

# ARTICULATE

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

FREE

THE FIRST WORD ON ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE IN THE COLUMBIA BASIN



**GET OUT: PAINTING EN PLEIN AIR**

**G-RATED: THE MUSICAL PUPPET SHOW**

**WRITE ON: LEESA DEAN & TRIGGER JONES**

**DOUKHOBOR LIFE IN CANADA**

**ON SCREEN: NELSON CIVIC THEATRE SOCIETY**

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NKLT.TRAVEL/ARTS

# FREEDOM TO READ IS AN ESSENTIAL HUMAN RIGHT



Two recent incidents have brought the idea of censorship to the front burner for me. First, the Nelson Public Library had to postpone its planned drag queen story time because of online threats to the storytellers and the library staff. Then, a library patron filed an application to have Nobel Prize-winning writer Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* removed from

the Castlegar Library shelves because it depicts a sexual assault by a father on a child. "Tabloid morality panic" is a phrase I ran across that nicely sums up how disinformation can create a tsunami of reaction and impact an institution or a whole community.

I don't know where to begin on how wrong both of these dramas are on so many levels. Almost a century ago novels such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* were labelled "salacious" and banned from circulation in the U.K., the U.S. and elsewhere. But that was 100 years ago, you say? Um, didn't Puffin Books just hire "sensitivity readers" to bowdlerize the language of Roald Dahl's children's books deemed too incorrect for the under-12 set? *The Guardian* informs us that, "Augustus Gloop [is] now 'enormous' instead of 'fat', Mrs Twit no longer 'ugly' and Oompa Loompas are gender neutral." The arbiters of suitability strike again.

For the past 35 years, one week in February has been designated Freedom to Read Week by the Book and Periodical Council, an umbrella organization for writing and publishing in Canada. Among the resources on the Council's website, [freedomtoread.ca](http://freedomtoread.ca), is a list of books, magazines and newspapers that have been challenged or censored over the past decades, along with articles on freedom of expression rights. "Bannings and Burnings in History" is an essential read for anyone who thinks censorship is no longer an issue for schools and libraries.

Speaking of libraries, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations has a published policy on intellectual freedom. It reads in part: "Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources." ("Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries," 2016.) At the risk of being considered unacceptable, amen and hallelujah to that.

Margaret Tessman, editor

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On the Cover: Nadine Tremblay and the cast of *G-Rated*.  
Photo: Almeda Glenn Miller

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SPRING/SUMMER 2023  
ISSUE #43

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ISSN #1709-2116

ARTiculate is produced in Nelson as a project of the West Kootenay Regional Arts Council:  
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The West Kootenay Regional Arts Council acknowledges the generous support of the following funders and corporate sponsors:



Printing generously supported by:

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# CASTLEGAR ART WALK RETURNS

by Maggie Shirley

Never count Castlegar Art Walk out.

The pandemic took its toll on Art Walk in Castlegar, as like many communities it depends on people having access to local businesses. While some surrounding communities adapted Art Walk by featuring artwork in store windows, the Castlegar coordinating committee took a break for the 2020 to 2022 seasons. But for 2023, the Art Walk committee is back with new enthusiasm and new members.

The committee hopes to attract at least as many venues and artists as previous years. “We know it has been difficult for some local businesses to stay open,” says committee member Val Field. “Some of our past venues have shut down. But there

are new businesses opening in Castlegar and the ones who have participated in the past are eager to participate once again. We are so grateful to the shops that participate because without them and their sponsorship, Art Walk couldn’t function.”

The return of Art Walk in Castlegar is a positive sign that our community, its artists and its businesses are alive and flourishing.

This year, Castlegar Art Walk will open on June 2 to coincide with Castlegar Sunfest and the West Kootenay Camera Club show at the Kootenay Gallery of Art. It will continue until the beginning of BC Culture Days on September 22. There will be Art Walk brochures available around town to guide your tour. For more information, check out Castlegar Art Walk at [facebook.com/CastlegarArtwalk](https://facebook.com/CastlegarArtwalk).

## SUMMER YOUTH ART RETREAT

In July, Oxygen Art Centre will facilitate its first Youth Art Retreat at the Narrows Art Retreat, a beautiful space at Grohman Narrows along the Kootenay River west of Nelson. This educational opportunity will be grounded in land-based artistic practice and will focus on encouraging youth engagement, connection and building meaningful connections with the land.

Six youth ages 13 to 17 will have the opportunity to work with professional artists and educators, spend time outdoors learning land-based practices and knowledge, and develop skills, connections and professional development in contemporary art practice.

The retreat aims to reduce barriers to contemporary art education while drawing on issues of decolonization, climate activism and ecology, exploring and amplifying knowledge through art.

Columbia Basin-based artist and educator Amber Santos will serve as the instructor-in-residence. Santos’s extensive experience working with youth and facilitating community arts-based programming will inform the project. Santos will work with Oxygen’s education coordinator Natasha Smith to facilitate mentorship throughout the duration of the project while also supporting visiting artists. Artist Damian John has confirmed his participation as a visiting artist and will facilitate a call-to-action zine workshop.

[oxygenartcentre.org](https://oxygenartcentre.org)

## YASODHARA ASHRAM CELEBRATES

Yasodhara Ashram is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2023. The ashram was founded in 1963 by Swami Sivananda Radha, one of the first Western women to become a swami and a pioneer in the development of the yoga movement in the West. One of the most enduring yoga centres in North America, the ashram continues to be women-led.

To celebrate its 60th year, the ashram invites those who feel called to self-development and spiritual teachings to come experience its unique approach to yoga and community living. Communications team member Dave Sullivan credits the longevity of the ashram to its focus on care and self-led learning. “What distinguishes the ashram is the level of care given to guests and how quickly people can feel at home here,” he says. “In addition, our unique approach to yoga is steeped in helping people tap into their own inner wisdom, not in dogma.”

The ashram’s philosophy is symbolized by the Temple of Light. Travellers on the Kootenay Lake ferry can spot the white temple glowing on the hillside above the East Shore. The temple’s eight doors symbolize how the ashram welcomes people of all cultural and religious backgrounds, ages, genders, sexual orientations and walks of life to experience transformation and healing from the land, teachings and remarkable community.

Yasodhara Ashram welcomes hundreds of guests every year to participate in their on-site and online programs, which include intensive yoga courses, no-fee Karma Yoga (selfless service), guided and self-guided retreats, online series and online day workshops.

527 Walker’s Landing Road, Kootenay Bay

250-227-9224 or toll-free 1-800-661-8711, [yasodhara.org](https://yasodhara.org)

# LEVITY MICRO GALLERY

LEVITY is a pop-surrealism-focused art gallery that opened in Nelson in September 2022. At 15 square metres it certainly lives up to its name. A commercial gallery with juried, curated exhibitions, the featured art is typically “playful, whimsical, weird, cute, but slightly creepy.”

Gallery owner Sarah Campbell has a BFA in visual art from UVic and a BED from UBC. Her partner Christopher Millin has a journalism background and publishes a children's lit magazine called *Crow Toes Quarterly*. He also owned and operated Saint-Germain Café Gallery in Penticton for six years.

“For the past twenty years I’ve wanted to blend paid work with running a gallery to support artists and their dreams,” says Campbell. The stars aligned for her when she A) became an empty nester, B) found a full-time online job, and C) found the perfect tiny space to rent in downtown Nelson.

Pop surrealism is Campbell and Millin’s favourite art genre. “Because pop surrealism is a wide umbrella, I can be really inclusive and include a lot of artists. My goal is to make art accessible for people who might not feel comfortable in an art gallery. Art is a big world and there’s lots of different things happening.”

Three solo shows are planned for 2023 and the gallery will be collaborating with the Nelson Mural Fest by mounting an exhibit of artwork from previous mural painters. Upcoming shows include “Monsters under the Bed” group show, May 20 to June 4, and the Mural Fest Showcase, June 7 to 28.

Wondering about pop surrealism? Check out “Lowbrow Art & Pop Surrealism Explained,” a great 10-minute YouTube art history lesson that reveals all.

566 Baker St., Nelson, 250-488-0513, [levitymicrogallery.com](http://levitymicrogallery.com)



Meaghan Crowe, *Creatures as confused as I am.*

# KASLO RIVER TRAIL TOUR

Kaslo singer-songwriter Diemm has collaborated with Nelson Kootenay Lake Tourism (NKLT) to produce an audio installation on the Kaslo River Trail. Part of the NKLT touring app, the installation launched in spring 2023.

“I walk the River Trail frequently, and the material I’m installing on the trail originated from that place,” says Diemm. “If my Muse is anything, my Muse is a nature mystic. I’m very excited about this project. It’s been my dream to be able to distribute the poems and songs exactly in the places they originate, and the technology has finally arrived!”

Diemm says that the pandemic allowed her to be “a wandering poet.” “I was unable to stay in my house so I spent hours outdoors on the network of trails. I write a lot when I’m walking in the woods, with a pen, or dictating lyrics into my phone.”

NKLT executive director Diana Ducs worked with Diemm to

determine where her poems would best fit on the trail. The six final pieces start at one of the trailheads on Highway 31A between Kaslo and New Denver and meander east along the Kaslo River.

“Some of the pieces have a very meditative quality to them that I haven’t dived into as a live performer. They fit in woods,” says Diemm. The pieces feature layers of folk harp and voice, both spoken and sung.

The Kootenay Lake Road Trip app offers self-guided audio tours around Kootenay Lake. The Driving Tour features over 100 regional points of interest; the Harrop-Procter Tour explores the history of the two tiny lakeside communities; the Mural Tour, in both English and French, highlights nearly 50 murals in Nelson; and the Kaslo River Trail Tour will guide you on a forest bathing journey along the trail. Tours can be started from anywhere along the routes, for as long as you’d like. [nelsonkootenaylake.com/touringapp](http://nelsonkootenaylake.com/touringapp)



# AFKO COMMUNITY PRINT STUDIO

Marcus Dénoimé supervises Marguerite Glazer's screen-printing technique. Photo: Julia Pepler

## CRANBROOK ARTS GRAND OPENING

Cranbrook Arts is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023. The organization acquired a new building in 2019, which underwent extensive renovations thanks in part to community fundraising and a grant from Columbia Basin Trust. The timing of the completion of the renos bumped into the pandemic in 2021, so a delayed grand opening is only now in the works and will feature a Columbia Basin Culture Tour retrospective, demos, free trials and an artisan market.

The gallery is the heart of the 1401-5th Street building, which also features a pottery studio and a workshop space that offers classes for children and seniors. The gift shop now has its own storefront at 1013 Baker Street, with work by over 100 East Kootenay artists and artisans on display.

Kristin Teetaert is the new Cranbrook Arts executive director. She and her program director, Monique Cudbertson, are working to make the gallery a dedicated professional space and to increase community outreach. "Where a lot of work used to be done by volunteers, we now have a big building to coordinate," says Teetaert. "We want to create a good, solid foundation for the arts here, extending beyond our walls and working with other community organizations so people can learn who we are."

1401-5th St./1013 Baker St., Cranbrook, 250-426-4223  
cranbrookarts.com

AFKO.Sérigraphie is a community screen-printing studio created by and within the West Kootenay francophone association (AFKO). The studio opened its doors in June 2022 with the help of a Canadian Heritage grant.

Marcus Dénoimé is a practising artist who for the last eight years has specialized in printmaking. "I love to hitchhike, and while doing so last year I was picked up by the director of AFKO. At the time they had just received the funding to start a community screen-printing studio. She told me they needed a screen printer to run and maintain the studio and I was more or less hired on the spot. I love a good, serendipitous encounter."

Screen printing is a laborious, equipment-dependent practice, perfect for a community studio where materials and tools are available to all. Although the studio operates within the francophone association, everyone is welcome regardless of language and background. "Artists and creative folks in the area can afford our reasonable drop-in fees to use the shared equipment and tackle personal projects," says Dénoimé.

AFKO.Sérigraphie has teamed with Oxygen Art Centre to run a screen-printing course and offers ongoing workshops in the studio space. Dénoimé is technician, teacher and enthusiastic promoter of the studio.

"The model of community print studios is both a beautiful one, and very common around the world, yet as far as I know there aren't any in the Kootenays. There has been a void for a space like this and since our inception, the community reception has been amazing."

AFKO.Sérigraphie

Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

807 Baker St., Nelson, 250-352-3516

Facebook and Instagram @afko.serigraphie

# ARTS REVELSTOKE RECORDS KOOTENAY SOUNDS

Arts Revelstoke is presenting a new initiative called *Kootenay Sounds*, which showcases musicians and their communities in the Kootenays.

Filming and live audio recording of musicians and bands will happen in venues in six different communities in the Kootenays: Revelstoke, Nelson, Rossland/Trail, Cranbrook, Fernie and Golden. The completed regional videos will be posted on Arts Revelstoke's YouTube channel for all to enjoy.

Arts Revelstoke general manager Maggie Davis curated the musical choices. "The most challenging part was to find representation across regions and genres. My research involved reaching out to people who run coffee houses or friends in different regions to dig into the music scene. We placed a big emphasis on emerging musicians."

The recording venues include co-lab working spaces, Fort Steele's Wildhorse Theatre, breweries and more traditional theatre settings. And the musical offerings are just as diverse, mixing big band, reggae, punk, folk and rock sounds. "The importance of the project is to connect the Kootenays through sound. It's a postcard to the region," says Davis.

The *Kootenay Sounds* recordings started with a vision of tiny desk concerts and grew as Canada Council funding enabled the hiring of a sound tech, videographer and crew. "We bring all our own gear and hit the road," says Davis. "The project has been so well received by artists and venues and the bands have been blowing our minds. It's a cool way to support these artists."

In each region, bands or singer/songwriters are invited to perform original songs, and the communities are highlighted as an integral part of the filming.

Post-production will take place over April and May, and the completed videos can be found at [youtube.com/c/ArtsRevelstoke](https://youtube.com/c/ArtsRevelstoke)



eat well. be well.



# SPIRIT WRESTLERS



## Doukhobor Life in Canada

by Margaret Tessman

Ahna Berikoff is a West Kootenay-based retired instructor and academic with deep roots in the Doukhobor community. Much has been written about the Doukhobors in the past that has created disparaging narratives and stereotypes. “To challenge those stereotypes we need to broaden the scope of understanding of the Doukhobors and who they are as a people,” says Berikoff. She wrote her Ph.D. thesis on the Doukhobors and has worked as an associate professor at MacEwan University in Alberta and prior to that as a child and youth educator in B.C.

“My understanding of inequity and oppression informs my work. When I teach, I am transparent about my Doukhobor identity. It’s key to me and how I relate in the world.” Berikoff raised her sons in the Russian language and with traditional Doukhobor cultural values. She sees balanced historical information as a fundamental ingredient of community connection. “It’s important to me for adults, youth and children to have knowledge of where they come from, have pride in their identities and not internalize the disparaging discourses that have been generated over time.”

To help present a non-biased view of Doukhobor history and culture, Berikoff has collaborated in the production of a digital project, Doukhobor Life in Canada. Part one, completed in May 2022, comprises an introductory video and four 12-minute

videos that describe early Doukhobor history: their trajectory across Russia, their belief systems, oppression, key events and immigration to Canada. Each video is highlighted with photos and song and the website also features “Community Conversations,” recorded interviews with two West Kootenay couples and an individual from Saskatchewan about how Doukhoborism informs their lives. “I hope that the project will shed a different kind of light about the Doukhobors, move away from the debilitating narratives and engender curiosity, empathy and conversations,” says Berikoff. “We want to create a different kind of narrative about the Doukhobors with Doukhobor input and agency.”

Part two of the project is in the works and is centred on the heritage and culture of the Doukhobors in Canada, specifically Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C., including the Kootenay area.

Berikoff and long-time colleague Sharon Nazaroff settled on presenting the material in a digital format as easily accessible and learnable for people. “It’s a great educational opportunity,” says Berikoff. “People can watch from home or in community venues.” Nazaroff is an early childhood educator and currently a trustee for School District 8 (Kootenay Lake). Extensive research, consultation with Doukhobor scholars and historians, writing, filming and editing took place in the development of the project. As well as Berikoff (research, writing, editing, directing) and Nazaroff (administration), the core crew included Nelson filmmaker Carlo Alcos (videography and film editing) and narrator and videographer Robert Chursinoff, and narrators Faith Malakoff with a Sons of Freedom Doukhobor heritage and Ryan Dutchak with an Independent Doukhobor heritage. “Carlo has a fine ethic and an affinity for social justice issues,” says Berikoff. “Both Carlo and Rob created an atmosphere of ease for narrators Faith and Ryan.” Chursinoff is a writer and professional musician who recently published his first novel, *The Descendants*.

The history of the Doukhobors in Canada began in the late 19th century with the migration of the sect from Russia to the Prairies and beyond. Oppressed in their homeland because of their cultural beliefs and practices, the Doukhobors found refuge in their new home, but also clashed with colonialism in many areas of their lives. “When the Doukhobors arrived in Canada I don’t think they knew what they would be facing,” says Berikoff. Their differing responses to governmental pressures, assimilation and the consequences of resistance impacted the different forms and directions Doukhobor groups eventually took.



Above: Narrators Ryan Dutchak and Faith Malakoff take a break during filming.  
Opposite: Bread, salt and water are the traditional Doukhobor sacred symbols.  
Photos: Ahna Berikoff

There are three distinct Doukhobor groups: the Independent Doukhobors, the USCC (Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ) and the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors. Individual Doukhobors may have roots in more than one of the groups, while identifying more strongly with a particular group or not identifying with any group. Although there are differences, each group identifies as Doukhobor in their fundamental belief systems and values. Doukhobor means “spirit wrestler” in Russian, a term originally applied to the Doukhobors by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1785 and meant as a derogatory label. Doukhobors came to embrace the name as meaning to wrestle with rather than against the spirit, along with the sacred symbols of bread, salt and water that are present at Doukhobor services and that represent the basic principles of hospitality, respect and “Toil and Peaceful Life.”

Berikoff’s aim for the project is to give Doukhobors and non-Doukhobors alike the best version of Doukhobor culture and history, and to ensure that old stereotypes are put to rest. “I want to contribute to fostering a sense of understanding, pride and interest in our Doukhobor identities.

“It’s important to us to tell our own stories in our own voices in our own way.”

The videos and “Community Conversations” can be found on the project website, [doukhoborlife.ca](http://doukhoborlife.ca).

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# ADAPTING THROUGH ADVERSITY

Nelson Civic Theatre's 2021 Home for the Holidays Celebration featured a live-streamed cartoon drawing lesson.  
Photo: Carlos Rubio

## The Civic Theatre shines on

by Bill Macpherson

The pandemic. The seemingly never-ending event that has shaken our world for the past three years.

It has wreaked havoc on individuals, businesses, organizations and society as a whole. It still continues to impact us all.

Turbulent times require determined people, certainly. The staff and board members of Nelson Civic Theatre Society (NCTS) have upped their game in numerous ways in the face of this crisis that has taken down so many.

"It's been like a rollercoaster. Scary, filled with peaks and valleys, yet an amazing, exhilarating ride," says NCTS executive director Eleanor Stacey.

"As operations were being shuttered, one of the things we—staff and board members together—vowed to do was to remain visible and relevant. We've been adaptive and successful in weathering the pandemic storm."

Stacey is quick to give kudos to the nine members of her team. She also lauds the steady hand of the board of directors for steering the society, and Nelson cinema-viewing opportunities, through the rough waters the pandemic precipitated.

"Their belief we could emerge stronger was critical. An already solid partnership between staff and board members has improved."

New directions and new initiatives were critical if the organization was going to persevere. When your primary purpose of bringing together large groups of people in an enclosed space is abruptly verboten, a major rethink and enhanced creativity are absolutely necessary.

Certainly, the strong membership numbers have suffered. Pre-pandemic the society had 1,500 members, a reflection of the artistic, cultured vibe Nelson and area is renowned for.

"Even with ongoing outreach to all our members we probably lost two hundred when we couldn't screen films," says programming director Jason Asbell. "So we needed to think outside the box and ramp up creative solutions."

"I remember clearly how we were all set to screen the 2018 documentary film *Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché* directed by Pamela B. Green. I thought, could we use the blank wall on the west side of the buildings up on Vernon Street at Hall? There's room for cars down below, but how to do the sound?" Collaboration with Kootenay Co-op Radio ultimately saw them broadcast the audio simultaneously on air as the film was projected and voilà! The drive-in program was born. Adaptive creativity personified. "We're quite proud of that solution."

As they should be. There was more to come, too.

While the pandemic raged, NCTS staff entered into discussions with Reo's Videos then-owner Cole Johnson. He was looking to sell the business. Ultimately, the decision was made to purchase the 16,000-plus title collection. This would later tie in with the construction of the Shoebox Theatre at 225 Hall Street, a 22-seat venue where patrons could view rentals with friends and the society could show films of an independent stripe to appropriately sized (as per ever-changing pandemic restrictions) gatherings.

"We recognized the linkage between the archival trove of films that Reo's collection is and an intimate space wasn't necessarily a revenue generator," says Stacey. "More important, though, was the preservation of this eclectic, expansive video library, and a means for people to watch movies while the Civic was closed."

“It’s a fantastic place to share exclusive viewings, so we’ve put together packages to help people imagine different ways to gather with friends at the Shoebox.”

Both Stacey and Asbell acknowledge the importance of two Telefilm Canada grants. They enabled the creation of the second theatre and, as important, permitted the organization to explore partner and program expansion plans while riding out the revenue loss of extended pandemic-imposed closures.

These initiatives are expanding the scope and involvement of NCTS within and beyond Nelson. In 2022 the Vancouver International Film Festival’s Pop-Up program screened six films at the Civic, including Indigenous director Trevor Mack’s *Portraits From A Fire*. Expanded partnership activities are planned with VIFF in the future.

NCTS is an active member of the Network of Independent Canadian Exhibitors (NICE). The organization—an alliance of Canadian independent cinemas, festivals and professional programmers—acts as an industry body on behalf of film exhibitors through information and resource sharing.

This partnership has greatly expanded NCTS’ profile and connectivity across the country, providing enhanced interaction with 80 like-minded organizations, and government bodies at all three levels. Locally, NCTS was instrumental in the creation of the recently launched Kootenay Regional Film Commission (KRFC). Stacey, Kootenay Screen-Based Industry (KSBI) Initiative regional

program manager Lynn Trinh and collaborating organization Kootenay Rockies Tourism work closely with KRFC commissioner John Wittmayer to promote the industry and secure opportunities for local filmmakers/productions, reaping the attendant economic benefits for the region.

Finally, NCTS’ Artist Residency Program is in its third year. The first cohort of four artists continue to meet and learn from one another and a second cohort of six area artists—writers, actors, dancers, visual artists—has begun virtual weekly meetings to discuss individual creative processes and to share techniques and ideas.

The program is designed to be non-extractive, with no reporting, no deliverables, no milestones required of any of the artists. As Stacey says, “This is unique because its intent is the process of creation. We asked each resident to simply identify a question in their creative process to focus on through their residency.”

There’s no denying the pandemic has been impactful on NCTS. Their many progressive initiatives, however, have been transformative and strengthening. The pledge to remain relevant at the onset rings true—through inspiration, reasoned approaches, risk-taking, networking, hard work and belief.

Those efforts deserve the full-fledged support of the entire community. After all, who doesn’t love the cinematic experience?

[civictheatre.ca](http://civictheatre.ca)

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# ART EN PLEIN AIR

## The mountains are calling and I must paint

by Maureen Cameron

In 2020 Abby Wilson, a well-known and active Nelson painter and outdoor enthusiast, felt a call to enhance her creative life. During these recent more isolating times, she missed the richness of her usual contacts with the arts community. The launch of the Kootenay Plein Air Artists and Urban Sketchers Facebook page was inspired by Wilson's extensive plein air practice, as well as her experiences while hiking and living in the Kootenays. She wanted to inspire others to know about and experience the beauty, fun and challenge when one ventures outdoors, leaving the four walls of the studio behind to paint or sketch in urban settings or landscapes. Currently the site has 268 members from the East and West Kootenays but is most active around the Nelson area.

Plein air, the call to paint or sketch outdoors, has been a choice of visual artists, whether alone or in groups, throughout history. It came more to light in early 19th century France and Italy with the Impressionists, who were interested in capturing ephemeral qualities of the environment to reflect the effects of natural light. Paintings of contemporary life and landscapes exemplified this approach in works by Monet and Rousseau, for example.

Prior to the early 1840s, artists faced challenges in achieving their goals while on location, such as transporting paints made from raw pigments ground and mixed in the studio, and managing their wet canvasses while travelling. Inventions around that time

not only solved some problems, but eventually led to a growing interest in and increased ability of artists, whether intrepid adventurers or urban sketchers, to venture outside in all kinds of weather, locales, seasons and times of day. The more flexible bristle brush with a metal ferrule, the invention of the paint tube and over time vibrant new paints, along with portable easels and efficient carrying systems, created a revolution in the painting world.

Steve Quattrocchi, another Nelson artist and art teacher, was an early supporter of the Kootenay Plein Air Artists and Urban Sketchers page. Quattrocchi has been painting all his life, in and out of the studio, while travelling, studying and working in Vancouver with an inclusive art program before coming to Nelson. In addition to his music, art and photography, he has a love of the outdoors. Upon first meeting Abby Wilson, he recognized shared values in her initiative and imagined the creative and social opportunities for individual artists and the community that could come from connecting through the focus of plein air.

Quattrocchi speaks of appreciating the immediacy of the outdoor experience with no pretension or airs. "It's just me, with my choice of tools and environment." He sees art as an ongoing exploration of sensory input and how to express it, how painting a landscape from within seems to capture its essence in a very real way. Every artist has their own approach and motivation for their

subject matter, yet it's an opportunity for people to learn from each other in these shared experiences.

Eileen Gidman, watercolour artist, teacher and mentor from Creston, credits her long-time practice of on-location sketching and painting as influencing her entire body of work: inks and watercolours, fabric, canvas and nature journaling. Like Quattrocchi, the immediacy of the outdoor experience, whether in landscape or in urban settings, led to her understanding that she prefers to paint what she knows. Plein air supports her to draw inspiration from the feelings, the visual memories and the attention to the details of what is before her. It is the knowledge of place in the moment that has honed her ability to know what is important to her.

In contrast to studio work where some aspects can be controlled, the thought of painting outside may seem daunting. Wilson compares plein air painting to a gym workout for landscape painters. It's the ultimate challenge: racing against the light and conditions and open to the mercy of the elements. A worthy endeavour for those with an inclination to engage in uncertainty and unpredictability, unleashing their artistic soul through constraints while following their particular call. Wilson's call is the mountains; others might be drawn to street scenes caught in a certain light, a gesture between friends in a café or shedding light on social issues.

"We painted at Whitewater ski resort one weekend in a blizzard," Wilson says. "My painting got covered in sticky snowflakes which absorbed the pigment while outside and then melted into paint soup when brought indoors. I've also had an easel blow over in the wind, knocking my painting in the sand at Taghum Beach 'butter side down.' And of course, the great adventures hiking paint up into the mountains where the bright paint attracts insects to land on the wet surface, turning the paintings into mixed-media pieces with fragments of mosquito." Responses to Wilson's posted images of her "paint soup" were sympathetic, some even complimentary, suggesting that a new technique had been discovered.

The success of the Kootenay Plein Air Artists and Urban Sketchers public page is evident in the growing number of members, and it is proving to be an active platform to share ideas, ask questions, promote or be inspired to create plein air gatherings, host workshops and post links. The planned events are shared experiences where everyone is welcome. Group events build confidence. There are tricks of the trade to be learned in navigating location choices, supplies and managing expectations.

Looking forward, Wilson imagines growing the online artistic community conversation, inspiring more monthly paint-outs and workshops created and hosted in different communities. She envisions an annual painting retreat in Nelson's backcountry cabins with invited guest artist teachers. Quattrocchi imagines growing on the supportive culture in Nelson, with the potential of exhibits and critiquing events, and continuing to engage the community and participate in the already rich art and culture of the Kootenays.

Facebook: Kootenay Plein Air Artists and Urban Sketchers or hello@abbywilson.ca



Above: Painting fall foliage at Cottonwood Falls Park in Nelson. During ...

Opposite: ... And after.

Photos: Andrew Woodward



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# KOOTENAY ARTISANS AT WORK

## Slow down and take the time to learn about traditional artisan trades

by Galadriel Watson

Where does clay come from? What are the steps needed to make a hat? How do you bake organic bread from scratch? To answer questions like these, several artisans in the Kootenays are using bilingual signs and one-on-one interactions to educate people about traditional crafts.

“It’s no longer ‘Come and buy art,’” says Diane Walters, potter and owner of eARTh Community Clay Studios in Nelson. Rather, “It’s an experience of ‘Meet the artist and here’s the story and let me tell you a little bit more.’ And they walk away with

not only a product, but having learned something, having been educated about that process or product.”

Currently, a handful of Kootenay artisans have banded together under the banner of Économusée, a Quebec-based organization—now international—that promotes traditional artisan trades. Its members are called “artisans at work.”

“Our crafts are based on age-old skills,” says Liz Cohoe, hatter and owner of Lillie & Cohoe, based in Nelson—even if they may benefit from modern equipment.

As the musée part of the Économusée name indicates (“museum” in English), participants not only run their businesses and sell their wares but educate people along the way. The hat shop, for example, “really is set up as an exhibit,” Cohoe explains. “There’s information that you can read. We show our work environment.

We show how things are begun in the design. We have lots of things to do in here. It's the discovery of the self through playing with the product. There is no pressure to buy, but permission to discover."

Levi Nicoll is owner of the Kootenay Bakery Café Co-op in Nelson. "I call baking one of the dying arts," he says, as he finds it very difficult to hire skilled professionals. Educating the public is important in keeping the trade alive. "How do we teach people about what we do in an easy and absorbable manner?" The answer was to join Économusée. At the moment, signs do a lot of the explaining in his bakery. As staffing and time allows, "I would love to add workshops, maybe a chance for someone to learn how to make something."

As for pottery, Walters offers many options. There are signs, of course, such as on the history of ceramics or the steps required to make a piece. She also offers classes and workshops and has a rental suite that enables folks to stay for ceramic retreats or "art-cation vacations." Rather than buying a bowl at Walmart, here "you meet the person behind it, you learn the craft, you understand the extra value and the ethics of where your money is spent," says Walters.

The written information at each site is in both English and French, and there have even been French events at the locations. This is partly thanks to Économusée's Quebec origins, partly because the participants got funding to be as bilingual as possible, and greatly because of the "value of inclusion," Walters says. Accessibility is also a priority, with the hat shop and bakery already accessible and the pottery shop taking the necessary steps. The broadest range of people should be able to feel at home.

Now, the small group intends to grow. A fine woodworker is already in the process of joining: Philippe Charmet of Salmo, who owns Emotions in Wood. More artisans are invited to get in touch to find out what it takes to become a member of Économusée and the local Kootenay group, and how beneficial it is.

Also on the go is the development of a Kootenay Artisans at Work Tour. Year-round, visitors to the region, as well as locals, will be encouraged to travel to all of the region's Économusée sites. "We want people to say, 'Hey, let's go on an Artisans at Work Tour,'" says Walters, "because we love them and we learn something every time."

A web page on [kootenayarts.com](http://kootenayarts.com) and social media presence are in the works, and the group plans to promote the tour through visitors' centres and tourism agencies. One day, the tour may even extend beyond the Kootenays to include the entire province, with the bonus of a "passport" that will motivate folks to maximize their number of stops.

While one-on-one interactions will likely require booking, the locations love it when people drop in, too. "We provide hands-on destination experiences," Walters says. "It's the idea that you combine art and education together. Come and meet the artists. Have an experience. Go on a tour." And obtain an even deeper connection to artisans and the items they make.

To learn more about the Économusée sites in the Kootenays and around the world visit [artisansaloeuvre.com/en/artisans](http://artisansaloeuvre.com/en/artisans).



Above: Diane Walters' garden and clay studio in Nelson.

Photo: Diane Walters

Opposite: Kneading a loaf at Kootenay Bakery.

Photo: Kootenay Bakery

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## ONGOING/ RECURRING

### Performance

#### Capitol Theatre Season Series

Year-round  
Capitol Theatre, 421 Victoria St., Nelson  
250-362-6363  
boxoffice@capitoltheatre.ca  
capitoltheatre.ca

### Art

#### Solo Art Exhibitions

Mar. 29–May 28  
Art Gallery Kimberley, 167 Deer Park Ave.,  
Kimberley  
250-432-9225  
info@artgallerykimberley.com  
artgallerykimberley.com

### Performance

#### Beyond the Legal Limit Columbia Basin Tour

Mar. 30–Apr. 14  
Langham Theatre, Kaslo; Kicking Horse  
Culture, Golden; Taghum Hall, Taghum; and  
Kootenay River Secondary School Theatre,  
Creston  
250-505-4351  
pathenman00@gmail.com  
pathenman.com

### Public Engagement

#### Our Trust, Our Future

Apr. 3–June 24  
Various locations region-wide, and online  
1-800-505-8998  
future@ourtrust.org  
future.ourtrust.org

### Performance

#### Performing Arts Trail and Jazz at the Griff Series

Apr. 18–May 18  
Bailey Theatre, 1501 Cedar Ave., Trail  
250-368-9669  
info@trail-arts.com  
thebailey.ca

### Art

#### Castlegar Sculpturewalk Self-guided Walking Tour

May 2023–Apr. 2024  
Begins at Kootenay Market Plaza, 600 block,  
Columbia Ave., Castlegar  
250-231-5669  
info@castlegarsculpturewalk.com  
sculpturewalkcastlegar.com

### Art

#### Invermere First Fridays With ArtSpots

First Friday of each month, May 5–Dec. 1  
Various locations, Invermere  
250-342-4423  
info@columbiavalleyarts.com  
artspotsinvermere.com

### Art

#### Eversfield Ceramics, Ceramics Workshops and Summer Schools

May 6–7, July 10–14, Aug. 21–25,  
9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.  
Eversfield Ceramics, 1522 Airport Road,  
Creston  
403-968-1657  
daviddbarnes9@aol.com  
eversfieldceramics.com

### Art

#### Exhibition Series

May 12–Sept. 9  
Studio Connexion Art Gallery, 203 Fifth Ave.  
NW, Nakusp  
250-265-8888  
studioconnexion@telus.net  
studioconnexiongallery.com

### Music

#### Music in the Park: Nakusp

Wednesday evenings, July 5–Aug. 30,  
6:30–9 p.m.  
Nakusp Park Gazebo, Nakusp  
250-265-0067  
aldacs2020@gmail.com  
arrowlakesartsCouncil.webs.com

### Craft

#### Selkirk Weavers & Spinners Studio & Giftshop

Various dates from June–Sept.,  
10 a.m.–4 p.m.  
Doukhobor Discovery Centre, 112 Heritage  
Way, Castlegar  
250-231-4643  
selkirkweavers@gmail.com  
facebook.com/SelkirkWeavers  
instagram.com/selkirkweaversspinners

### Market

#### Golden Farmers' Market

Wednesdays, Mid-June–Oct.,  
10 a.m.–3 p.m.  
Spirit Square, Timberframe Pedestrian  
Bridge, Golden  
goldenfarmersmarket@gmail.com  
goldenbcfarmersmarket.com

### Art

#### Hidden Garden Gallery Summer Season

June 20–Sept. 17, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.  
Hidden Garden Gallery, 112 Slocan Ave.,  
New Denver  
hiddengardengallerynd@gmail.com  
hiddengardengallery.ca

### Art

#### ArtWalk 2023

June 24–Sept. 10  
Various locations, Nelson  
artwalk@ndac.ca  
ndac.ca/nelson-artwalk

### Performance

#### REVV.Live Outside

June 30–Aug. 25, 7–9 p.m.  
Grizzly Plaza, Revelstoke  
250-814-9325  
info@artsrevelstoke.com  
artsrevelstoke.com/programs/revv-live-  
outside

### Music

#### Mountain Music Sunset Series

Saturdays, July–Aug., 7 p.m.  
Slocan Lake Arts Centre, 408 4 St., Silverton  
slocanlakeartscentre@gmail.com  
slocanlakeartsCouncil.ca

## MAY

### Festival

#### Creston Valley Blossom Festival

May 19–22  
Various locations, Creston  
250-428-4284  
info@blossomfestival.ca  
blossomfestival.ca

### Fashion

#### Haute Trash! Trash Fashion Show and Competition

May 20, 7 p.m.  
Capitol Theatre, 421 Victoria St., Nelson  
hautetrashnelson@gmail.com  
hautetrash.ca

## JUNE

### Event

#### Kootenay Co-op Radio Block Party

June 3  
Lions Park, Nelson  
250-352-9600  
staff@kootenaycoopradio.com  
kootenaycoopradio.com

### Festival

#### Wicked Woods Music Festival

June 8–11  
Raven's Nest Resort & Campground, 3901  
Kootenay Hwy 93/95, Fairmont Hot Springs  
403-462-1591  
marketing@wickedwoods.ca  
wickedwoods.ca

### Event

#### Cruisin' the Columbia Car Show

June 17, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.  
Esplanade, Downtown Trail  
250-368-7399  
shipstamp@telus.net  
smokensteelautoclub.com

## JULY

### Festival

#### Starbelly Jam Music Festival

July 28–30  
Crawford Bay Park, Crawford Bay  
info@starbellyjam.org  
starbellyjam.org

### Event

#### Honouring Mother Nature Through Art and Song

July 29  
Delree's Native Art Gallery, 399 Galena  
Shores Dr., Galena Bay  
250-369-0021  
info@delreedumont.com  
delreedumont.com

### Event

#### Columbia Basin Culture Tour

July 29–30, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.  
Various locations region-wide  
250-352-2421  
admin@wkartsCouncil.com  
cbculturetour.com

## AUGUST

### Festival

#### Nelson International Mural Festival

Aug. 11–13  
Various locations, Nelson  
info@ndac.ca  
nelsonmuralfest.ca

### Festival

#### Flats Fest 2023

Aug. 18–20  
Canal Flats Ball Diamond, Canal Flats  
250-270-0699  
flatscommunitysociety@gmail.com  
flatsfest.ca

## SEPTEMBER

### Market

#### Harvest Market Kootenay Artisan Fair

Sept. 3  
Lakeside Park, Nelson  
250-505-5444  
kootenaychristmasfair@hotmail.com  
kootenayartisanfair.com

### Performance

#### Queen City Burlesque Expo

Sept. 8–9  
The Royal, 330 Baker St., Nelson  
Capitol Theatre, 421 Victoria St., Nelson  
250-777-1027  
queencityexpo@gmail.com  
queencityburlesque.ca

### Festival

#### Hills Garlic Festival

Sept. 10, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.  
Centennial Park, New Denver  
250-358-2459  
coordinator@hillsgarlicfest.ca  
hillsgarlicfest.ca

### Festival

#### Elephant Mountain Lit Fest

Sept. 11–17  
Various locations, Nelson  
elephantmountainliteraryfest@gmail.com  
emlfestival.com

### Festival

#### Harrop Harvest Festival

Sept. 17, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.  
Harrop & District Community Centre, Harrop  
250-229-4740  
downunder2006@shaw.ca

# MURAL FOR A MOUNTAIN TOWN

To stoke her imagination, abstract artist Jessa Gilbert hiked the mountain peaks and valleys surrounding the Village of Salmo. Her goal was to develop a concept for a larger-than-life public art piece that celebrated the natural beauty of the area.

Now, a stunning 10 x 75-foot mural depicts the valley's streams, creeks and mountain ranges across the top of a centrally located building that houses the Salmo Valley Youth & Community Centre (SVYCC).

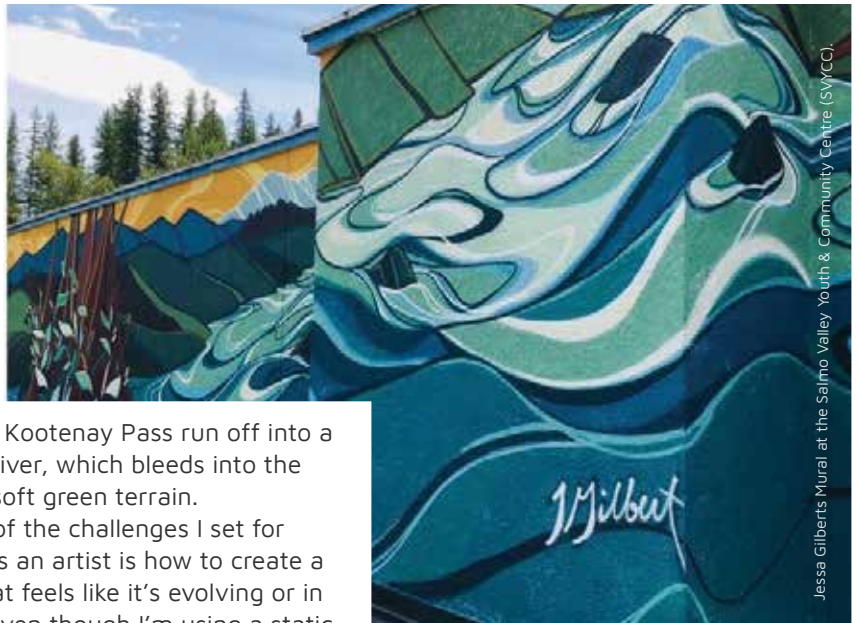
Spearheaded by the Salmo District Arts Council, a non-profit society devoted to supporting community arts and culture, the project was backed by a Public Art Grant from the Trust and complements three other murals already on the community building.

The mural captures the natural surroundings in a "shift in time" abstract piece that delicately transitions left-to-right from winter through summer. The snow-covered

peaks of Kootenay Pass run off into a flowing river, which bleeds into the valley's soft green terrain.

"One of the challenges I set for myself as an artist is how to create a piece that feels like it's evolving or in motion even though I'm using a static material," she adds. "This piece emulates the rolling terrain features nestled within the Kootenays, so there's a lot of circuitous movement and organic shapes. I want that playfulness and the ebb and flow of line to show things moving. I also take how we read things with our eyes into account; a curved line is going to have you move across the piece a lot differently than angulated lines."

The community centre houses many programs that benefit Salmo residents and annually sees over 15,000 people pass through its doors. Its latest mural represents the environment and has become a point of pride for the youth and residents who frequent the community centre.



Jessa Gilberts Mural at the Salmo Valley Youth & Community Centre (SVYCC).

"Art is for everyone—it's free, it's accessible, and it shows the community's diversity," says Gilbert. "The goal is to celebrate wilderness and adventure and to have the pieces I make feel joyful. I want them to be rich in colour and light and have an uplifting tone that evokes the awe we feel when we experience mountain landscapes or grand vistas."

The Trust recently worked with Jessa Gilbert to commission a deck of #basinlife playing cards to celebrate the wonderful place where we live, work and play. Order your free deck today by scanning the QR code below.



Read more remarkable stories of people and places in the Columbia Basin and order your free #basinlife playing cards today!

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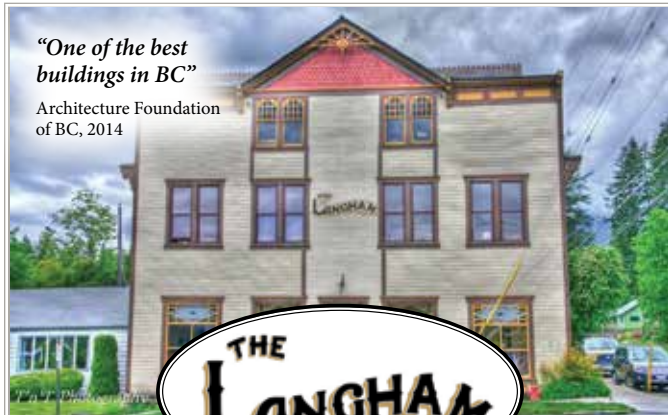
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Tsuneko Kokubo, *Granville and Broadway*, Oil on Canvas, 1960

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# G-RATED

Puberty, sex-ed and a cast of puppets

by Jocelyn Doll

Whether it was your parents perching at the end of your bed to talk about the birds and the bees, or your teacher pouring coloured water on a feminine hygiene product, no one really wants to remember sex-ed, let alone teach it.

“It’s awkwaaaaaaard,” sings Almeda Glenn Miller, co-writer and director.

“Like the time I called my teacher ‘Mom,’” Nadine Tremblay, co-writer and puppeteer, sings in response.

“It’s awkwaaaaaaard!”

“Like the time I ripped my pants right up the bum.”

Where some educators and parents see an uncomfortable conversation, Tremblay sees an opportunity to perform, alongside wide-eyed, brightly coloured cast mates who have a knack for handling uncomfortable situations.

*G-Rated*, the musical puppet show, handles topics such as puberty, healthy relationships, identity and friendship. It walks the fine line between light, sensitive and even funny, without being vapid.

“We’re attempting to give kids and teachers a language to begin the conversation about boundaries, consent, puberty, identity and sex,” says Glenn Miller.

The project has been in the works since 2019, inspired by the

results of a survey that indicated both parents and teachers would rather have the other teach sex-ed.

At that point in Tremblay’s career as a performer, writer and producer with Iron Mountain Theatre, she had only worked with one sock puppet, but the results made her confident that puppets were the way to go.

“Puppets are a great medium for introducing uncomfortable or awkward situations and music of course is a great way of telling stories,” she says.

Glenn Miller and Tremblay met twice a week during the pandemic, sometimes in Glenn Miller’s basement, sometimes over Zoom, writing scenes and sewing puppets.

Though the process of creating was a good way to get in touch with the characters, the puppets didn’t turn out as the duo expected.

“They had two left feet and big fat necks and skinny little limbs,” Tremblay explains. “They were just...”

“They were charming,” Glenn Miller suggests.

“They were weird looking, and they weren’t very well built,” Tremblay reminds her. “Like we would be performing and somebody’s ear would fall off.”

“It was just the most ridiculous thing that both of us had ever done in our lives,” Glenn Miller says. “And we just had a riot.”

Neither Glenn Miller nor Tremblay claims to be a seamstress. Glenn Miller taught at Selkirk College, more prone to writing fiction, essays or poetry than scripts, with a stint writing and performing with a small troupe of actors many years ago. Tremblay has written, produced and toured several musicals through Iron Mountain Theatre and works as an arts administrator for The Bailey Theatre in Trail.

Where Glenn Miller ran wild with ideas, at one point working on six different plays at the same time, Tremblay quickly (and Glenn Miller says “kindly”) pointed out when a scene would be better suited for an adult show.

“Nadine is a very astute performer,” says Glenn Miller. “She knows what she likes and doesn’t like so I’ve learned to send out trial balloons with her to see what lands and what doesn’t. It’s been a very open and collaborative process. The ideas flow between us quite readily.”

Cajoling each other through the pandemic, the team reached two milestones: they finished the manuscript, and they realized their handmade puppets weren’t going to cut it.

With funds raised through a Kickstarter campaign, they ordered custom puppets from Evelinka Puppets. There are seven puppets in total: Ms. Tremblay, Norbert, Yarrow, Penelope Wren, Young Penelope, Richard Tracy and Gerald. Some were based on famous people such as Bill Nye and Barbra Streisand, and some were inspired by people closer to home, such as the child of a friend, who has “wonky teeth and freckles and red hair.”

With their new cast in place, they performed the first half of the show, going over the script word for word, with a group of teachers and sex educators.

Much to their surprise they weren’t skewered, even for some of the more awkward scenes.

“They were just pumped about it,” Glenn Miller says.

It was around the time they were incorporating feedback into the play that Tremblay realized it wasn’t a one-woman show, so Phil Loosely joined the team.

“After a read-through of the script I was sold on the concept and was quickly welcomed into the creative process of developing the show and finding the characters’ personalities and mannerisms,” Loosely says.

Though being on stage is nothing new for the game-show host and improv performer, puppets are new, and it has been a long time since he’s adhered to a script.

With a stacked team and a completed manuscript, rehearsals came next, and the trio hope to perform their show to classrooms and gather feedback from their target audience: 10- to 13-year-olds.

The goal is to be in theatres and gymnasiums, performing *G-Rated* during the 2023–24 school year. This spring they are presenting 10 minutes of the show at the ArtStarts Showcase, where teachers and other interested parties will get the chance to sample the show and potentially book a performance.

Tremblay is already thinking next steps. “Because we have done this one and we have so many ideas for future shows, we could write ten kids’ shows and certainly have all that inappropriate material for ten adult shows. But who knows? We are just starting at one and we are going to see what happens.”

For more information on *G-Rated* contact Almeda Glenn Miller, [almedacowper0603@gmail.com](mailto:almedacowper0603@gmail.com), or Nadine Tremblay, [nadine.tremblay@gmail.com](mailto:nadine.tremblay@gmail.com).

Opposite: Phil Loosely and Nadine Tremblay have their hands full.

Below: Nadine meets with the cast.

Photos: Almeda Glenn Miller





Photo: Josée Gulayets Photography

# DÉJÀ LOUVE

## Burlesque is everybody

by Erin Maconachie

When burlesque performer and producer Déjà Louve moved to the West Kootenay from Vancouver, she was delighted to discover a small but vibrant local scene.

She credits the late Scarlet Mary Rose and Erin Thompson—Mz. Iris Wilde—with that. “They managed to maintain an underground burlesque scene here for a really long time,” says Déjà. “Then a couple of city folk moved in—me being one of them—who had a passion for burlesque and blended it with what they had already spent so much time and energy building.”

Déjà started off in the film industry in animation and visual effects. “When I joined the dance world, I was like, ‘Oh, this is where I belong,’” she says. “I need to be on the stage.”

Déjà began performing, and volunteered for the Vancouver International Burlesque Festival, the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas and the BurlyCon convention in Seattle. “I got accepted into the Edmonton Burlesque Festival and the Ottawa Burlesque Festival,” she says. “And then I met my partner. He’s a local boy, born in Nelson, raised in Salmo. So here we are.”

Déjà brought her passion, ideas and energy to the Kootenay burlesque scene.

“I’m so grateful to have become friends with Scarlet and Erin, and to learn what they had already done here,” she says. “But being able to bring my own twist to it was important to me. I create my own opportunities, that’s just who I am. If I don’t have what I need, I make it happen.”

Déjà offered the first Burlesque Weekend Intensive in Salmo in 2018 and started putting on small shows at the Salmo Hotel. She also saw an opportunity to host a burlesque expo in Nelson, featuring both local artists and touring professionals, all of whom she was pleased to be able to pay.

*Lust and Burlesque* was held for one night at Nelson’s Civic Theatre in September 2018.

“That went really well,” says Déjà. “It was super fun, and I felt like it was the beginning of building my brand.”

One year later, Déjà produced the Queen City Burlesque Expo for two nights at the Capitol, featuring World Famous \*BOB\*, a burlesque icon from Texas.

“She is a pillar in the community for her work in not only burlesque but in the queer community. That show was so special because I had so many activists in it.”

The third Queen City Burlesque Expo was held in 2022, and the fourth event is coming up in September 2023 with support from

Continued on page 24



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Photo: Josée Gulayets Photography

From page 22

Columbia Basin Trust through the Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance (CKCA).

“When I do something, I go all in. I have really high expectations of myself and of a show in general. If I ask people to pay thirty dollars a ticket and ask sponsors to contribute and look to get funding, I want to make sure that you have the best time that you’ve ever had with the biggest smile on your face, and you’re excited to come back for more.”

Inspired by a performance by Indigenous performer Lou Lou la Duchesse de Riere at the Vancouver Burlesque Festival, Déjà produced *Reclaim: A Powerful Evening of Indigenous Burlesque Arts* in 2019. In May 2022 she produced *Spring Fling Reunion* at the Capitol Theatre in Nelson, which featured the final performance of legendary local burlesque performer Scarlet Mary Rose, who passed away soon afterwards.

“It ended up being a really big deal,” says Déjà. “It was a huge, beautiful show with performers from Quesnel, from Calgary, from Toronto. And then we had Scarlet, who just blew the night away.”

Déjà feels that burlesque has universal appeal and opportunity. “For me, it’s a catch-all art form. Whatever it is you have to offer—whether you are trying to express any aspect of yourself in any capacity—burlesque will have you. It helps to free you from the social constructs of what beauty standards are, of what art is. It pushes you out of your comfort zone.”

“I love burlesque because it helps you become your most expressive self,” she says. “It helps people find validity in their own existence. It is a powerful tool for self-expression. There’s no limits. One of our mandates is about acceptance and representation: any age, any body type, any form of expression.”

A recent Déjà production at the Key City Theatre in Cranbrook, *A Love Affair*, featured Jacqueline Boxx, an artist from Baltimore who performs in a wheelchair. “And then we had a performer in her fifties, and then we had larger-bodied folk,” says Déjà. “The whole point is, everybody, everybody, everybody. It’s important that we have representation, and I always try to highlight or feature BIPOC and queer folks.”

This May, Déjà will travel south to the Panama Burlesque Festival where she will perform an act that she developed with CKCA funding. Déjà performed the piece for the first time at *Spring Fling Reunion*. “I was able to assess it and review it and get some guidance,” she says. “Now I’m tweaking the act to further perfection, so that I can hit the stage again.”

“There’s a lot of passion in the Kootenays,” says Déjà. She credits both the local audiences and the performers themselves. “It’s twofold: I’m grateful for the support for the arts in these areas, and I’m constantly learning from the people I’m growing alongside. You can’t ask for anything more than that. It’s humbling and helps me become a better performer as well.”

Find more Déjà at [dejalouve.com](http://dejalouve.com) and on Facebook and Instagram.

## EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

### **ALANA BARTOL & BRYCE KRYNSKI**

#### ***all roses sleep (inviolable light)***

March 3 to April 22, 2023

This multi-sensory exhibition includes an "olfactory video" shot in ultraviolet. It is accompanied by "scratch and sniff" cards and endeavours to let the viewer perceive the world from the perspective of a bee.

### **DRUNKEN PAW**

#### ***not keeping sweet since 2009***

April 28 to June 10, 2023

Calgary-based artists Mark Dicey, Leslie Sweder and Janet Turner, will present a selection of artworks they created together in a residency at Empire of Dirt in Creston. Three large-scaled collaborative drawings and select artworks from their own independent practices will be on display.

### **GENEVIEVE ROBERTSON**

#### ***oriri***

June 16 to July 29, 2023

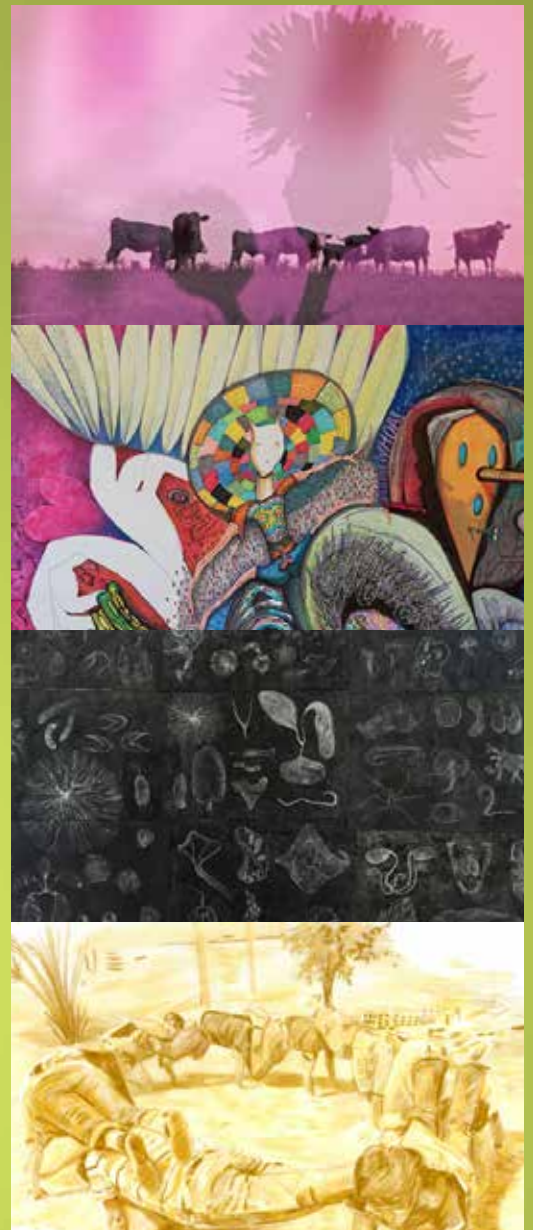
Genevieve Robertson's new body of large scale drawings explore permeability in relation to the body, environmental toxicity, and water.

### **HEATHER KAI SMITH**

#### ***The Light Does***

August 18 to September 30, 2023

The exhibition features new drawings and cyanotypes by Heather Kai Smith. Focusing on drawing as a practice of translation, images of collectivity and performative social ritual are re-presented as questions of form.



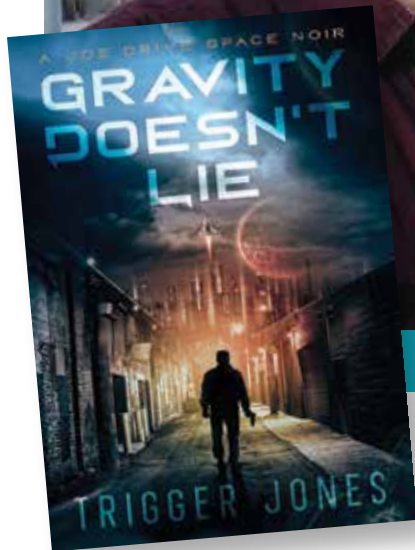
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# TRIGGER JONES



Husband-and-wife writing team Tony Berryman and Juanita Violini collaborate as Trigger Jones.

Photo: Tony Berryman

## Husband and wife team up

by Mike Redfern

“We chose Trigger Jones because it’s fun,” say Tony Berryman and Juanita Rose Violini of their co-writing pen name. “Trigger Jones stories have both action and humour, and we wanted the name to reflect that.”

This husband and wife writing duo from Invermere are enjoying themselves and they’ve been busy. A year ago they decided to combine their skills and write novels together. Now they have a fantasy series in the works, a science fiction series plotted out, and the first sci-fi novel published.

*Gravity Doesn’t Lie* is the first of a nine-novel series featuring an ex-space jet pilot living on the back side of the moon. Joe just wants to be left alone, but when the most beautiful woman in the solar system makes an impossible request, he’s in trouble. Now assassins are calling, the most dangerous man off Earth wants a quiet word, and a monk from a future-seeing foundation says humanity’s fate is in his hands. Joe will have to do something about it—if only to get some peace and quiet.

Berryman and Violini have self-published *Gravity Doesn’t Lie*. It is available everywhere online books are sold, and at Four Points Books and Valley Foods in Invermere. The second book in the series will be available later this spring.

Their fantasy series, based in the small mountain town of Magpie Junction, revolves around Zephyr Brett. She has taken over the family curio store, which is falling down around her and in danger of being handed over to developers. When a rakish adventurer wants to hire her to find the Honey Stone, an artifact lost in the woods over a hundred years ago, she has to take the job. Though Zephyr doesn’t know it, the women of Zephyr’s family have the ability to travel back through time.

This series, also nine books, will follow Zephyr and her friends as they try to steer Magpie Junction onto the path of progress, not just development.

Berryman and Violini bring a dark humour and a shared sense of the absurd to their writing. “One rule of thumb is, if it makes us both laugh it’s in the book,” says Violini. “Life is meant to be enjoyed.” They spend hours discussing characters and their development, plot twists and ideas for new stories, often on road trips. Conversation sometimes gets lively. “Writing stories together is a wonderful relationship tool,” they say. “It’s a continual exercise in improved communication skills.” They have a solid base to work from—they have been married for almost 30 years.

Berryman and Violini bring an impressive skill set to the co-writing table. Violini has spent 30 years writing and directing live murder mystery events and studying how mystery plots are woven together. She offers mystery plot consulting for all types of projects—live events, novels, scripts—through her website, [mysteryfactory.com](http://mysteryfactory.com). She has written *Cluetrail: From Whodunnit to Solution*, available through the website.

“Mysteries are all about the puzzle,” she says. “A true fair-play mystery gives the reader or audience all the clues to figure out what actually occurred but wraps it in a twisted puzzle that’s satisfying to solve.”

Berryman writes mysteries and thrillers. He spent 17 years as a registered massage therapist and his first published novel is a medical thriller called *The Night Nurse*, which pits a massage therapist who can’t stop seeing patterns against a nurse who won’t stop giving his patients the final mercy.

“I love creating deep, interesting characters and putting them in impossible situations,” he says. Two more massage therapy thrillers are in the works, in addition to the Trigger Jones stories.

The Trigger Jones stories are independently published. Being both writer and publisher means you have total control over all aspects of the process, say Berryman and Violini, but also means you have to do all the work and learn a host of new skills. They continue to hone all aspects of the work with every book. One guiding principle is excellence. “We aim for A+ professionalism in every aspect of what we do,” says Berryman. “We want to be examples of how to do independent publishing right.”

Violini is the master organizer. She keeps track of character descriptions, plot lines and story drafts. “A series needs to be consistent over many books,” she says, “or the readers will let you know if you get something wrong.” For the Magpie Junction series, she has drawn a wall-size map of the entire town.

Part of this professionalism is hiring others for specialized work. The cover for *Gravity Doesn’t Lie* was designed by professional cover designers MiblArt, based in Ukraine. Berryman taught himself interior book design. The combination seems to work.

Another aspect of independent publishing is marketing. “There are millions of hungry readers out there,” says Berryman. “The challenge is getting their attention.” In addition to creating an attractive product they spend time interacting with fantasy and sci-fi readers on Facebook and Instagram, run a Trigger Jones newsletter and have the first chapters of *Gravity Doesn’t Lie* available for free through the Trigger Jones website.

“The best way to sell your first book is to write the second,” says Berryman. “If readers like one book they will usually buy more.”

Berryman has trained as a voice actor and will turn all the Trigger Jones books into audiobooks as well. He has just completed a small recording studio in their basement. “Audiobook sales are the fastest-growing segment of the book industry,” he says. “And like every other part of the publishing world, doing it yourself has never been easier.”

You can find the couple on their websites: [mysteryfactory.com](http://mysteryfactory.com), [triggerjones.com](http://triggerjones.com), [tonyberryman.com](http://tonyberryman.com) and on Facebook.

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Photo: Erica Breau

# LEESA DEAN

## Voice & visibility

by Greg Elliott

Leesa Dean is an award-winning writer and is the author of *Waiting for the Cyclone* (2016), *The Desert of Itabira* (2020), *The Filling Station* (2022) and *Apogee/Perigee* (forthcoming). Based in Krestova, a community characterized by the natural richness of the rural Kootenays, the significance of place is powerfully echoed through the author's life and in her work.

"I'm always interested in human geography—people and land—what that looks like and how it can be unique," she says. "How can a landscape influence the situation in a story? What does human presence bring to a landscape?" In her fiction, she likes to have different people travel through that same landscape to highlight how they see differently, the beauty of those discrepancies and to show the dynamism of humans and places.

The characters in her work are often women who are marginalized somehow. "They're not just drowning and fumbling," she says of her characters, who she considers to be reflections of real women. "They're messy, complicated and also thriving in their own unique ways."

Although writing from a small community, Dean's work has been met with critical acclaim on the local and national literary stage. Among her long list of accolades, she has been a finalist for Ontario's Trillium Book Award and the ReLit Award, the runner-up for the Pacific Spirit Poetry Prize, and was recently featured in Vancouver-based *The Tyee* for her essay "Newcomers to Doukhobor Territory," which describes her experience as a newcomer to Krestova and its complex history.

"Sometimes it feels like you're wearing an invisibility cape," Dean says regarding life as a rural writer. Being recognized at provincial and national levels is testament to the fact that voices from small towns can bridge that potentially discouraging geographic divide. "We exist, us writers in these tiny hamlets. And we have a lot to say."

Dean is one of two Creative Writing instructors at Selkirk College, and one of her goals as an educator is to build up the local network of emerging writers. In her time teaching at the college, Dean has reviewed and helped revise tens of thousands of pages of student work. Some of these students have gone on to publish their own books. "Through this process, I've learned so much about who lives here and what they care about," she says. "It is an immense privilege."

Whether through writing itself, assisting with grant applications or allowing students publishing opportunities in the college's literary magazine, *Black Bear Review*, Dean is an integral force in helping local emerging writers find their place in the world of literature. "Tell me what your dreams are," she promises current and future students, "and I will help you figure out what that pathway looks like."

*The Filling Station*, Dean's most recent book, was published by Gaspereau Press in November 2022. A novella-in-verse inspired by the prolific poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, *The Filling Station* features

a lively character who first appeared in one of Bishop's own poems. The story weaves the elements of love, family and landscape with time, memory and dream, while also serving as an extended elegy to the poet and her poetry. The emotional, melancholic beauty of Dean's work occupies a setting drifting between rivers and seaside shacks in Brazil to the tangibly arid desert of Itabira, all while maintaining an essence of home and place. The rain, the sun and the love and longing for what exists beneath is intimately felt through every delicately constructed page.

"I wanted to do something different," Dean decided after first discovering Bishop's original poem entitled "Manuelzinho." She first read the work in 2010, in a dilapidated collection of the poet's work she purchased from a New York City bookstore. Although inspired by Marie Howe's *Magdalene* and Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, the novel idea of taking a character from a poem and basing an entire narrative around them was enthralling to Dean. To spend so much time on a singular work, it had to be—she spent over a decade writing the book.

"I was given the gift of spending ten years with Elizabeth Bishop. It's one of the best gifts I've ever received," says Dean. Bishop, a queer writer who suffered from significant familial tragedy, depression and alcoholism, persevered into legendary status through the mid-twentieth century. "It feels so important to me to be associated with work from that particular person."

The book's publisher, Nova Scotia-based Gaspereau Press,

has handcrafted each copy through a unique printing process and the manual blending of different inks is what creates the alluring appearance of *The Filling Station's* cover. The gradient of the fade is subtly different on every cover, and with it comes a feeling of individuality and personal connection between the poetry and the reader unlike anything felt—or not felt—in conventionally manufactured literature.

Dean's current novel in progress, *Just Let the Music Happen*, funded by a Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance major project grant, takes place here in the Kootenays and features—unsurprisingly—a complex, messy, uniquely thriving female protagonist.

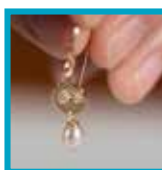
Until then, *The Filling Station*, alongside Dean's previous publications, may be ordered or purchased from your local bookseller.

*Greg Elliott is an emerging writer and current Creative Writing student at Selkirk College. He is also a lifelong resident of the Kootenays who, like Dean, feels the gravity of place greatly influences his work.*



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## PRINTER'S DEVILS: THE FEISTY PIONEER NEWSPAPER THAT SHAPED THE HISTORY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S SMELTER CITY, 1895–1925

RON VERZUH

Caitlin Press, March 2023



Ron Verzuh is a writer, historian and documentary filmmaker. His most recent book is *Smelter Wars: A Rebellious Red Trade Union Fights for Its Life in Wartime Western Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2022). He is the producer and director of the award-winning short film *Joe Hill's Secret Canadian Hideout* as well as *Codename Project 9*, the story of the Trail smelter's participation in the making of the atomic bomb.

In *Printer's Devils*, Verzuh offers both a study of pioneer journalism and a social history of the smelter city of Trail as it grew into a small but prosperous community. He traces the stories of residents and their evolving attitudes, pastimes and opinions as they respond in times of economic crisis, war, labour strife and life-threatening disease against the backdrop of one of Canada's pioneer industrial centres.

Beneath these stories is a revealing exploration into the lives of six *Trail News* editors—Trail's printer's devils—describing how their editorial choices were honed by their education, business priorities and experience as tramp printers in the early days of newspaper publishing in the region. Delving back through layers of history, *Printer's Devils* is a tribute to the lasting impact of journalism in Canadian society, as chronicled in one single-industry town.

## LOGAN ARIEL

by Carmen Adams

Logan Ariel of Castlegar was a self-described sad, lonely emo girl until she discovered Johnny Cash at age eleven. Perhaps an unlikely hero for a Kootenay tween, Cash—known for his deep, calm, bass baritone voice—uncovered a means for Logan to be “beautiful, graceful and heard.”

Although she enjoys self-expression in various forms, Logan appreciates focusing less on appearance and popularity and more on paper and in melody. From the legacy of singer-songwriter Cash, Logan inherited the power to interplay poetry and song. Music that people would be able to relate to.

Now seventeen, singer-songwriter Logan has been inspired to write music daily, rehearse and work on her performing. “Music allows me to advocate things people are too afraid to, it allows me to rediscover a million different parts of myself.”

Logan has been studying with vocal coach Mitch Seekins. She has

## IN THERE SOMEWHERE

KARI BURK

Weird Aunt Publications, 2022

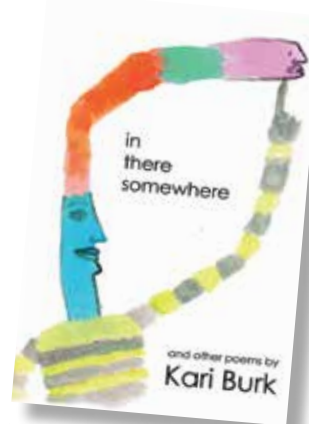
*in there somewhere* is Castlegar artist and gardener Kari Burk's latest chapbook of poetry. A graduate of Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Burk works mainly in painting, illustration and photography. She is the author of 16 other self-published poetry chapbooks and an illustrated memoir, *Snapshot of a Soul Place* (2015).

Her poems are as quirky and colourful as her artwork: personal, somewhat inscrutable and full of humour. She writes:

“In the land of poetry I see myself as an unleashed adventurer hawking half-baked ideas served on precarious platters. Fifty years ago I stole the ticket into this territory. It was the E.E. Cummings poem ‘she being brand new’ that I noticed and snatched from my older brother Kevin’s homework pile on the kitchen table. He must’ve left the room to go do something as I walked in, saw the poem, read it, then squirreled it away into my room where I proceeded to read it frequently. It gave me the key to the door that opened to the place of *you can write however you feel like writing*.”

“The first poetry chapbook I made, *I feel bad I didn’t prepare my shoes for the beating*, was in first year art school in the early eighties. I was messing around with photocopying (still do) and incorporating text and photocopied images into artwork. I’ve always loved reading and writing crazy stories to entertain myself and friends but didn’t know I was making a poetry chapbook until a friend saw it and named it as such.”

Facebook: The Harpy Medium, [theunscrutablerutabaga.wordpress.com](https://theunscrutablerutabaga.wordpress.com)



also been in private music production and beat-making courses, all before high school. She has also worked with LA-based producer Joe Corcoran and music career coach Emm Gryner. Together they produced four songs available on streaming platforms. Logan’s music has gained over 170K streams on Spotify alone.

Besides online, you may find Logan performing under local art councils for music festivals, craft fairs and birthday parties. “Being so young and getting paid to perform is the most wonderful feeling in the world.”

# FORGOTTEN CRANBROOK: A PHOTO HISTORY OF EARLY CRANBROOK & DISTRICT

## COLUMBIA BASIN INSTITUTE OF REGIONAL HISTORY

Wild Horse Creek Publishing, 2022

by Erin Knutson

*Forgotten Cranbrook* is a collaboration of Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History (CBIRH) executive director Erin Knutson, founder Derryl White and ex officio Keith Powell. The trio agreed that bringing the Institute's rarest images to life and chronicling the history of Cranbrook from the late 1800s to 1960s was a way to mark the beginning of a new legacy.

"This is a book I'm proud to co-author," says Powell. "They have an incredible photo collection, and I saw a way to tell a story about a town that grew from humble beginnings into what it is today while showcasing this impressive body of work."

"The writing and collaboration between the three of us went fairly seamlessly. This has been one of the best writing experiences of my career, and I would love to work as intensely on another project with this editorial team," says White.

Ninety percent of images in *Forgotten Cranbrook* are from the CBIRH collection, with contributions from their partners, the Cranbrook History Centre and Kimberley Heritage Museum. The book includes 120 pages of historical photos of early Cranbrook, many never seen before, accompanied by carefully researched text.

A portion of the proceeds will flow back to the CBIRH to support the preservation of regional history and to help them carry forward this powerful legacy.

*Forgotten Cranbrook* is available through the Columbia Basin Institute of Regional History, 250-489-9150, or at Huckleberry Books in Cranbrook.



## Upcoming events 2023



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**Jim Byrnes** - April 29  
**Stephen Fearing** - May 10



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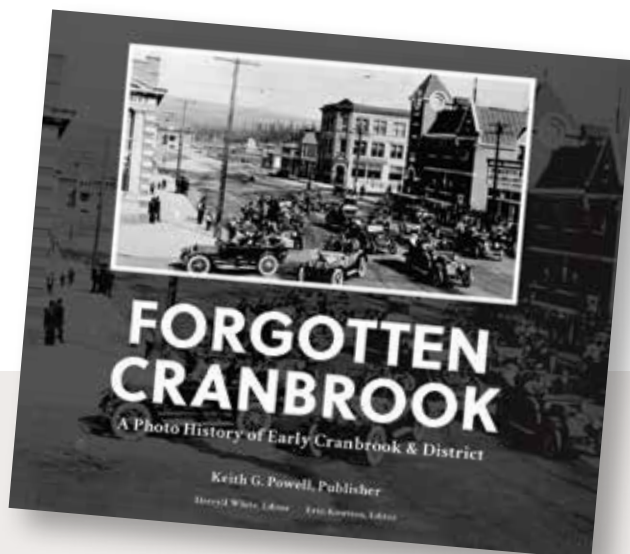


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# THE DESCENDANTS

**ROBERT CHURSINOFF**

Nightwood Editions, 2022

Review by Leesa Dean

*The Descendants* is an ambitious, action-packed first novel from Robert Chursinoff, an author with a fascinating background: born and raised in the Doukhobor community of Brilliant, B.C., Chursinoff is also an acclaimed musician and screenwriter now based in Vancouver.

The novel spans nearly two decades and features a dynamic, well-developed cast of characters. Most of the action revolves around Jonah Seeger, a descendant of Freedomite parents who flees the Kootenays after a run-in with the Hell's Angels, and the love of his life, Ruby, a sharp-edged musician who struggles with substance abuse.

There is so much substance to this novel. It explores historical divides in the Doukhobor community, addiction, intergenerational trauma, PTSD, physical disability, but also love and the musicality of human existence. The characters are contemporary but also deeply rooted in their family's traditions. Russian phrases and Doukhobor spiritual practices braid through the scenes, giving the reader a true sense of witnessing culture.

The story is told from multiple viewpoints, meaning the beautifully complex inner worlds of numerous characters are intimately revealed. Amongst the most vivid, perhaps, is Yuri, Jonah's soft-spoken queer uncle who also bombed buildings and burned houses as a young Freedomite and who has spent much of his life traumatized by memories of his time in a New Denver residential school where many Doukhobor children were forcefully separated from their families.

Chursinoff's novel offers a thoughtful glimpse into Doukhobor culture and history while grounding in a contemporary Kootenay landscape.



# SIEGE OF HERONS: COLLECTIVE NOUNS ALPHABETICALLY

**RAMONA WILDEMAN**

ILLUSTRATED BY

**LOU DAHL**

Self-published, 2022

Ramona Wildeman wrote *Siege of Herons* because she loves words. Originally planned as a children's book, Wildeman says that the book will appeal to all ages.

"I probably have no less than ten dictionaries/thesauruses in my house, in many languages. I love etymology—learning the history of words. Collective nouns offer a way to express the love of noticing and observation of the world we live in. Many collective nouns are old words, words not in the common lexicon. Bringing them back into our language and inspiring folks to notice and observe and create new collective nouns is why I wrote *Siege of Herons*."

Excerpt from *Siege of Herons*:

*A pride of lions, a tuft of grass, a pod of whales are common examples, but there is a whole lexicon of other collective nouns to discover. Words that are descriptive and evocative of the singular noun as in a gaze of raccoons or words that describe an impression of the group, as in a plump of ducks (on the land) or a raft of ducks (on the water). Or some collective nouns are based on the sound—a charm of finches—or appearance of the group—a knot of toads . . . Let's reintroduce existing collective nouns back into active language, and challenge people to think of new collective nouns . . . For example, a group of skateboarders could be called a deck, or maybe a flip?*

Wildeman moved to Kimberley in 2022, just before her book was published. It was one of three finalists in the children's book category for the Canadian Book Club Awards.

[anacceptabletime.com](http://anacceptabletime.com), [@ramonawildeman](https://www.instagram.com/ramonawildeman)



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## DANCING ON MOUNTAINS

Edited by Luanne Armstrong  
Caitlin Press, June 2023

*Dancing on Mountains* is a collection of inspiring and eclectic stories written by women from across geography and time, each of whom has been drawn to take root in the Kootenays. In their own words, these women—teachers, artists, musicians, writers, entrepreneurs and environmentalists—share stories that embody the spirit of the Kootenays. From fleeing the U.S. draft alongside the men of the 1960s and pushing against traditional gender roles and sexism, to reclaiming Indigenous identities, calling out environmental threats and fighting for our climate today, these stories span the spectrum of human experience. Thoughtful, heartwarming and delightfully entertaining, *Dancing on Mountains* is a celebration of the brilliant, radical essence of the women of the Kootenays.

Luanne Armstrong holds a Ph.D. in Education and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia. She has written 25 books—novels, children's books, memoir, essays and poetry—and has co-written or edited many other books through to publication. Her latest work is a collection of essays, *Going to Ground*, published by Caitlin Press in 2022. Armstrong lives and writes on her family farm in Sirdar, on the east shore of Kootenay Lake.



Luanne Armstrong  
Photo: Caitlin Press



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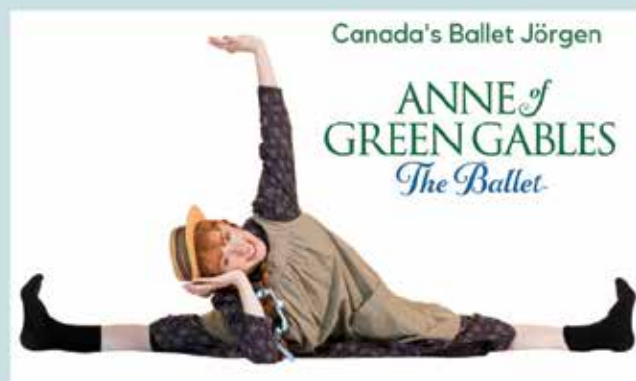
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# KEEP ON DANCING

## Maintaining a healthy art ecosystem

by Sydney Black



The potential demise of the Vancouver Folk Festival was a breaking story that seemed to drop out of nowhere, highlighted on the Facebook pages of the executive directors of music festivals across the province. There was great concern around what this cancellation would mean for the festival circuit in the province, and brought attention to the fragility of the festival format. Founded

in 1978, VFF had become a staple of the provincial festival circuit, drawing over 40,000 attendees annually and hosting icons like Ani DiFranco, Adam Cohen and Amos Lee.

But rising costs were impacting the festival's ability to operate, to the point that it was no longer viable to hold the event. The decision to shut down would impact countless performance artists, who lost yet another important gig, and alert the public to the financial fragility that many beloved arts events face.

Far from an isolated incident, this decision reflected the state of performing arts across the country, which has yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels and is projected to be the last area of the arts sector to return to "normal." Kelly Hill of the arts research organization Hill Strategies has run the numbers, and "the performing arts continue to experience a lower economic impact than before the pandemic. In the third quarter of 2022, the direct economic impact of the performing arts was \$598 million, 11% below the level at the end of 2019 (\$670 million)." ("Changes in direct economic impact of the arts and culture between 2019 and the summer of 2022.")

Folk Fest's impending closure brought a rallying cry from the arts and culture community around the importance of these cultural institutions in the face of the pandemic, which encouraged the provincial government to reopen their Fairs, Festivals and Events Fund. This funding was key to the survival of many festivals across the province in 2022 and its reinstitution in 2023 continues to offer a vital lifeline in a time of continued uncertainty.

Folk Fest may have pulled through after a huge show of public support in the media, but what are festivals in the Kootenay region expecting to experience this summer? For Kaslo Jazz Etc. Festival's artistic and executive director Paul Hinrichs, the festival will continue to be a scaled-down event, as it was in 2022. "Without any certainty that the event would even proceed, and also an emphasis on supporting the mental health of our staff and broader team, we figured we should not overwhelm our various stakeholders.

We reduced our paid attendance in 2022 by approximately twenty-six percent. We shortened our operating hours by twenty-five percent. We also outsourced all of our festival campground operations to other local NPOs, so they could manage them and

collect the net proceeds. These moves allowed us to reduce the number of volunteers required to operate the festival by nearly fifty percent. It created a much more relaxed and healthier event on-site and behind the scenes."

Carla Stephenson, executive director and co-founder of Ymir's Tiny Lights Festival, is focusing on the centre of the event: community. "For Tiny Lights, we were so grateful to be able to see our town animated by our return to an in-person festival in 2022. The real connections, smiles and hearts opening are what inspire our work. We were able to run tech and photography mentorship programs which allowed us to bring professional mentors into our region, and we will be building on these programs in 2023. This year we are focusing on meaningful partnerships in our community. Whether that is local folks billeting artists, or working with local farmers to feed our artists, we know that festivals can be a catalyst for collaboration and community building."

Revelstoke's LUNA Fest, which hosts free as well as paid events, saw an explosion in attendance—from 3,000 to 8,000 attendees—and a rise in exhibits between 2019 and 2022. They anticipate that their 2023 event will be similar in scale. LUNA Art Fest coordinator Maggie Davis anticipates having 40 public art installations this year. If LUNA Art Fest does have to scale back, it will be a result of less staff capacity (due to a smaller team) and a decrease in the amount of COVID relief funding available to festivals.

How can we help keep regional festivals thriving? Community and volunteer support have been flagged as essential to keeping the festival scene alive. Purchasing tickets, providing online support or making donations, if you are able, are all ways that the community can rally around the organizations that are instrumental in ensuring that artists and arts lovers have opportunities to convene.

Kootenay audiences, artists and arts workers are fortunate that so many festivals will continue to have offerings in 2023. Each of the organizers interviewed for this article offered similar sentiments around the future of their festivals: "If you build it, they will come" and "Keep hope." Carla Stephenson brilliantly sums up this shared perspective: "It is truly a testament to local support that so many Kootenay festivals have continued to exist and shine since the pandemic. I appreciate the beautiful immersive experience that each one offers to our region. I think it is a sign of a healthy arts ecosystem that each has found a particular niche."

Your homework assignment to support your regional festivals? There are some assignments, such as liking and sharing their posts, and volunteering or donating, but the most important thing you can do is attend and dance. Festivals are still standing, and that alone is cause to celebrate.

*Sydney Black is the executive director of the Nelson & District Arts Council and the chair of the Cultural Development Committee for the City of Nelson. She is the co-founder of the Nelson International Mural Festival and lives in what is colonially known as Nelson, B.C.*



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