

Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival

in cooperation with Vancouver Moving Theatre, Carnegie Community Centre and radha yoga & eatery presents

Eastside Stories

The People. The Voices.



RESISTANCE | DISPLACEMENT | SURVIVAL | SOLIDARITY
STRUGGLE | COMMUNITY | MENTAL HEALTH | WELL-BEING
NEIGHBOURHOOD | TOPIAS | IDENTITIES | NEW TOWN
GROUND | SHARED EXPERIENCE | IDENTITY | HOME | KNOWLEDGE
ORAL HISTORY | WALKS | FILMS | MUSIC | STORY SHARING

FRIDAY JUNE 19 - SUNDAY JUNE 21 2009

Carnegie Community Centre | radha yoga & eatery | DTES streets

Greetings



The Carnegie Community Centre Association welcomes you.

Having heard and shared some of the stories of the DTES, my appreciation of others who struggle has altered me. Understanding history; realizing kinship; developing compassion: life changing indeed. Something else, though. Maybe it is the recognition that it is about *we* and not *I*.

Come to share a story, to hear personal views of life. Come to learn about the people, what we've done, the places that have helped shape this community. From events long gone by, to what we are up to now, come to hear what we have in common.

Matthew Matthew, President, CCCA



"Radha" is pleased to support Eastside Stories and to participate in the arts of the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. We welcome you to this story-sharing weekend that gives voice to its residents – their struggles, hopes and dreams.

The Radha building has many stories embedded in its walls. It has lived here for 100 years longer than we have and holds the spirit of all the people who have walked through its doors.

We are particularly pleased to host a performance of *East End Blues and All that Jazz*, a musical telling of the black history of the neighbourhood. Hearing these stories through music is such a delightful way to learn!

With special thanks to Vancouver Moving Theatre and the Carnegie Centre for your inspiring community work.

Swami Lalitananda
Radha Yoga & Eatery



When Savannah and I first moved into the Downtown Eastside in the mid 1970s we came across the now legendary book *Opening Doors* – Carole Itter and Daphne Marlatt's extraordinary gold mine of oral history as told by East End residents. *Opening Doors* inspired us with first hand accounts of our neighbours and their families: the collective history of the East End, its struggles, hopes and dreams.

Now, over 30 years later, we feel compelled to join with our community to give voice to residents past and present, to hear first hand their stories, experiences, struggles and accomplishments; to hear what they have done – and what they are doing today – to survive and build community.

Eastside Stories is a community kitchen table – with elders and friends sharing stories – around which we sit, listen, learn, and participate. Join in the conversation, ask questions, dig deep, enquire into events or strategies taken, and contribute your own voice to the gold mine of Eastside stories.

Thanks to all the organizers, the participants and community partners who have contributed with such enthusiasm to Eastside Stories.

See you around the kitchen table everyone!

Terry Hunter
Artistic Producer,
DTES Heart of the City Festival
Executive Director,
Vancouver Moving Theatre

Eastside Stories: The People. The Voices.

June 19 to 21, 2009

**Living memories of community
inform our present and contribute
to our future**

Various locations in the DTES

Presented by the Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival, in cooperation with Vancouver Moving Theatre, Carnegie Community Centre and radha yoga & eatery

Most events are free admission or pay-what-you-can. Please consult each event description for ticket information.

The Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival and the Eastside Stories Project acknowledge and honour that our Eastside neighbourhood lies within the traditional territories of the Coast Salish people.



www.heartofthecityfestival.com or call 604-628-5672

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Remembering (and recording an oral history of) people in Vancouver's East End

One of the questions that was asked to our elders in 1978-79 was about the 1930s, during the Great Depression. How did they cope? We heard many many stories of families managing, but barely. There was no actual welfare as we know it today — instead there was a line up at a downtown depot where you sent the strongest family member to haul home a satchel of potatoes, sometimes a satchel of turnips. Shoes were handed down, as were all clothing as kids grew up. Every yard had a vegetable garden; some had chickens and ducks. Few had cars — the streetcar (a passenger rail car) got you around if you could afford the fare, otherwise people walked. In Vancouver's East End, few had telephones and those who did shared theirs with their neighbours. Nobody had a camera.

There were mostly wood burning stoves. So there were woodpiles everywhere. And the woodstove heated the houses, at least partially. More than one person mentioned the mold that grew up the bedroom walls. In most families, the older children managed to find after school jobs, maybe delivering stuff by bicycle or piling wood for an elderly widow. There were no adequate pensions for seniors then. And some were even carrying old wounds from World War One.

There is always the risk of idealizing an earlier time. For certain, medical advances were limited, as was access to a doctor. Many used remedies from their own culture, brought from other lands. This was a time before antibiotics were developed. It was not unusual to die of

infections. In terms of educational opportunities, the chances were limited. It didn't matter how smart you were, you might have to leave school by Grade 8 (some even younger) in order to help out your family. Not being able to read very well was often masked over an entire lifetime.

Listening and learning from our elders is a tradition that never stops. I learned about resilience. I learned about the necessity of family. I was already 38 years old when Daphne Marlatt and I started listening and recording old timers. I felt like I was finally "growing up." I remember laughing a lot at the remarkable insight and humour I heard from every one of them.

**Carole Itter
May 2009**

In 1979, with poet Daphne Marlatt, artist, writer and long-time Strathcona resident Carole Itter compiled and edited the historic collection of oral history, Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End, which now resides in the BC Provincial Archives.

*Because the whispers of those who have passed on continue in the wind, their voices must be heard and the struggle must continue
Their plight and our plight is connected.*

Stephen Lytton, *The Soul of Vancouver*

Schedule of Events

FRIDAY JUNE 19

3:30pm – 5pm
Bruce Eriksen Heritage Walking Tour
meet at Carnegie front steps, 401 Main

7pm – 9pm
Story Sharing
Fight for Community Recognition
Carnegie 3rd floor Learning Centre
401 Main

SATURDAY JUNE 20

10am – 11:30am
Chinatown Walking Tour
Every Building has a Story
meet at Chinese Cultural Centre
50 E. Pender

11:30am – 1pm
Threads of Wisdom:
Stories of Hope in Shadows
Carnegie 3rd floor Learning Centre
401 Main

1pm – 3pm
Story Sharing
It's a Long Story...
Carnegie 3rd floor Learning Centre
401 Main

3pm – 5pm
Everyday Heroes: Digital Stories
Carnegie 3rd floor Learning Centre
401 Main

6pm – 7:30pm
Videos – Hogan's Alley, CBC Interview Clips, Bamboula
Carnegie Theatre, 401 Main

7:30pm – 9pm
East End Blues & All That Jazz
Carnegie Theatre, 401 Main

SUNDAY JUNE 21

10am – 11:30am
Historical Walking Tour
Caught in the Middle
meet at Vancouver Police Museum
240 E. Cordova

11:30am – 1pm
CCAP Walking Tour
Sites of Empowerment
meet at Carnegie front steps, 401 Main

1pm – 3pm
Story Sharing - Three Guys and an Alley
Carnegie 3rd floor Learning Centre
401 Main

3pm – 5pm
Story Sharing - Standing Up for Community
Carnegie 3rd floor Learning Centre
401 Main

7:30pm – 9pm
East End Blues & All That Jazz
radha yoga & eatery, 728 Main

Telling Stories

We need to tell our own stories. If we don't tell our stories, people with power will tell our stories for us, and we won't like what they say. When we tell our stories, we reach out to each other and build community. We share our pain. We share our hope. We share our laughter, and our determination. When we tell our stories we draw our own maps, and we question the maps of the powerful. Each of us has something to tell, something to teach. We speak the language of the heart – here – in the Downtown Eastside – the soul of Vancouver.

Sandy Cameron

Walks & Story Sharing • Friday June 19

BRUCE ERIKSEN HERITAGE WALKING TOUR With Bob Sarti 3:30pm – 5pm

Meet at steps of Carnegie Community Centre, 401 Main, Pay what you can
Take a walk with Bob Sarti and hear the stories of people, events and places that made headlines in the turbulent early 1970s. Bob first walked the streets of the DTES as a reporter for the Vancouver Sun interviewing the legendary DERA founder and social activist Bruce Eriksen. Bruce fought to transform the image of Vancouver's lowest-income neighbourhood from 'Skid Road' to a residential community in its own right. Recently retired to Hornby Island, Bob lived and volunteered in the DTES for over 20 years and wrote last fall's popular theatrical sensation *Bruce The Musical*.

THE FIGHT FOR COMMUNITY RECOGNITION 7pm, Carnegie Community Centre 3rd floor Learning Centre, Free

The story of the 'Fight for Community Recognition' is the story of amazing people who always believed in and understood what the Downtown Eastside is all about, and who refused to let stereotypes undermine it. Libby Davies

In 1975, the newly-formed Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA) demanded official recognition for the area as a residential community rather than "Skid Road". Thinking outside the box, they called on a host of creative, humorous, publicity-friendly and hard hitting strategies. Their years of struggle achieved bylaws requiring hotel sprinkler systems; lighting in alleyways; safe and secure social housing; and the establishment of the Carnegie Community Centre. Sharing personal stories about what the DTES community had to do to be recognized are Sandy Cameron, historian, poet

and community visionary; Jean Swanson, long time community anchor; Sheila Baxter, anti-poverty activist, author and grandmother; Ian MacRae who rolled up his sleeves with DERA; and reporter, writer and anarchist Bob Sarti. Moderator: Matthew Matthew, President of Carnegie Community Centre Association. The evening opens with the local hand-drum group Harmony of Nations.



Sandy Cameron



Carnegie Volunteers, circa 1990



Helen Hill

Walks & Story Sharing • Saturday June 20

EVERY BUILDING HAS A STORY: Chinatown Walking Tour With Maureen de Montezuma 10am - 11:30am

Meet at Chinese Cultural Centre
50 E. Pender, Pay what you can
A walk through its streets can give a glimpse into the history of Chinatown. Ancestral families and stories are tied to the neighbourhood and some of the oldest buildings in Vancouver can be found within these blocks. "There's not a building that doesn't have a story." A retired street nurse who worked in the DTES, Maureen de Montezuma has been leading Chinatown walking tours for over nine years with the Chinese Cultural Centre.

THREADS OF WISDOM: Stories of Hope in Shadows 11:30am – 1pm

Carnegie Community Centre
3rd floor Learning Centre, Free
For the past six years, Pivot Legal Society's annual Hope in Shadows photography contest, and the publication of a calendar, has empowered residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside by providing them with disposable cameras to document their lives. Since the contest's inception, participants have taken over 20,000 images of their neighbourhood. Working with this archive, Brad Cran and Gillian Jerome collected personal stories behind these stunning photographs and compiled them into the award-winning book *Hope in Shadows: Stories and Photographs of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*. These stories open doors into the proud community. We welcome Vancouver's new poet laureate Brad Cran and co-editor Gillian Jerome to share their experiences collecting these stories, along with participating writers and photographers Helen Hill, Rosalynn Humberstone and Tom Quirk.

IT'S A LONG STORY . . .

1pm – 3pm
Carnegie Community Centre
3rd floor Learning Centre, Free
I think it's important for our society to understand that each person down here has their story. Kat Norris
How far do we go back? When did we meet? Do we know the stories of the people who surround us? Share life stories with Norma Jean Baptiste, Sandra Pronteau and Bill Quinn, all long-time Downtown Eastside residents who are artists and Aboriginal. They'll talk about their lives in the DTES, what they have done to survive, and what they have done to help build and to support their community. Moderator: actress, writer and mother Priscillia Tait.

EVERYDAY HEROES 3pm - 5pm **Carnegie Community Centre** 3rd floor Learning Centre, Free

The SHIRE digital storytelling project was developed by the Carnegie Learning Centre and the Carnegie Seniors to capture the housing and isolation experiences of our DTES Seniors. Although originally focused on housing, the stories that emerged were the ones that needed to be told. This collection of digital stories highlights ordinary people doing courageous acts of humanity on the streets, in the hotels, and organizations of our community. These actions defy discrimination, create opportunities, and maintain dignity. Come and view these short video vignettes with the storymakers and share your own story. *The project was funded by the New Horizons for Seniors Fund and greatly assisted by Homeless Nation.*

Walks & Story Sharing • Sunday June 21



Hogan's Alley, 1958

photo courtesy of Vancouver Archives

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: Historical Walking Tour With Chris Mathieson

10am - 11:30am

Meet at Vancouver Police Museum, 240 E. Cordova

Pay what you can

In the City of Vancouver the attitude toward 'vice' has changed over time, perhaps most notably in the Downtown Eastside. Society is currently examining the idea that vice is not just a moral issue but is linked to poverty, health, social changes and shifts in governing policies. Law enforcement officers can get caught in the middle of struggles between justice, public policy and community values. Join Chris on a walking tour through the oldest parts of the city, exploring the early history of Vancouver's underground economy and bringing to life stories of historical personalities and events. The tour visits one of the earliest brothel districts, the location of the city's first saloon and the city's first police station and jail.



CCAP Walking Tour

organizer in the Downtown Eastside, and contemplate how these key sites give us clues as to how to build a vision for a safe, healthy and affordable low-income neighbourhood in the future. CCAP is a project of the Carnegie Community Centre Association and works mostly on housing, income and land use issues in the Downtown Eastside.

THREE GUYS AND AN ALLEY: Growing up around Hogan's Alley

1pm - 3pm

Carnegie Community Centre

3rd floor Learning Centre, Free

Hogan's Alley was a local nickname for an elusive 8-foot alley running through this neighbourhood in the area of Union and Prior. During the 1940s and 50s, the muddy alley passed behind backyard gardens, stables, homes and businesses owned by Italian, Chinese and black entrepreneurs, but with the construction of the Georgia Viaduct in the 70s, most of the area was destroyed. Join three men who lived in the neighbourhood as youngsters: Randy Clark walked across the street to work at his grandma Vie's Chicken and Steak House (209 Union) before growing up to become a Vancouver educator; performer and technician Elwin Xie lived and worked at his family's Union Laundry; and actor Chic Gibson, who played in the alley, is the son of Leona and Sylvester Risby, proprietors of the Country Club eatery. Moderator: actor, director and writer Denis Simpson.

STANDING UP FOR COMMUNITY

3pm - 5pm

Carnegie Community Centre

3rd floor Learning Centre, Free

During the 1950s, city planners declared this area a slum and intended to wipe out huge areas of Strathcona, Chinatown and Gastown to make way for a freeway from New Westminster to downtown Vancouver. Despite protests, 15 blocks were cleared for urban development and hundreds of homes were lost. But the neighbourhood refused to die. Mary Lee Chan and her daughter Shirley joined hundreds of people within the neighbourhood and beyond who stood up for this community. They fought for years until they stopped the freeway and convinced



Hayne Wai

city officials to abandon urban renewal in favour of rehabilitating existing homes. This resulted in a change in the way the City made decisions. Today there is more citizen involvement but we need to stay vigilant of the process. Shirley Chan, CEO of BOB who continues to stand up for the community; author and scholar Richard Nann; and Hayne Wai, long-time community advocate, instructor and humorist, will share some of their experiences and effective strategies. Moderator: Larry Wong, writer, curator and historian.

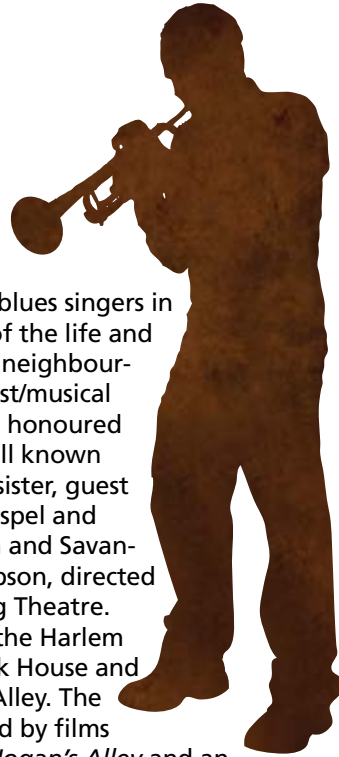


Shirley Chan

East End Blues and All That Jazz

Saturday June 20, 7:30pm
Carnegie Community Centre Theatre
 401 Main Street • free
 Black History films 6pm

Sunday June 21, 7:30pm
radha yoga studio & eatery
 728 Main Street • \$10.00
radha is not wheelchair accessible



Come hear two of Vancouver's finest gospel and blues singers in East End Blues and All That Jazz, a celebration of the life and times of the Downtown Eastside's historic black neighbourhood. Singers Candus Churchill and Tom Pickett, pianist/musical director Bill Costin and bass player Timothy Stacey are honoured to share the stage with Master of Ceremonies, the well known Downtown Eastside raised actor Chic Gibson, and his sister, guest singer Thelma Gibson. This soul-stirring evening of gospel and blues, jazz and memories, is created by Denis Simpson and Savannah Walling with assistance from the late Leonard Gibson, directed by Denis Simpson and produced by Vancouver Moving Theatre. The concert will commemorate the Fountain Chapel, the Harlem Nocturne, fine eateries such as Vie's Chicken and Steak House and the Country Club, and reflect on the elusive Hogan's Alley. The Saturday evening presentation at Carnegie is preceded by films featuring former East End black residents, including *Hogan's Alley* and an episode of *Bamboula: A Day in the West Indies*.



Candus Churchill



Denis Simpson



Savannah Walling



Tom Pickett



Timothy Stacey



Bill Costin

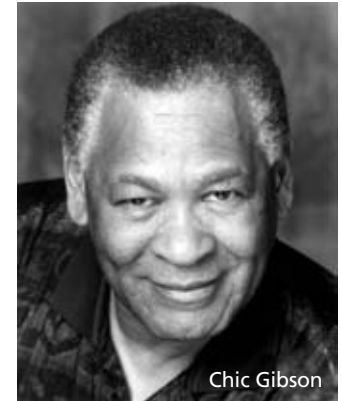
A Musical Family



Leonard Gibson

Chic, Thelma and Leonard Gibson grew up in the Downtown Eastside and were familiar with, knew or were related to many of the people who will be mentioned tonight. At family reunions and picnics everyone HAD to sing, dance or play an instrument: there was always music, old blues, jazz and spirituals in their home. Their father played bluegrass guitar, their uncle was a local balladeer, their mom sang all the time, and their brother Len was born dancing and taught them all. All three siblings grew up to be accomplished performing artists, performing in Vancouver's first live television show *Bamboula*, touring internationally and across Canada, and contributing in many ways to the growth of Vancouver. In the entertainment business all his life, actor/singer Chic was also the first black to work for BCE (later BC Hydro); he co-chaired the first Abbotsford Air Show; and produced the first multicultural Easter

Parade. After working in their parents' restaurant on Powell St., Thelma toured internationally as an actor, singer, dancer and choreographer, working in nightclubs in Canada, Europe and the West Indies. Performing professionally on local stages at age five as a tap dance phenomena, Leonard grew up to become the first black dancer in Canada to train in classical ballet; his career led him to dance, choreograph, and teach across North America and Europe. Thelma's motto is "*There's no such word as can't.*" All three siblings have been honoured with awards for their contributions to the black community and for their achievements in the performing arts. Sadly Leonard died in 2008. We are all grateful he was able to collaborate on *East End Blues and All That Jazz*, keeping the memory of the East End's black community alive.



Chic Gibson



Thelma Gibson

Films

In cooperation with Humanities 101, the Saturday June 20th presentation at Carnegie of *East End Blues and All That Jazz* is preceded by a few short films starting at 6pm.

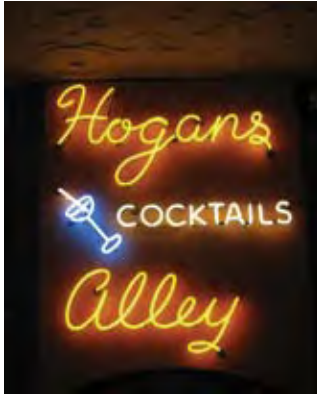
Black East Enders have made major contributions to the industrial, cultural and culinary history of the Downtown Eastside, including a legacy of musicians and superb triple threat artists who sing, dance and act: choreographer Leonard Gibson; his brother Chic and sister Thelma Gibson; Nora, Al and Jimi Hendrix; Jimi's aunt Pearl Brown and her sister Eleanor Collins.

• Hogan's Alley (1994, 32 minutes)

This video documents the previously unrecorded history of Vancouver's black community between 1930 and the late 1960s, specifically the area alongside Hogan's Alley. The film examines the lives of three black women: Thelma Gibson is an African-Caribbean dance teacher who recalls the era with nostalgia; Pearl Brown is a well known local jazz singer who speaks about working in the chicken houses flanking Hogan's Alley; and Leah Curtis is a lesbian in her mid-forties, whose history as an abused child is interconnected with her experience as a child worker in the gambling houses of Papa White. The video investigates the identities of these women, as well as the identities of a disappeared community. Directed by Andrea Fatona and Cornelia Wyn-garden.

• CBC Interview with Jimi Hendrix (1968, 2:07 minutes)

Terry David Mulligan interviews Jimi



Hendrix and his bandmates Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell as they're getting ready to make their Vancouver debut at the Pacific Coliseum in September 1968. In this short clip Jimi talks about going to school at Dawson Annex, the good old days, family and his grandma Nora Hendrix.

• CBC Studio Interview with Nora Hendrix

(1970, 3:56 minutes)
Shortly after Jimi Hendrix's death in September 1970, Jack Webster interviews Jimi's grandmother Nora Hendrix, a former dancer, Downtown Eastside resident and one of the founders of the Fountain Chapel at Jackson and Prior. She had a close relationship with Jimi; Jimi and his father, Al Hendrix, regularly drove up from Seattle to visit Nora.

• Bamboula: A Day in the West Indies (1954, 29:23 minutes)

Broadcast on September 1, 1954, this is the second episode of the first live musical variety series produced by CBC Vancouver. The episode features performances by former Downtown Eastside residents Thelma, Chic and Leonard Gibson plus songs by Eleanor Collins. One of the first TV shows in North America to feature an inter-racial cast, the performers called themselves the "United Nations." Denis Quan, one of the lead dancers, was Chinese Canadian. To everyone's surprise, the show was cancelled after only three episodes. Len said a Toronto CBC executive told him that the interracial cast dancing together made the show too risky for sponsors. *Thank you to CBC Vancouver Archives for permission to show this episode.*

From Oklahoma to the East End

Soon after emigrating to Vancouver in 1968 (I was born in Oklahoma), I dined at Vie's Chicken and Steak House at 209 Union Street on the invite of my father-in-law, jazz musician Don Hunter. Its southern-style cooking and cheery hospitality felt familiar, reminding me of eateries I'd known as a child and the culture I'd left behind. It reminded me of what I loved about my southern heritage (and the racism I'd hated). Vie's eatery was one of the last vestiges of what – for six decades – had been Vancouver's only residential and business black community.

Eight years later, in 1976, I moved into the Downtown Eastside – north of Hastings, and later to Chinatown and Strathcona. I discovered the book *Opening Doors*, a wonderful treasure house of oral history that opened doors into the memories and cultures of my East End home. I was inspired and haunted by the life stories and wisdom of black residents Dorothy Nealy, Rosa Pryor, Leona Risby, Austin Phillips and Nora Hendrix. While I was learning about the depth and breadth of the historic black community's presence, its physical presence was vanishing: Vie's Chicken and Steak House soon closed, and the Fountain Chapel – the heart and spirit of the historic black community – was sold to Chinese Lutherans.

Over the years, I was honoured by friendships with some of Vancouver's extraordinary black performers – artists such as Ralph Cole, Denis Simpson and Tom Pickett – whose triple-threat artistry as singers, actors and dancers inspired me. Vancouver productions celebrating black heritage – such as *Ain't Misbehav'n* and *Wang Dang Doodle* – were deeply inspiring too. Our company Vancouver Moving Theatre began to program gospel, blues and jazz performed by some of our favourite artists into concerts and festivals.

The roots of *East End Blues and All That Jazz* lie in *The Downtown Eastside Community Play*, where I was one of four collaborating co-writers collecting stories from the community. I was put in touch with past and present black residents, some of whom I interviewed. But their contributions arrived too late in the writing process and there wasn't time to incorporate much of this material into the community play. Feelings of responsibility and a creative itch led into explorations with Denis Simpson, Donna Spencer and Leonard Gibson, as I felt strongly that the memories, stories and musical forms demanded recognition. These explorations have given birth to *East End Blues and All That Jazz* and *High Flying Bird* (working title), an original collaborative musical theatre work-in-progress, recently read for feedback at the Firehall Art Centre's BC Buds Spring Arts Fair.

Over the years, the more I've learned about the rich history of the East End – the historic Downtown Eastside, Vancouver's old townsite – the more I've learned to love and respect my home community: its physical beauty, its cultural and social diversity, its human scale and character, its people and its memories. I've begun to think a lot about how communities vanish or stay strong, how they preserve or lose their unique identities. It's about community, it's about preserving our physical and spiritual history; it's about preserving our relationships and supporting each other; it's about survival.

The collaborative making of *East End Blues and All That Jazz* and my search into the Downtown Eastside's black heritage is part of my life's journey to acknowledge and honour - in everything I do - my family's mixed blood heritage and history of participation on both sides of the American civil wars.

Savannah Walling

Selections from Interview with Kat Norris



Kat Norris is Coast Salish from Valdez Island, the Lyackson First Nation – speakers of the Hulquiminum language. Her mother was Coast Salish, her father was Hawaiian-Filipino and Nez Perce. Born on Valdez, Kat attended Kuper Island Residential School.

Her ancestors have a long connection with this area. *“Our people were nomadic by nature.”* They would travel to different areas around today’s Lower Mainland to hunt and fish. After colonization, they would travel to work on the farms, in the mills and food processing plants. *“A lot of our women worked in the fish plants. Even the kids would work together.”*

She and two of her friends organized the first national Aboriginal Day in this area (originally on the Capilano Reserve in North Vancouver). *“When they instituted National Aboriginal Day, I thought there should be celebrations.”* Kat continues to organize the annual Aboriginal Day Community Celebration usually held in Oppenheimer Park. [see upcoming events]

This is her understanding ~

(The lower mainland) was a space shared by many peoples and my great grandfathers used to travel over here to share and trade with the Musqueam people as a family and there are a lot of stories people aren’t aware of and stories that are lost because of people passing away.

Even our people on the island (Valdez) have emotional claim here. We traveled here, married here, have family members in Musqueam and Squamish Nations and those ties are pretty strong. We used to come over just below (today’s) Burrard bridge and catch fish, and by (today’s) 2nd Narrows).

There are stories about there being middens around Crab Park – anywhere there was a nice place, a beach – that’s where our people would congregate and stay for awhile and hunt. They wouldn’t overuse the resources of any one area, so they would go to different spaces or areas.

My elders talked about the coolness, the medicines and the water – and the rivers and creeks. They miss how hilly the area used to be. There was more fresh water and creeks that are covered over now that they could follow to the water.

Food was more plentiful and they could go anywhere. Clams, crabs, sea urchins, sea weed. Salmon, different types of salmon in different seasons. Different berries – salal, blackberries, huckleberries.

This area was really cool in the summertime because of the trees. The trees regulated the weather. ‘When a tree falls,’ they said, ‘let it stay because it will help the little animals and help the earth to stay healthy.’ The earth was really soft.

Maple trees were all over the Salish territory in this period. Mother, father and grandfather – used the maple leaf to wrap around their hand to use it like a glove to whip Indian ice cream out of the berries. Using a spoon or anything would take away from the taste and not be as fluffy.

We used to sell our dried herring and salmon roe to Japanese people. They loved to buy our tinned salmon. They liked the way our people prepared the fish - everything always had to be really clean - that’s why the Chinese and Japanese liked our foods. This area had a lot of different shops. My mother and grandma used to like to buy flour and dried foods and dry goods and materials here.

They liked that if you didn’t make it home, you could pick any spot and sleep anywhere. There were a lot more casual places where certain families would come to certain spots and it was kind of like ‘their space’ – they’d make sure it was okay to come in and check the protocol and all.

This area was shared territory. Because we were an oral people, our people know stories of different places.

Interviewed by Savannah Walling, March 13, 2008 at the Park Place Café on Powell Street

Visual Arts



**FROM BUFFALO MEAT TO BALONEY:
The art of Downtown Eastside elder Bill Quinn
To June 30
Carnegie Community Centre, 3rd floor Gallery**

This powerful series of artwork by longtime DTES resident and First Nation elder Bill Quinn - the result of a lifetime of experience on the underside of colonialism - makes an unequivocal statement about the nature of imperialism and global capitalism and the impact these forces have had on the indigenous people of the world. Ten years ago Bill took an original approach to collage art, and began to transcribe his rich understanding of contemporary society into a visual discourse that layers tragedy and humour into this one-of-a-kind exploration of the journey – and the story – of buffalo meat to baloney.

Excerpts from "Confessions of a Laundryman's Son"



My father was born in 1920 on Lulu Island (now called Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver), in a barn on the family pig-farm. He and his nine brothers and sisters attended a predominantly white grade school on Lulu Island. He later studied in California to be an aircraft maintenance technician. There, he had an instructor who could solve complex mathematical equations in his head. His name was Albert Einstein.

At the age of seventeen, my father traveled to Yin-Ping (Enping), China to marry my mother, who was fifteen years old. It was an arranged marriage. Although she was married to a Canadian born Chinese, my mother was not allowed into Canada. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 placed strict limitations on Chinese immigration, virtually cutting off all Chinese immigration to Canada. My father returned to Canada soon after their marriage because the Japanese had captured many of China's coastal cities. The newlyweds were separated for 11 years.

Soon after my mother's arrival in Canada, my father and his brother, my Uncle Loy, purchased the Gin Lee Laundry at 274 Union Street on the edge of Vancouver's Chinatown.

With the purchase of the laundry, my father ended his career with Canadian Pacific Airlines as an aircraft technician . . .

Upon the change of ownership, the laundry was renamed Union Laundry. My family operated the laundry for over 30 years. Many of our customers were the rooming houses, the hotels, and the restaurants of what was then known as Skid Road.

. . . Our living quarters were located on the second floor above the laundry. There were three bedrooms: my two sisters shared a room with our maternal grandmother, my parents shared a room with one of my brothers, and I shared a room with two other brothers.

As young children, my brothers and sisters and I started off folding small fluffy items such as towels. As we got older, we were assigned more difficult jobs, such as feeding damp linen into the mangle, a massive flat iron for pressing bed sheets and tablecloths. I spent the bulk of my boyhood folding, packaging, and organizing customers' linen . . .

. . . At one point, a laundry equipment supplier let us try out a semi-automatic wrapping machine. It was more trouble than it was worth and was quickly returned. Machines cannot compete with the efficiency of a Chinese laundry boy!

During the 1960s, the City of Vancouver had plans for an urban renewal project that included the construction of a free-way through the residential neighborhood of Strathcona and Chinatown, viewed then as an urban blight. When the mostly Chinese community stopped City Hall in its tracks, urban planners decided instead to construct a viaduct on the edge of Chinatown. Unfortunately, this is where our family laundry stood. The land was expropriated, but not before a fight from my father, who was featured in the local newspaper, vowing to hold off the bulldozers with a shotgun as he resisted forced removal . . . With the expropriation funds from the City, my parents purchased a lot across the street from the original laundry and set up operations in 1973.

Our family ran Union Laundry in its second incarnation at its new location at 231 Union Street for a few more years. We sold the laundry in 1979.

While growing up, there were times I was embarrassed to be both Chinese and a laundry kid. I wished my father were anything but a Chinese laundry



man, a stereotype I was aware of even at a young age. Rather than folding mounds of towels and bed sheets in a sweltering laundry, I wanted to be outside playing. I wanted to live anywhere but in Chinatown.

In retrospect, my boyhood in a Chinese laundry has left a deep impression on me. The shame I felt as a child is now a sense of pride as an adult. The experience of growing up in a laundry is one I would not trade. At the time, the work was labourious and never ending, but upon reflection, it made for an unusual and remarkable childhood. I can now appreciate the fact that my parents "ate bitterness" in order to provide a better life for my brothers and sisters and me.

**Elwin Xie
2007**

The full article was originally published in the arts magazine *ricepaper* vol 12.2

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My elders would say to me that I would have to be a good little boy in order to hear a story, of course I wanted to be a good boy to hear the story. I now have those voices of my elders both haunting me and protecting me, urging me to tell their stories.

Wayson Choy, born and raised in Vancouver's Chinatown

.....

Living Stories

By Savannah Walling

It is like the heartbeat of our city and what happens here happens to all of us.
Libby Davies, MP Vancouver East, from foreword to *Hope in Shadows*

Some stories about Vancouver's development are to be found only in the streets, buildings and landscapes of the Downtown Eastside – and in the memories of its residents. They are part of the founding story of this city, the common heritage of all who live in Vancouver. These Living Stories – and the stories of people who live here today – are the foundation of our Downtown Eastside community.

A spit of land on Burrard Inlet is the birthplace of Vancouver. During most of the city's first hundred years, this area was simply known as the East End. Its natural borders are the waters of Burrard Inlet on the north. Its eastern and western borders were formed by tidal streams flowing through the gulches of today's Campbell and Carrall/Columbia Streets. Its southern limits were the tidal flats of False Creek. Today it's called the Downtown Eastside.

The place from which Vancouver grew, it's one of the city's least understood and most publicized communities.

Ancestors of today's Coast Salish peoples used this spit of land for thousands of years, establishing along the fertile shores of Burrard Inlet and False Creek seasonal villages like K'emk'emlay' (Q'umq'umal'ay') and Lek'lek'i (Luq'luq'i). Use rights for its waters, lands and tidal flats were overseen by a complex traditional governing system. The area was a hub of major trade routes between inland Coast Salish and interior groups – a place to meet others who hunted and gathered. There has always been a strong First Nations presence here and still is today – it's called the largest urban reserve in Canada.

Since Vancouver's founding upon unceded Coast Salish territory, this spit

of land has been an entry point for successive waves of immigrants and young families. It's a working and retirement home for resource workers. It's a haven for middle class professionals who value sustainability over growth. It's a sanctuary for artists and the marginalized. Today the world of these residents co-exists in many of the same places as the world of the street scene.

Shaped by its mix of housing, industry, cultural diversity and history, the Downtown Eastside's distinctive, overlapping mini-communities feature Vancouver's oldest buildings: Gastown, the Main and Hastings corridors, Chinatown, Japantown (Powell Street) and Strathcona. Each street is like walking in a different neighbourhood, filled with interesting people from different walks of life and circumstance. The neighbourhood attracts and keeps people with a deep loyalty to their home.

Over and over, year after year, community members and grass roots groups such as DERA and the SRA have mobilized in their struggles: for dignity, equal protection under the law, fair working and living conditions, affordable homes, work and wages, harm reduction and treatment centres; theatres, gardens, community spaces and cultural centres. They join forces to protect our community whenever its survival is threatened. They fought for recognition as a residential community. They fight to preserve its historic physical form and scale, its beautiful old buildings, its green spaces and access to the water front. In the words of DTES poet Sandy Cameron, *"the history of the DTES has been one of struggle, of loss, of celebration and perseverance"*.

When city planners intended to wipe out huge areas of Strathcona, Chinatown, Gastown and the waterfront to make way for a super-freeway and high-rise towers, the community mobilized. After years of struggle, grass-roots initiatives forced government policy to change. As a result, the provincial and federal governments invested in innovative social housing programs and a Neighbourhood Improvement Program that launched a cultural renaissance, improving facilities at cultural centers and supporting creation of the Powell Street Festival.

As new physical and social changes seriously strain our community's social fabric, new grass roots initiatives are rising to confront the challenges. Today, for example, the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) works on housing, income and land use issues. It is also mapping the Downtown Eastside community to uncover stories of places residents value, places they find meaningful, and how we can make dangerous or unwelcoming places safer.

Downtown Eastsiders are sharing stories of today and times gone by with words and images, in paintings, photographs, songs, dances, films, essays, plays, and poems. Our stories provide ways for people to talk – in their own words – about their experiences and ways of being in the world. These stories are not always easy to hear, nor easy to tell. They uncover our hardships and defeats, but they also reveal our strengths and possibilities. Loss is a profound turning point in many of these stories. So are struggles for justice and human rights and testimonies that play a part in the process of transformation.

Our stories celebrate people who manage to thrive and be decent to each other in spite of terrible obstacles, misery and poverty. Our stories remember those who have been lost and those who have re-discovered who they are. Our stories honour our ancestors and heroes past and present.

Our stories, like our ceremonies, show how – as a community – we can come together despite our seeming differences to bring about positive change for the future and make the Downtown Eastside a healthy community for those who call it home. Our stories remind us to never, never give up; that gains always have to be defended; that you can't leave it to other people to fight your battles; that all of us are involved; that success – and survival – depend upon helping and supporting each other.

In the words of Brad Cran and Gillian Jerome in the book *Hope in Shadows*, our stories are "sparks of life and threads of wisdom." Our stories make us whole, giving us a sense of our roots, our places of belonging, our destiny. They help us draw strength from the past; to feel proud of our history and who we are; to have the courage to keep going; and to never lose hope.

for the entire article go to
www.heartofthecityfestival.com

See also: Walling, S. *Raising the Silence: Remembering The Downtown Eastside's Historical Black Community*
www.heartofthecityfestival.com

Remembering

Thank You Hal, For The Gifts You Gave Us



Harold Asham contributed his knowledge and sense of humour to the Downtown Eastside community. He was a writer, friend, tutor, volunteer, community activist, father, grandfather, brother, student, and a devoted member of the Carnegie Community Centre.

Hal worked with the Carnegie Community Action Project, and he said, "We have to fight in order to get even a small amount of justice." He was involved with Humanities 101, Science 101, and the Carnegie Book Club. He was on the Carnegie Board, worked with the Neighbourhood Small Grants Program, and was part of an Oppenheimer Park band. He made a database for the City Wide Housing Coalition, fixed computers, and taught people how to use them. And while all this was going on, he had to deal with diabetes and dialysis.

The Carnegie Centre and the Downtown Eastside meant a great deal to Hal. When writing about Carnegie volunteers he said, "I'm astounded at the heart in this place," and "I want everyone to know the heart of the community is alive and well in the Downtown Eastside." He voted in the

federal election last fall, and wrote, "It's kinda nice being community-minded at election time. I remember when I never bothered to vote. I guess being in Carnegie just makes a person want to get involved. Today is Monday and I'm helping Jean make buttons for CCAP. On Wednesday I went over to Oppenheimer Park to take part in the band practice. I don't know

how I got into the band, but it feels good. On Sunday I completely forgot the cake-making class. I was busy doing something else. You know how it goes. Maybe there'll be another class I can go to next week. Talk to you soon. Hope you have a good week - Hal."

Hal died on May 1, 2009. He was loved and respected in the Downtown Eastside, and we will miss him. We can remember him by following his example of community service. Thank you, Hal, for the gifts you have given us.

Sandy Cameron

.....
 Please remember our friends
 Who are no longer with us
 Rich and poor who have died
 On the Downtown Eastside
 Their spirits live within us
 And keep the circle strong

Leith Harris, "Please Remember"
We're All in This Together

Upcoming and Ongoing

First Annual Vancouver Anarchist Bookfair Fri June 19 and Sat June 20

Russian Hall (600 Campbell)
 A two-day gathering of various groups promoting ideas and values that are consistent with Anarchism. www.vancouveranarchistbookfair.ca

Off The Street: Arts & Crafts Fair Sat June 20

Victory Square (Hastings and Cambie)
 Sculpture, painting, knitting, carving, jewelry, quilting – on display, for sale.

National Aboriginal Solidarity Day Sun June 21

Crab Park (Portside Park, north end of Main)
 Carnegie Community Centre and Oppenheimer Park staff and volunteers invite you to the festivities.

Traces: Projecting Stories of Strathcona Fri July 24 and Sat July 25

Corner of Hastings and Jackson, screenings at dusk
 This living history project by Strathcona youth, seniors, and artists creates visible connections between past and present neighbourhood stories and images projected onto building facades and through storefront windows. www.mediaundefined.ca

Powell Street Festival Sat Aug 1 and Sun Aug 2

Woodland Park (700 Woodland Dr)
 The much loved Powell Street Festival at a new location for one year only, as the traditional venue at Oppenheimer Park is undergoing an upgrade. www.powellstreetfestival.com

6th Annual DTES Heart of the City Festival Wed Oct 28 to Sun Nov 8

Various locations in the DTES
 Music, art, talks, walks, forums, theatre, history, poetry, celebrations, video, media, comedy, food, featuring over hundreds of artists at over 80 events. www.heartofthecityfestival.com

Arts4All Institute Thurs Nov 12 to Fri Nov 20

A six-day practicum and creative laboratory for art that creates and engages with community with guest artist Ruth Howard of Toronto's Jumblies Theatre. www.heartofthecityfestival.com

after homelessness... Fri Nov 20 to Sun Nov 29

Firehall Arts Centre
 Main stage Forum Theatre play produced by Headlines Theatre. www.headlinestheatre.com

Hogan's Alley Memorial Project

The Hogan's Alley Memorial Project, a grassroots cultural organization, was founded in 2002 with the goal of preserving public memory of Vancouver's original black neighbourhood. www.hogansalleyproject.blogspot.com

East End Neighbourhood History Mapping Project & Web Site

• Did you grow up in the neighbourhoods now known as Strathcona and Grandview Woodland? Are you interested in preserving the history and heritage of the East End, Vancouver's oldest neighbourhood and the people who lived here? Contact house geneologist James Johnstone by e-mail househistorian@yahoo.ca with photos or other data to include in an interactive website that would resurrect the lost neighbourhood, in virtual reality anyway. www.homehistoryresearch.com

Credits & Thanks

EASTSIDE STORIES

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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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HATS OFF TO Eastside Stories SPONSORS



**G R E A T
BEGINNINGS**

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DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE HEART OF THE CITY FESTIVAL

Produced annually by Vancouver Moving Theatre in association with the Carnegie Community Centre and the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, with a host of community partners.

The mandate of the Heart of the City Festival is to promote, present and

facilitate development of artists, art forms, cultural traditions, history, activism, people and great stories about Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

If you have project or program ideas for future festivals or events please contact Terry Hunter at 604-628-5672.

So You Want to Learn More About the Neighbourhood's History? Bibliography

Assembled by Savannah Walling

THE OLD EAST END – All Super Resources!

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Hayes, D. *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley*

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Compton, W. *Bluesprint*

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Choy, W. *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood*

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LABOUR HISTORY

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SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOURS

Atkin, J. *Vancouver Walks*

Footprints Community Art Project *Old Vancouver Townsite Walking Tour*

Vancouver and District Labour Council *Labour, Work and Working People Walking Tour*

Vancouver Heritage Foundation *Historic Map-Guides*
www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org

for the entire bibliography go to
www.heartofthecityfestival.com

The Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival
in cooperation with Carnegie Community Centre and radha yoga & eatery presents
Vancouver Moving Theatre's production



East End Blues & All That Jazz

featuring

Master of Ceremonies *Chic Gibson*

Singers *Tom Pickett & Candus Churchill*

Musical Director *Bill Costin*

Musicians *Bill Costin & Tim Stacey*

Special Guest *Thelma Gibson*

Directed by *Denis Simpson*

Created and written by *Denis Simpson*

& *Savannah Walling with Mr. Leonard Gibson*

A soul-stirring evening of gospel and blues, jazz and memories
celebrating the historic black community of Vancouver's East End

SATURDAY JUNE 20 7:30pm

Black history films 6pm

Carnegie Community Centre, 401 Main Street FREE

SUNDAY JUNE 21 7:30pm

radha yoga & eatery, 728 Main Street \$10 at the door