliminate Anti-Asian Racism," signed by over 100 organizations across the country, stated *Maclean's*:

- must issue a comprehensive and unqualified public apology to Asian Canadians;
- must engage in public consultations to address racial profiling and stereotyping via their media outlets;
- must implement measurable corporate and editorial anti-racism policies in consultation with relevant community constituents, and must publish the results of their policies annually;
- and, must implement employment equity programs to diversify their corporate and editorial boards and frontline personnel.

It also suggested that Canadian institutions of higher education:

- must develop academic programs and courses that explicitly address racism in Canada and the historical and contemporary experiences, representations and contributions of Asian Canadians;
- must undertake and publish campus climate surveys of racialized students, staff and faculty;
- and, must establish advocacy and support offices for racialized students, staff and faculty.

## Knowledge Infrastructure funding provides opportunities to improve accessibility

By Gordon Argyle | Facilities Management

The Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP) is a major initiative of campus building upgrades and improvements, including accessibility modifications. These improvements contribute to the university's strategic vision to create an inclusive campus with equal access for all.

### MacLaurin Building

- Exterior and interior ramps for those with mobility aids have been rebuilt to a higher standard. A new ramp from the courtyard to ground level significantly improves access.
- Improved room badges with embossed numbers and raster Braille have been installed.

### Clearihue Building

- New ramps to the main entrance and in the lower level of C-Wing have been installed.
- New room badges with embossed numbers and raster Braille have been installed.
- Eight new automatic door openers in A-wing offer barrier-free access to the building.

### Elliott Building

- Exterior doors have been upgraded in lecture and lab wings, and two new door openers have been added to the south wing.
- Elevators have been upgraded with an additional control panel and new door badges.

### Cornett Building

- Six entrances have been rebuilt to incorporate wider door leafs with improved door openers, replacing the narrow doors that hindered wheelchair access.
- Interior stairs now have colour contrasting, tactile nosing.

### University Centre

- A second lift has been installed in the foyer of B-Wing.
- The Financial Aid Office now provides height-accessible counter space, new door signage and enhanced locksets on many doors.

The KIP project provided a significant boost to Facilities Management's ongoing commitment to creating a welcoming, accessible campus.

## Diversity Writing Contest 2011

Congratulations to the winners of the 2011 Diversity Writing Awards. To read all the winning entries in the categories of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, visit [library.uvic.ca/site/writingcontest/](http://library.uvic.ca/site/writingcontest/).



Shailoo Bedi of UVic Libraries congratulates Timothy Vander Wekken.

### First place, poetry

#### Distinguish My Soul

By Timothy Vander Wekken

No two spots that are the same  
No great divisions despite our names  
These census and opinion polls  
Do little to distinguish souls

This colour of skin many have worn  
This red stained beard many faces adorn  
And with few small facts you think you know  
Of whom I am and where I'll go

But I could tell you so much more  
Of values and views you can't ignore  
Of thoughts and dreams you can't assess  
And a thousand things you'd never guess

And there would be no doubt of who I am  
Of how very different I have become  
From anyone you'll ever see  
From anyone who'll ever be



## *First place, non-fiction*

### **How Could Anyone Ever Tell You You Were Anything Less than Beautiful?**

By Joy Fisher

"Carol's dead," my friend Anna told me over the phone. "She killed herself."

Shocked, I wondered what could have impelled this woman to suicide. Carol had survived so much in her life that I knew it couldn't have been the act of a quitter.

Once my shock subsided, memories of Carol began to surface. I'd met her in 2005 when a handful of us were struggling to organize an Interweave chapter for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members of the Unitarian-Universalist Society of Sacramento. Carol began coming to our meetings. She was a tall, raw-boned but impeccably stylish woman who often dressed in soft pink to accentuate her white hair and blue eyes. She had reached her "golden years" and was ready to lend a helping hand to others. Carol made herself useful, staffing our booth at the local gay pride festival. I was grateful to our new heterosexual ally for her support.

It didn't occur to me at first that Carol was one of us, and, at first, she didn't own up to it. Eventually, however, I learned that Carol was a pioneer, a male-to-female transsexual who had transitioned in the 1970s, when it took great courage and was costly in every sense of the word. Not only had she paid for her surgeries out-of-pocket, but she had lost her family. She had fathered two daughters when she was still trying to fit into the world as a man, and both had cut off contact when "Charlie" became "Carol."

She had caught a few breaks, though. In those days, she was working as a manager at the

National Aeronautics and Space Administration. She had been an electrical engineer, part of a team that developed the communications system for the Mars Rover. One of her favourite stories was how she'd gotten approval from her boss to get her name changed on official NASA records. Still dressed as a man, she walked into his office carrying her medical files and official records. While her boss read them, she waited for his reaction. Finally, he'd looked up, surveyed her in her man's suit, and said, "Well, I guess you've got a lot of clothes shopping to do."

By the time I met Carol, she was retired, living in Elk Grove, south of Sacramento, California. She hadn't found the "man of her dreams," but she hadn't given up hope. The reason Carol hadn't owned up to being a transsexual when she first started attending Interweave was that she didn't want that information to get back to the rest of the congregation. She was afraid it might scare away "Mr. Right." Once she came out to us, we agreed to keep her secret. We were "out and proud," but we were willing to give Carol her chance at happiness.

Carol had a keen intellect and an understated, acerbic sense of humour. One of her characteristic comments, when giving praise, was: "That is absolutely—adequate!" Sometimes I wondered, though, whether Carol believed she herself was adequate. After I'd known her for about a year, Carol told me she was going to have cosmetic surgery. She wanted to "soften" her cheek bones and jaw line. As a second-wave lesbian-feminist who'd given up make-up decades before, it was hard for me to understand Carol's concerns about her appearance. She looked fine to me just as she was.

After that conversation, Carol was gone for awhile. When she came back, I greeted her and asked, "Hey, Carol when are going in for your surgery?" As

soon as I asked, I knew I'd made a terrible mistake: Carol looked as though I'd slapped her.

"I've already had it," she replied, finally. "I stayed away until all the bruising healed."

I felt like an insensitive jerk. I hadn't noticed any difference in her appearance.

Carol forgave me, but I never quite forgave myself. Over the years, I have realized that Carol and I were more alike than I ever thought. More than anything else, we both wanted to present our authentic selves to the world and be recognized for the persons we felt we were. For me, that meant taking off the dresses, make-up and bras that were part of the image expected of women in our culture; for Carol, it meant putting them on. In everything she did, including the cosmetic surgery, Carol tried to bring her outer self into harmony with the woman she felt herself to be on the inside.

Not long after that incident, I moved to Canada. Sometimes I would hear about Carol from Unitarian friends. In 2008, Carol's photographs were exhibited at the Unitarian Society. My friend Anna, also an accomplished photographer, took pictures of Carol for the event. Anna told me she had two sittings before Carol found a pose she was satisfied with. I wasn't surprised. Anna emailed me copies of the posters used to advertise the show; I was awed by the quality of Carol's work. One friend, more articulate than I, said that Carol had a gift for selecting the enduring aspect of each object she photographed. That's because she's endured so much herself, I thought.

In 2009, during the Christmas holidays, I heard that Carol had been in a serious car accident and was in hospital. A mutual friend, Mary, told me Carol was travelling in heavy traffic on Interstate 80, one of the main freeways through

*continued on next page*

Sacramento, when traffic ahead slowed down abruptly. Carol managed to stop her car in time to avoid serious collision with the car ahead, but a bus slammed into her from behind. She was wearing her seat belt; her body snapped backward, breaking two vertebrae in her neck. She couldn't move her arms or legs.

The surgeon operated on Carol all night. He replaced her shattered vertebrae with cadaver bone, but he didn't expect her to live and thought, if she did live, she would be a quadriplegic. He instructed staff to contact him if there were any signs of movement. Before he left the hospital parking lot, his cell phone rang. Carol was moving her arms and legs. While she was in rehab, Carol started walking. The doctor told her, "You're my miracle patient!"

Mary asked Carol whether she would like to contact her daughters, but Carol declined. What she lacked in family, Carol found in friends. Her hospital room was filled with cards, flowers and visitors. She told Mary, "I can't believe how many people care for me!" She felt there must be a reason why she'd survived, and she was determined to discover it.

The surgeon had operated from the front, through her throat, so Carol couldn't swallow. She was told she couldn't be released until she could. Carol didn't want to stay in hospital. They weren't giving her hormones, so her facial hair had started growing again; she was mortified. Mary brought her an electric razor, but Carol wanted to go home. With the help of an attorney, Carol arranged for 24-hour nursing care at her own expense. This satisfied hospital staff. They inserted a "tummy tube" so Carol could be fed, and home she went.

Mary saw Carol frequently. She was receiving speech therapy to help her learn to swallow. She was scheduled to do a final swallow test right after Easter. If she passed, the tummy tube would be removed and Carol would be able to eat again. The worst would be over.

On Good Friday, Carol's speech therapist made a house call. Carol was doing well; the therapist believed she would have no trouble passing the swallow test. Later that morning, Mary called. Carol sounded upbeat during the conversation, but, 10 minutes later, Carol called the police and told them she was going to kill herself and she didn't want her neighbours to find her body. When the police arrived, they found Carol dead on her bed. She had shot herself three times, once on either side



*Laura How (first place, fiction), right, receives her award from Shailoo Bedi of UVic Libraries.*

*To read her story visit:  
[library.uvic.ca/site/writingcontest/](http://library.uvic.ca/site/writingcontest/).*

of her body, the third time in the head. She had placed a pillow on the opposite side of her head before firing so as not to make a mess. Her purse and address book lay beside her so she could be identified and her friends notified.

What was it that had pushed Carol, after all she had endured, beyond the limits of endurance? Mary tried to puzzle it out. In the end, she gave up. "I have learned I don't have to know why she did it," she told me. "She knew why."

More than a hundred people attended Carol's memorial service. Carol's photography and painting were on display, along with some of her NASA plaques.

They played her favourite song, "Over the Rainbow," and the congregation sang one of my favourite Unitarian hymns: "How Could Anyone Ever Tell You You Were Anything Less than Beautiful?"

I wish I'd been there to sing it to Carol. I wish she'd been there to hear it.

## Critical Conversations: The Art and Science of Diversity



The word that attendees use to describe the **2011 Provost's Diversity Research Forum**, which took place Feb. 9–11, is inclusive. Administrators, faculty, deans, students, staff and community members all felt welcomed. A huge thank you to all the presenters, participants, Elders, sponsors and volunteers—your engaged participation and presence made the fourth annual event a success. Here are a few comments from participants:

*"The forum helped me understand many of the initiatives the university is taking to promote diversity on campus."*

*"The public recognition of diverse perspectives was very powerful for me as it was an overt breaking of silence, for individuals but also at the institutional level."*

*"I liked the non-judgmental format. There didn't seem to be social hierarchy at work; the space seemed level and grounded."*

