

# NEXUS

camosun's student voice since 1990

summer 2012

nexusnewspaper.com



assisted suicide: a multi-faceted story

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# We need voices.

Representing the student voice can be a lot of work, and volunteers go a long way towards making each issue of *Nexus* fantastic.

**We could use your help.**

**Writers** - We cover news, sports, and entertainment on campus and throughout Victoria, from local theatre to mainstream movies, concerts, and festivals.

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**NEXUS**  
camosun's student voice since 1990

# NEXUS

camosun's student voice since 1990

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These stories (except Local, Live and Loud on page 14) were originally published in *Nexus* during the fall '11 and winter '12 semesters.

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One of the most interesting, fun, and satisfying aspects of being involved in media is keeping your eye on a story after you've covered it. In the case of assisted suicide, we did an in-depth feature story on the extremely sensitive and philosophically engaging subject back in November of 2011. It's reprinted here, in our Summer issue, as one of the stories chosen to represent what we've done in the past school year.

The subject of assisted suicide is in the news again, and now it's because the BC Supreme Court has decided to strike down parts of the Canadian law which bans assisted suicide. (The story reprinted here is left how it was when it originally ran.) Some people say this gives them the right to die with dignity when they feel their time has come; others feel that it's murder. The story is far from over. Canada will continue to have its eye on it, as will all of us editors, journalists, and aspiring young writers.

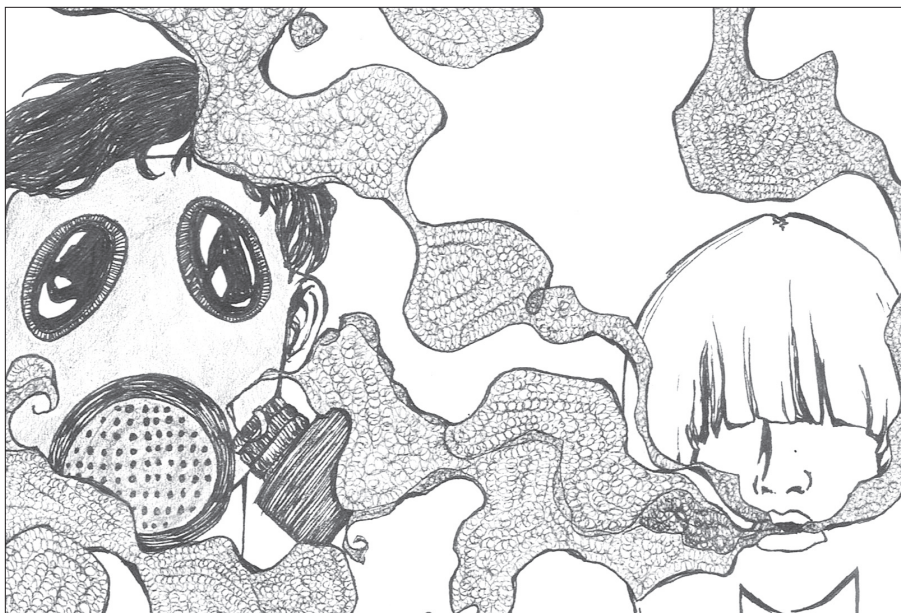
There are lots of opportunities at college newspapers to cover subjects, events, and topics that are touchy, that are controversial, that deserve to be covered. Stories that need to be told.

We're proud of the stories that we've told. This special magazine-format issue looks back at some of them while we get ready to start producing regular issues of *Nexus* again in September.

Interested in telling the stories as they unfold instead of reading them? Drop us a line at editor@nexusnewspaper.com and we'll get you started.

Greg Pratt  
editor-in-chief

## Camosun is too smokin’



JESSICA TAI/NEXUS

**JEAN OLIVER**

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Camosun students who use Ewing 100 at the Lansdowne campus for classes and labs should get free gas masks upon registration. It’s the only way to survive the smoke that gets sucked in through the doors and windows.

The levels of secondhand smoke around the designated smoking areas have impacted the routes I take to class as well. And sitting down to enjoy a sunny, warm day? Best to not do it in territory controlled by the smokers.

Sitting at picnic tables anywhere in the Fisher courtyard, or volunteering at one of the display tables, makes it impossible to avoid the fumes (unless you have that gas mask handy).

The college is working towards implementing a smoke-free campus policy, which won’t happen any sooner than fall 2012; in the meantime, it’s my hope that students will be able to use the breezeway corridor picnic tables without having to sit upwind of the Fisher building.

When the windows of the Ewing lab get opened, when lots of traffic comes in and out of the doors next to the gazebo-style smoking shelter, eye-stinging, headache-inducing clouds of cigarette smoke get sucked inside, chimney-style. (You know, a clip could be installed on the back of our

chairs for those gas masks.)

Students and staff in Fisher 214 and 216 have also complained about smoke wafting across the courtyard and in through the windows.

Entering the bottom floor of the Ewing building fills me with nostalgia for the days I enjoyed a smoke in a nightclub. The acrid, lingering aroma of stale cigarettes in the stairwell... All that’s missing is my feet sticking to day-old dried beer on the floor.

And Ewing 100? Not a happy place. Even if you manage to luck out and find a free computer, you join other students whose red eyes stream with tears as they peer at their screens through the fumes.

Don’t get me wrong, I understand where the smokers come from: I am an ex-smoker. To my former smoking pals I am to be pitied. I am a traitorous weakling. I broke the creed. I am Boromir. I abandoned my phlegm-filled sisters and brothers for pink lungs and full-olfactory function.

To this day I miss the camaraderie that’s only to be found ’round sharing fire. I know what it means to turn your shoulder to the wind and shelter a lit match. I remember the tender looks elicited by the holy grail of questions: “Can I bum a smoke?”

I was the one who always had a lighter that worked.

Now I fantasize about gas masks.

## Time for drug awareness 2.0

**JAI RAKIC**

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In BC, 16 people died from adverse effects to ecstasy in 2011; two more have already died in 2012.

At least five of these deaths have been blamed on the drug being cut with PMMA, which is up to five times more potent than the drug’s preferred ingredient, MDMA.

When this bad batch surfaced in June of 2011, police and media alerted the general public and went on to rail about the deaths as pointless and preventable.

What police should have really done, instead of giving the tired “you’re always in danger when you take drugs” validation, was something far more useful and potentially life-saving, like sharing real details (colour, shape, stamp) of the tainted drug.

We should be focusing on equipping those inclined to take the drug with the knowledge to recognize a bad pill if they come across one.

Measures like this need to be taken to protect our youth and inform and arm them so that future loss of life can be minimized. While we can’t protect them from themselves, we can try and protect them from the unscrupulous drug pushers that knowingly incorporate hazardous ingredients into their products.

Is it too much to ask for a little more awareness when it comes to social drugs like ecstasy and cocaine, where the typical user is somebody you probably work with or even sit beside in class?

The Dutch, always ahead of the game when it comes to educating their citizens on drug safety, have introduced on-the-spot drug testing at large raves and once a week at most cafes.

These sensible drug precautions are being adopted throughout Europe; it’s definitely time that Canada followed suit instead of condoning Russian Roulette.

There will always be the argument that drugs are dangerous and providing harm-reduction tools will condone their use, but the social cost is too high. When it comes to drug use, it seems as if our officials believe that dead bodies are the best deterrent.

## Camosun ombudsman here to help students

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“I seem to have found something that suits me and I seem to suit the job. So I’m quite happy doing it.”

**CARTER MACDONALD**  
CAMOSUN COLLEGE

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VANESSA DAVIES/NEXUS

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**VANESSA DAVIES**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Camosun College ombudsman Carter MacDonald is one busy guy. Having signed a two-year contract extension with the college in September 2011, he finds most of his time split between his offices at the Lansdowne and Interurban campuses.

As an ombudsman, MacDonald acts as an advocate of fairness for students. His duties include giving students advice on any number of issues regarding teachers, policies, and referrals to other offices, as well as attending meetings with students and the college to act as mediator. His position is funded equally by the college and the Camosun College Student Society; the funding is equal to maintain an impartial view. (Go to [camosun.ca/ombuds](http://camosun.ca/ombuds) for more information on the services provided by the ombudsman.)

“My mandate is to come to an informal resolution of issues, so in a lot of ways it’s like being a problem-solver,” he says. “I’m

### Camosun ombudsman Carter MacDonald.

trying to help students solve problems that are bothering them or interfering with their success as a student here at the college.”

On average, MacDonald sees 25 students a week, and those numbers increase around end of term. He spends a lot of time between meetings networking to find solutions for the students he has spoken to.

MacDonald retired from the position of college safety manager at Camosun four years ago, which he had done for nearly 10 years. After being contracted to help with college safety again, MacDonald found himself in the ombudsman role when then-ombudsman Gary Insley was off on long-term medical leave.

When Insley didn’t return, MacDonald became the permanent ombudsman.

“It turns out that while it was a bit surprising for me to stumble into the role, I seem to have found something that suits me and I seem to suit the job. So I’m quite happy doing it,” he says.

Apart from his ongoing ombudsman duties, the constantly busy MacDonald also teaches a course for the Camosun school of business on human rights, harassment, abusive authority, and bullying in the workplace.

“I’ve also taught non-violent crises intervention, self-defence for women, and a number of different things,” he says. “Some of those I don’t do anymore, but I can do variations of them, and sometimes I get asked to do that. It keeps me quite busy, but I like to be busy.”

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# Students get thrifty for interesting clothes



KATE MASTERS/NEXUS

**Camosun student Emily Harris' old-school boots.**

## **KATE MASTERS** CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Finding well-fitting and stylish secondhand clothing can be a daunting task, but shopping at thrift stores is a great way for students to find affordable clothes. Plus, it's a way to find items that are a bit different than what's available in other clothing stores.

"I just think it's more unique, and I like the idea of recycled clothing," says visual arts student Emily Harris.

Thrift-store shopping is usually about finding a statement piece, but consider buying basics there as well.

"I get a lot of my long-sleeve plaid t-shirts secondhand, and some pullover sweaters," says university transfer arts student William Butcher.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the sheer volume of clothes in thrift stores. The racks of clothes are often disorganized, which can lead to further frustration.

It's good to have a focus when heading into these stores. By having a clear visual image of a future purchase, sifting through the undesirable garments becomes easy.

"Generally, I have an idea of what kind of look I'm going for before I buy something," says visual arts student Keilah Lukenbill-Williams.

Also, have a look in an older relative's closet; they might own a timeless blouse or blazer that can be adapted in a modern way. In Harris' case, she wears her mother's boots.

"I know they're really old and probably from London," she says.

But there are drawbacks to secondhand stores. Business student Lauren Kubek says she would like to purchase clothes at thrift stores, but can't due to her allergies.

"Cat dander gets in fabrics," says Kubek, "so it's hard for me to buy secondhand clothes."

But not all cheap clothing has to be secondhand. Popular stores like H&M have a wide variety of clothes for reasonable prices, and discount clothing stores like Dots and Winners have brand-new clothes that are marked down anywhere from 40 to 60 percent.

### **Looking for cheap threads? Start here.**

#### **Value Village (1810 Store)**

The most extensive thrift store around, with a huge selection of men's and women's fashions at reasonable prices. The downside? It's huge, and often disorganized.

#### **Salvation Army Victoria (525 Johnson, 3948 Quadra)**

The Sally Ann is smaller than Value Village, but it's cheaper and has a good selection. As with any thrift store, digging out the fabulous finds is always the challenge.

#### **The Patch (719 Yates)**

Only quality secondhand clothing, so it isn't as overwhelming as traditional thrift stores. Unfortunately, the prices are higher.

#### **Dots (724 Fort)**

At Dots you can pay \$20 for items from brands like Kensie and Kersh that the Bay and boutiques downtown sell for \$70. Too bad about the limited selection of men's clothing.

#### **Winners (3170 Tillicum, 2945 Jacklin)**

Specializes in having brand-name clothes for low prices. Unfortunately, it's a very large store and the desirable clothes can get picked over quickly.

Don't forget about other thrift stores like WIN and St. Vincent de Paul. Money from purchases from these places even goes to local charities.

# STATE OF THE ARTS

## HOW ARTS FUNDING AFFECTS OUR COMMUNITIES

BY ALI HACKETT, STAFF WRITER

PHOTO BY CAROL-LYNNE MICHAELS

When Stephen Harper famously declared that “ordinary people” don’t care about arts funding during the 2008 election campaign, artists and arts groups were quickly forced to prove their worth. At that time, \$45 million had just been cut from the federal arts budget, and not long after, the government of BC made serious cuts of its own.

Since the provincial government made those serious cuts to arts funding in 2009, many artists and arts groups in BC have had to find innovative ways to generate money while struggling to make ends meet.

The Victoria Spoken Word Festival is one of the affected groups, and is coming into its second year without any government funding.

Missie Peters, festival director, says it’s the only one of its kind in Canada, but that their application for a government grant was denied. The festival pairs emerging poets with professionals from across the country to help them develop new skill sets. In lieu of government funding, Peters was inspired to fundraise for the

festival herself and decided to register it with IndieGoGo, one of the biggest online funding platforms.

“The idea really was for me to be able to connect with the spoken-word community, and the people who love the art form across the country,” she says. “In this way we can pool funding on a national level, get people excited, and get some exposure for the festival, in addition to getting funds.”

Beyond the public funding, Peters says she’s received community support in the form of billets, drivers, and other volunteers.

“To me, getting people who may not have otherwise had an opportunity to get involved is almost as valuable, or more important, than the money,” she says. “It’s really made us build that local network.”

This festival has had a positive experience without government funding, and although it hasn’t been easy, Peters says that she’s proud that the festival has been able to succeed without any grant money coming its way.

And, as it turns out, the Spoken Word Festival’s situation is not unique.

### Public investment equals public enjoyment

Keith Higgins, a Vancouver-based artist, has been involved in artist-run organizations since the ’80s. He has helped create all sorts of institutions, including Artspeak Gallery and The Pacific Association of Artist-Run Centres, and continues to run Publication Studio Vancouver, a small publishing house, among other things. He believes that although there are ways for artists and arts groups to generate income, public investment allows artists to be more experimental in their work.

“We’re quite lucky to have an institution like the Canada Council, which awards money based on the perceived merits of the work, and exists at an arm’s length from political imperatives,” he says. “That really allows a multiplicity of voices.”

Higgins says that when it comes to discussing arts funding, the focus often tends to revolve around whether or not artists can produce work. He says that’s not necessarily the issue.

“You’re going to see art made,” says



Higgins, “but you’re not going to see it. What public investment often ensures is that the public will have access to the culture that’s being made.”

Whether it’s paintings, sculpture, plays, or writing, the access to culture is an important distinction. Although there’s some truth to the “starving artist” stereotype, having poor artists doesn’t necessarily serve the community.

“If I see it from my point of view,” says Higgins, “I see the arts as a welcoming space. Quite often in theatre, music, or dance, you find a haven for people who, for one reason or another, find they don’t fit in somewhere.”

Higgins also says that exposure to arts and different culture can enhance communication within a community.

“We’re more able to get along as communities and as societies when there’s access to culture,” says Higgins, “especially when there’s culture being produced that’s actually responsive to the community.”

According to Higgins, the importance of the arts isn’t often acknowledged. The debate about the value of art can be a heated one. Opponents of public arts funding say an unfair advantage is given to people who get grants over those who don’t. Beyond that, it’s hard to place a monetary value on something as subjective as art. That being said, Higgins maintains that culture is worth investing in, for both social and economic reasons.

“The provincial government in British Columbia, regardless of its political stripes, has rarely stepped up with adequate or reasonable levels of support, especially when it comes to access to culture,” he says. “The unfortunate thing about that is people with-

out access don’t know what it’s like to have those facilities in their communities.”

Higgins feels that the underinvestment in culture has left us in a negative cycle. One result of this historic lack of appreciation is that many artists have left their communities in search of a place where they will feel valued.

It’s also hard for artists to lobby for federal money, either from the Canada Council for the Arts or the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, when they haven’t had investments on the provincial or municipal level.

### Artistic independence

Ian Case, general manager of the Intrepid Theatre, says they’ve had to make administrative changes, including the reduction of staff, to keep up with funding cuts. Case has been working at Intrepid for almost 10 years and says the loss of provincial gaming grants and cuts to arts funding in 2009 has had huge impacts on the arts community in BC. (The provincial government uses revenue generated by gambling to fund eligible groups in the forms of grants.)

When Case started, government funding made up 45 to 50 percent of Intrepid’s annual budget; now it’s about 30 percent. The theatre company increasingly relies on earned revenues, donations, and sponsorship to make ends meet.

“As the company has grown it’s become less reliant on [government funding],” says Case. “Having said that, government funding is still really important, not only for Intrepid Theatre, but for all the non-profit

arts organizations, because it allows them to maintain the accessibility and affordability of their programs.”

Increased reliance on commercial or box-office sales means looking less at pushing the boundaries and more at marketing towards mass appeal.

“Having government funding means we can offer work that you might not see otherwise,” says Case. “It also encourages artists to test their limits and create work that is more exciting than regular commercial fare.”

The BC Liberals recently reinstated \$15 million in gaming grants, bringing the total to \$135 million annually. They’ve guaranteed the same amount for the next fiscal year, but still haven’t outlined a sufficient long-term strategy, at least not in the point of view of Higgins.

“Anybody who’s lived here will tell you that the provincial government works on a sort of binge-purge cycle, as far as budgeting goes,” says the artist. “About a year and a half before an election they suddenly have money for things. Abruptly after the election they say, ‘By the way, our budget forecasts weren’t quite right,’ and the austerity measures roll out.”

### Art economy

The BC Arts Council (BCAC) is a provincially funded peer-review panel that gives grants to artists and arts groups. The government appoints its members but the panel operates under its own mandate.

“Once the government gives us the money





they do not interfere in how we distribute it amongst the disciplines and applicants,” says Stanley Hamilton, BCAC chair.

The BCAC acts as an advocate for the arts, and has a different funding pool than the gaming grants or the Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development, another provincial contributor to arts funding.

Last year, the BCAC contributed almost \$17 million in arts grants, across 225 communities in BC. Hamilton says almost 80,000 people are employed in the arts sector in BC. The economic impacts of the arts are felt regionally, as well, and it’s not just the employment of the artists. Hamilton points to the Belfry Theatre and the Victoria Symphony, both of which receive operating grants from the BCAC, as supporters of the local economy. Their audiences tend to spend money on dinner or drinks when attending shows, as well as parking, public transportation, and cabs.

Case also knows the effect of the arts on the economy, and he’s often asked to argue for the arts from the economic point of view. He cites the 2010 Greater Victoria Arts and Culture Sector Economic Activity Study, completed by Dr. Brock Smith of the Peter B. Gustavson School of Business at the University of Victoria, as a great example of the success of arts.

“It’s not a small industry,” says Case. “It creates a lot of jobs, and it’s an economic generator municipally, in terms of activity downtown.”

The study says the total economic activity generated by the Greater Victoria arts and culture sector in 2010 was \$170 million in net income. This takes into account all

expenditures by part-time artists and hobbyists, full-time artists, and arts businesses and organizations, as well as money spent by arts patrons, and is the equivalent of \$21 million in property tax revenue.

The report shows that money invested in the arts scene in Victoria not only stays in the community, it also draws people here. The vibrancy of a city rich in culture entices investors and tourists alike.

Higgins, too, applauds the economic impact of the arts, but says wages are still pretty low when compared to the provincial average, and a lot of artists are struggling. Higgins is also the executive director of the UNIT/PITT Projects, formerly the Helen Pitt Gallery, and says they almost had to close their doors due to gaming grants cuts in 2009. When the gallery moved, the only premises they could afford in Vancouver didn’t have plumbing or heat.

“We’re managing, but I wouldn’t ask somebody else to work in these circumstances,” says Higgins. “I’ve got full-time work here: publishing, presenting exhibitions, putting on public programs. But my salary works out to about 10 bucks an hour once you break it down over all the work I’m doing. The ability to apply for the [gaming grants] again is going to ease a lot of pain.”

### All points to public funding

Jo-Ann Roberts, host of *All Points West* on CBC Radio One in Victoria, says exposure to and involvement in the arts fosters our ability as a society to think creatively.

“It’s always been my feeling that the arts allow us to think about bigger issues,” says Roberts, “and to see things in a way we haven’t seen them before. The arts often show us a creative way forward when faced with tough times.”

She makes the case for publicly funded art and includes some of CBC’s programming in that category, although not everyone agrees.

Opponents of the CBC say that taxpayers’ money would be better spent elsewhere and that the market should dictate art consumption.

The issue with this, says Roberts, is that when left in the hands of private media corporations, the focus shifts towards ways of generating profit, rather than the public interest.

“Because [CBC] is not tied to meeting just what shareholders want, we can often present what is not commercially viable, at least initially,” says Roberts.

Roberts cites CBC Radio 3, which promotes independent music, and their annual literature competition, known as Canada Reads, as two of the many examples of how the CBC continues to make art accessible to the public.

The bottom line when it comes to arts funding, according to Roberts, is providing avenues for arts groups to be heard. She says arts cuts directly impact the state of arts in Canada.

“If art isn’t publicly funded,” says Roberts, “there’s less reason for private news or broadcast organizations to cover and support the arts, because they’re not feeling any competitive pressure.”

# Self-chosen death: a heart-w

By Ali Hackett, staff writer

This story was originally published in November of 2011. There have been changes in the legislation surrounding assisted suicide in Canada since then (see Letter from the Editor, page 3). We left the story here as it originally ran to preserve its context.

About a decade ago, Camosun university transfer student Joanna Webber's uncle decided he wanted to be euthanized.

Half of Webber's family lives in Holland, where assisted suicide is legal. When her uncle, who was suffering from Multiple Sclerosis, started considering this end-of-life decision, her entire family was involved and backed him up.

"The whole family came together and made the decision," she says. "Everyone was really supportive."

Webber says her uncle's demeanour changed when he decided on a date for his death.

"When he had set the date he was so happy and just living life," she says. "There was a brutal heat wave in Holland that summer, but he didn't care at all."

Before his disease progressed, Webber's uncle was a doctor and researcher, and decided to give his body to science upon death. Part of what changed after his decision to die was that he now had some certainty in his life.

**"WHEN HE HAD SET THE DATE TO DIE, HE WAS SO HAPPY AND JUST LIVING LIFE."**

**Joanna Webber  
Camosun Student**

"Multiple Sclerosis is really intense because you lose different functions slowly," she says. "You never know what's coming."

Webber feels that the open discussion about her uncle's chosen death helped the family as well.

"In Canada, we don't have the choice to come to that conclusion; you can't discuss it with your family members because that would just be crazy," she says. "In Holland, you can actually talk about it. They have counselling for the family to help them come to grips with it."

## Leaving home to die

Globally, there are thousands of suicide-related organizations, both for and against, with valid arguments on both sides.

Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, and Switzerland allow different forms of assisted suicide. As well, three US states—Oregon, Washington, and Montana—have recently allowed physician-assisted suicide for terminally ill patients only.

But in Canada all forms of euthanasia and assisted-suicide remain unlawful, although the law has been challenged in court several times. Under the current Criminal Code, a person who aids or abets suicide can be imprisoned for up to 14 years.

Currently in BC, a Vancouver woman named Gloria Taylor, the BC Civil Liberties Association, and three others are challenging the law preventing assisted suicide. Taylor, 63, suffers from ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, and wants the same rights as people in Holland and other parts of the world.

ALS is a degenerative disease causing muscle waste; eventually all control of voluntary movement is lost. When internal muscles such as the diaphragm fail, patients are unable to breathe on their own. Often sufferers of ALS die from respiratory failure.

Diseases like these are often brought up when right-to-die advocates make their case in court. Degenerative diseases act slowly and are unpredictable. Some people live for years, although they are often unable to walk, eat, or take care of themselves, while the brain stays intact.

In the case of Taylor, she is physically unable to commit suicide on her own, although mentally able to make the decision. Under the current law, she would have to ask a loved one or doctor for assistance, putting them at risk for prosecution.

The three other plaintiffs in the *Carter v. Canada* case are Victoria doctor William Shoicet and Lee Carter and Hollis Johnson, a married couple who flew Lee's mother, Kathleen, to die with the help of an assisted-dying group in Switzerland earlier this year.

The couple's participation in the trip has put them at risk for criminal charges, but they have come forward because they believe these services should be available in Canada. The trip to Switzerland cost over \$30,000, and had to be done under a shroud of secrecy. The mother was unable to say goodbye to her friends, and the family couldn't tell anyone their plan, which they believe was an unnecessary cruelty.

## Regulation by prohibition

Canadian Alex Schadenberg is the executive director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC); a group that believes all forms of euthanasia and assisted-suicide should remain unlawful. EPC was created

# renching dilemma

after the highly referenced Sue Rodriguez case, which drew a lot of attention to the right-to-die movement.

Schadenberg switched his focus from pro-life advocate to the alleged dangers of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide and formed the EPC, which is acting as an intervener in the *Carter v. Canada* case.

“We need a law to protect our citizens,” says Schadenberg. “We need a law sometimes to protect me. For us to have a just and fair society, we can’t have a situation that says, ‘You have the right to kill me.’ It doesn’t work.”

Russel Ogden, co-founder of the Farewell Foundation in Vancouver, got his start researching the assisted suicides of AIDS patients in the early ’90s, and has been studying self-chosen death ever since. The Farewell Foundation is also acting as an intervener in the *Carter vs Canada* case. He believes the Swiss approach to assisted suicide does work, and has a place in Canadian society.

In Switzerland, assisted suicide is done outside the healthcare system, with help from assisted dying groups, as well as doctors, nurses, and psychiatrists.

“It has a combination of upfront safeguards, as well as after-the-fact safeguards for every self-chosen death,” says Ogden. “In order to receive assistance with dying in Switzerland, a person must undergo a process of eligibility, an assurance that they are not operating under any misapprehension of what their suffering is, that they are making a fully informed request, and that there is no undue influence or coercion.”

Assisted deaths in Switzerland are reported to the coroner, police, and prosecutor, and an immediate investigation follows.

“The consequence of that,” says Ogden, “is it’s unlikely that anybody wishing to act in an unethical manner is going to choose this approach.”

Schadenberg, on the other hand, believes that coercion is impossible to prove, and feels that the Swiss model, too, is flawed.

**“FOR US TO HAVE A JUST AND FAIR SOCIETY, WE CAN’T HAVE A SITUATION THAT SAYS ‘YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KILL ME.’ IT DOESN’T WORK.”**

**Alex Schadenberg  
Euthanasia Prevention Coalition**

“The fact is, in Switzerland we’ve had the whole action of assisted suicide... change very quickly. It’s not about terminal illness,” he says. “For instance, now you have assisted suicide for couples. You have one member in a couple who is just an elderly person, and the other one who has a terminal condition, and they’re doing assisted suicide for that. So, you know, as time goes along, people say there isn’t really any abuse. If you allow everything, then I guess there’s nothing that you can do which is wrong.”

Ogden feels that keeping the conversation about assisted suicide open and transparent leads to safe and responsible practices. Prohibition, on the other hand, just drives it underground.

“People still find appropriate medications and plastic bags to die,” says Ogden. “The prohibition is not stopping people. It doesn’t work.”

## Right, wrong, or choice

The exact guidelines and protocol around assisted suicide vary between countries and states. In Switzerland, anyone can choose assisted suicide, no illness required, but in Oregon a person must have less than six months to live as diagnosed by a doctor. Ogden maintains that the issue needs to be about choice.

“This is about choosing the manner, the time, and the location of one’s death,” says Ogden. “At the moment, most people are dying in the hospital setting, and they don’t get to make a decision about when that happens.”

Often, palliative care patients are receiving so much morphine or other medication for their pain that they aren’t fully conscious at the end of their lives.

“The ability to say goodbye, at the time of your choosing, is enhanced if you’re picking the day that you’re going to die,” says Ogden. “You can gather the people that you want to say goodbye to, send the postcards, make the phone calls... If you’re in the typical dying process of most Canadians, you will go very slowly, in a prolonged way, in an institution.”

Ogden points out that neither he nor the Farewell Foundation are opposed to the current situation, but that some people would rather pick their final event with greater precision.

“There are different ways of organizing one’s dying process,” says Ogden, “and we believe that people should be able to have whichever option they would like.”

## End-of-life care

The normal procedure when a doctor decides that no more effort should be put into sustaining life is to have palliative care take over. Palliative care can provide relief from pain and other distressing symptoms at the end of life, but is inconsistent throughout Canada.

In fact, there's evidence to suggest that abuse of sedatives and painkillers is already happening during palliative care, both intentionally and unintentionally.

In his sworn affidavit as a witness for the Attorney General of Canada in the *Carter v. Canada* case, Dr. Jose Pereira discloses several ways in which palliative sedation is abused today. The abuses range from use of sedation to hasten death, use of sedation in inappropriate circumstances, inadequate patient assessment, and a number of other situations that arise due to clinician or physician fatigue or highly complex cases.

***“SURELY THE BETTER THE QUALITY OF LIFE IS, AND THE BETTER YOUR PALLIATIVE CARE IS, THE LESS LIKELY IT IS THAT YOU WOULD REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN DYING.”***

**Udo Schuklenk  
Chair of Expert Panel, Royal Society of Canada**

At the palliative care stage, medical staff turns its focus to the patient's comfort without considering the side effects of, for example, morphine, which can cause respiratory depression or death.

Dr. Will Johnston, a general practitioner in Vancouver and chair of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition of BC, highlights the difference between the use of morphine in palliative care and euthanasia.

“I've had people say, ‘You will give me a pill if it gets really bad, won't you?’” he says. “And I've been able to honestly assure them that it is considered completely valid and ethical palliative care to give a person as much pain relief as they want, as much sedation as they want, with the eye being on the pain and sedation, not the intent to kill.”

Johnston defends the state of palliative care in Canada, although a recent report released by the Royal Society of Canada, called End-of-Life Decision Making, as well as Pereira's testimony, reveals the need for extensive improvements.

“At the moment, palliative care in Canada is not wonderful,” says Udo Schuklenk, chair of the expert panel that researched and co-authored the report.

But even if palliative care was improved across the board, the report points out the need for individuals to have end-of-life options.

“Surely the better the quality of your life is, and the better your palliative care is, the less likely it is that you would request assistance in dying,” says Schuklenk. “Having said that, for many people there is an existential suffering involved knowing that they have a few months or a year left, and they're not prepared to wait for that. In the view of the panel members at least, that is a very reasonable response and it should be respected.”

## Does decriminalization lead to criminals?

Johnston contends that society would be at risk should assisted suicide be legalized.

“The increment in suffering between, say, Gloria Taylor's death in my care, using legal, ethical palliative care, and her death her way... will be small enough that it's simply not worth the danger to society of changing the law,” says Johnston. “I can see how easily people are improperly influenced, and how the next stop could easily be... a suicide prescription. The proposal that we could control this stuff is, to me, unrealistic and naive.”

The End-of-Life Decision Making report looked at data from countries where assisted suicide is decriminalized, and conceded that there had been abuse of the system, as Johnston predicts.

To determine whether these abuses were happening only in societies where assisted suicide was legal, the panel also looked at countries where it's unlawful: Canada, Britain, Germany, and Australia.

***“THIS IS ABOUT CHOOSING THE MANNER, THE TIME, AND THE LOCATION OF ONE'S DEATH. AT THE MOMENT, MOST PEOPLE ARE DYING IN THE HOSPITAL SETTING, AND THEY DON'T GET TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT WHEN THAT HAPPENS.”***

**Russel Ogden  
The Farewell Foundation**

What they have found is that involuntary euthanasia is happening in those places as well. According to the report, there doesn't seem to be any evidence at all that decriminalization leads to more abuse or more involuntary deaths.

“Our suspicion is that abuse is just taking place in any system,” says Schuklenk. “What we need to ensure is that the abuse is limited to the maximum possible extent. This is true in both societies where it is criminalized, and societies where it is decriminalized.”

# Film explores human ambition via Everest



PHOTO PROVIDED

**Mount Everest is the world's most commercialized mountain. It's also one of the deadliest.**

**MEGAN GIBSON**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Climbing Mount Everest is an unattainable dream for many people, unless you have \$100,000.

It used to be that a climber would spend many gruelling years in training before approaching Mount Everest; now all you need is money.

Documentary filmmaker Dianne Whelan spent 40 days at the base of Mount Everest documenting the climbing season of those who were motivated, for one reason or another, to conquer the world's largest (and most commercialized) mountain.

"For me, the mountain has always been a metaphor for human ambition," says Whelan. "Today there are over 250 dead bodies on Everest, frozen failed ambitions. Climbers literally have to step over the dead to get to the top. So I think

the mountain is still a metaphor for human ambition, but that metaphor has changed and I think that says something about who we have become."

*40 Days at Base Camp* had its world premiere at the Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) this past October; all three screenings sold out.

"I've seen a lot of Mount Everest and climbing documentaries; what's really outstanding about this one is that you got to see the climbers' personalities," says VIFF's Canadian images programmer Terry McEvoy. "Usually a documentary is about the glory of getting to the top of the mountain, but this one's about an outlaw community; you're dying a little bit every day that you're there."

*40 Days at Base Camp* was also the opening film for the Banff Mountain Film Festival. In April it screened at the Trento

Film Festival in Italy, the world's oldest mountain film festival.

"This is an independent film, so I want to get it out to the world," says Whelan. "Getting out in Canada is the first step in that long process."

During her cross-Canada tour, which brought her to Victoria in April, Whelan aimed to create awareness that Canadian-content films are rare and unregulated.

"We want to bring attention to these two points," she says. "One, [Canadian] English films have represented only one percent of the domestic box office in Canada for decades; two, unlike in radio and television, which both have strict Canadian content regulations, there is no protection for Canadian content in movie theatres. With all the mergers in media, essentially a handful of people decide what we see on TV and in the theatres."

## NEXUSNEWSPAPER.COM

## local, live, and loud

by marielle moodley

JULY 10-14

### 13th Annual Ska Fest

The 13th annual Ska Fest features so many cool bands it's best to say just head over to victoriaskafest.ca for a complete roundup of what's going on during this four-day skankster's paradise.

THURSDAY, JULY 12

### Open Relationship, The Chantrelles, Hundy Thou

Upstairs Cabaret, \$8, 8 pm  
Forces of feminine strength along with guys who break it down make these three local bands a unique combination of indie punk rock, soulful funk, and punkish hip-hop.

FRIDAY, JULY 13

### The Tragically Hip, Sam Roberts Band

Juan de Fuca Rec Centre lower fields, \$59.50, 4 pm  
Locals Jets Overhead and Current Swell will get things started before Sam Roberts gets all chill and hair and dude on everyone and then a little unknown rock combo called The Tragically Hip rocks the joint as the sun sets. Sounds nice, no?

SATURDAY JULY 14

### The Ghostbirds

Fort St Café, \$5, 8 pm  
The Ghostbirds are throwing a music video release party, so come check out their talented haunting harmonies and instrumentals.

SATURDAY JULY 21

### Snoop Dogg

Save on Foods Memorial Centre, \$39.50-\$59.50, 7 pm  
Hip-hop heavyweight Snoop Dogg is coming to Victori-izzle to perform some of his top shizzle that he's ever prodizzled! Just mentioning that The Dogfather is coming to town is more than enough to get crowds c-walking down to the show.

FRIDAY JUNE 27-29

### Rock of the Woods: a variety of West Coast Musicians

Glenora Farms, \$45-\$100, 4 pm  
Rock of the Woods' impressive line up showcases multi-faceted musical talents, from the beachy/folky vibes of John Middleton all the way to the electronic

talent of DJ Hennessy. Well worth the trip out to farmland!

TUESDAY JULY 31-AUG 5

### Mamma Mia

Royal Theatre, \$79-\$89  
Broadway's smash ABBA-based hit and one of the most successful musicals of all time, Mamma Mia, makes its way to Victoria.

FRIDAY AUGUST 3-4

### As the Crow Flies

Gorge Harbor Marina, Cortes Island  
As the Crow Flies are playing a two-day show with an acoustic Americana Friday night show followed by a psychedelic onslaught of electric mayhem on Saturday night.

SEPTEMBER 4

### Yelewolf

Club goneg  
Get ready for some loud, crunk, southern hip-hop as Yelewolf spews his voice on the mic overtop some sick southern beats.

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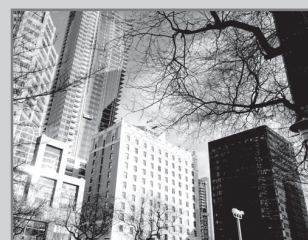
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# COMICS

Noble Sloth Manifesto By Libby Hopkinson



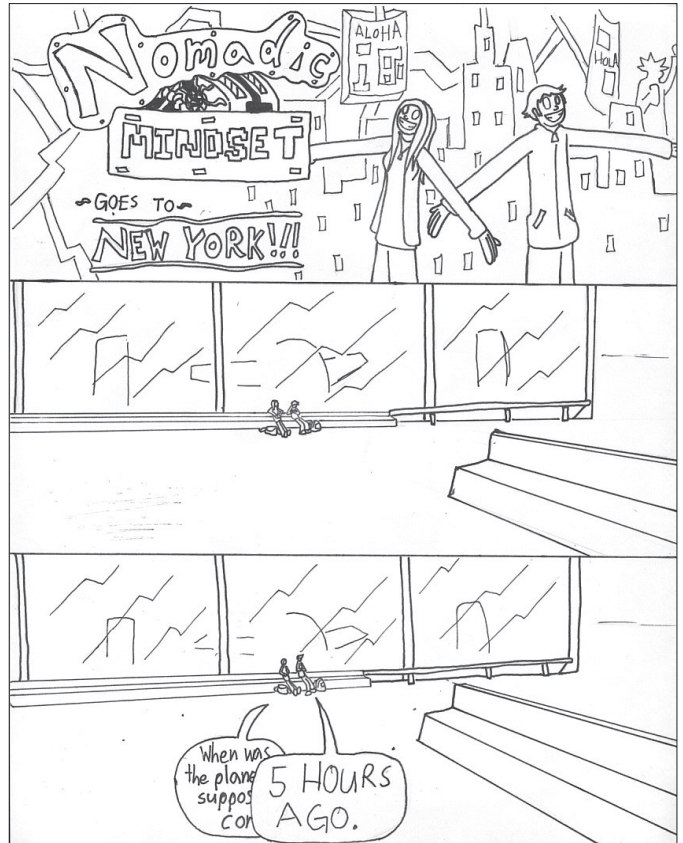
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