



# SPOTLIGHT ON MUSEUM ED

This column explores innovative informal education projects being undertaken within our local museum community. As active spaces for dialogue, connection and critical thinking, it seeks to highlight programming that makes our institutions more inclusive and that encourage more meaningful engagement with our visitors.

Storyteller leads visitors during Forbidden Vancouver's Lost Souls of Gastown tour.  
*Photo credit: Sarah Carlson*

## UNTOLD HISTORIES

Exploring Community Stories Outside of the Museum

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Sarah Carlson

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Tomekichi Homma, one of the first Japanese immigrants to settle in Steveston, is highlighted on this Nikkei Stories information panel. Photo credit: Sarah Carlson

Whether it is exploring the seedier side of the city's history with the Vancouver Police Museum's **Sins of the City** tours or experiencing the sights and sounds of the Burrard Dry Docks in North Vancouver with the Shipyards Pals Sal and Sam, the ways in which local history and community stories are being shared is shifting, moving from the museum to the streets as a way of connecting with new audiences and removing barriers. The ways in which these place-based stories are explored can take many forms, including walking tours, interpretive panels in the neighbourhood and virtual storytelling through audio and video. These not only highlight untold histories in our community but also provide a platform for previously unheard voices to share their stories and transform our understanding of the current historical narrative.

Companies like **Forbidden Vancouver** have always operated without brick and mortar as the stories they tell are intricately connected to buildings and places within

# NIKKEI STORIES

NIKKEI [NEE KAY] OF JAPANESE DESCENT

## 1 Tomekichi Homma

Man of the Times

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Tomekichi Homma was one of the first Japanese immigrants to settle in Steveston in the early 1880s. The son of a former samurai warrior, Homma was taught to believe in justice, dignity, and equality for all. In Canada, he became a leader in the fight against racial discrimination in the fishing industry and for the right of Japanese Canadians to vote.

Watch a short video to hear the story by using your mobile device to scan this QR Code, or visit our website at [www.nikkeistories.com](http://www.nikkeistories.com)

Visit all 10 sites

1 Immigration Museum	6 Steveston Community Centre
2 Fish Wharves	7 Steveston Park
3 Steveston Church	8 Steveston School
4 Steveston Market	9 Steveston Cemetery
5 Steveston Museum	10 Steveston Station

Presented by Stevedore



**The ways in which local history and community stories are being shared is shifting, moving from the museum to the streets as a way of connecting with new audiences and removing barriers.**

the community. Offering guided tours that share Vancouver’s rich history with a side of theatre, visitors can step into a world of murder and revenge in Gastown, explore Vancouver’s dirtiest Prohibition-era secrets from mobsters to rum-runners, and discover the jaw-dropping beauty and sinister stories of Stanley Park. The first of its kind for Vancouver, **The Really Gay History Tour** is Forbidden Vancouver’s newest tour and brings attention to important community stories that are traditionally left out of the historical narrative.

Researched and developed by storyteller Glenn Tkach, the tour weaves a colourful history of Vancouver’s LGBTQ2+ community and celebrates the successes and struggles of those who fought for acceptance and change. For Glenn, this was a personal passion project and a history that had intrigued him, fuelling his desire to uncover the hidden stories of queer history that he knew had been denied, repressed, buried and erased through the decades. A powerful part of the development process for him was “having the opportunity to sit with individuals who had lived through some of it. Having first-hand accounts of what they experienced and having them entrust him with their personal



stories was really powerful.” “Living in the digital age that we do, where we experience things mostly via screen, there is a hunger for this kind of physical experience”, a personal and human and community connection which Glenn believes these tours provide. By teasing these stories out of the historical record and sharing them as part of an live immersive experience allows visitors “to hear about what happened in the place where it happened, to stand at the building where an event or a protest occurred and to imagine it in its own context, which brings a lot of nuances to the story and to the events told.”

Another way in which the untold stories of our community are brought to life is through self-guided walking tours. Taking advantage of technology that integrates with our mobile devices, like QR codes and iBeacons, recent community video projects like **Black Strathcona**, **Nikkei Stories**, **South Asian Stories** and **East End Stories** have increased the visibility of local stories within the community. Illuminating rarely told aspects of Vancouver’s history using information panels at key sites throughout

Forbidden Vancouver storyteller Glenn leads guests on The Really Gay History Tour. Photo credit: Kiri Marr

**Opposite page:** Forbidden Vancouver storyteller Glenn Tkach leads guests across Davie Street’s rainbow crosswalk on The Really Gay History Tour. Photo credit: Kiri Marr



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the neighbourhood, which contain a QR code that links to a short video. Supported by archival materials, these video clips tell the story of early immigrants, key individuals, like [Jimi Hendrix](#), [Hide Hyodo Shimizu](#), [Shushma Datt](#) and [David Oppenheimer](#), as well as the lively social and political history of each area, including the [Punjabi Market](#) and [Hogan's Alley](#). Virtual reality tours, like the [360 Riot Walk](#), also make use of technology to allow visitors to follow the history in the streets where the 1907 Anti-Asian Riots, a mob that attacked Vancouver's Chinese Canadian and Japanese communities following a demonstration organized by the city's Asiatic Exclusion League, took place.

While technology will continue to advance and transform the way in which we are able to engage with the intersection of place and history, the core of any programming highlighting untold community stories will always be making connections to the important places and personal stories of those who have shaped our history. By providing a broader understanding of neighbourhood or building, these programs also bring awareness to the details that form the layered, complex story of an area and enable visitors to forge personal connections to the history through the use of compelling stories from members of the community.



**SARAH CARLSON**

Sarah Carlson is the acting Educational Program Coordinator for the Richmond Museum and has been a member of the LMME Conference Committee since its

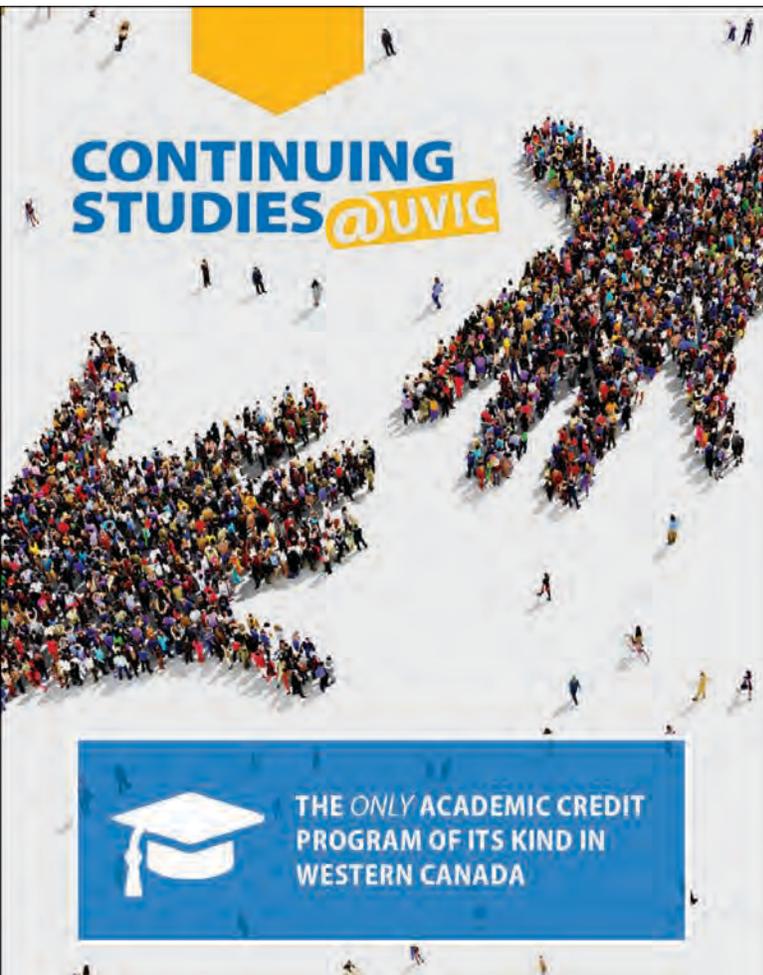
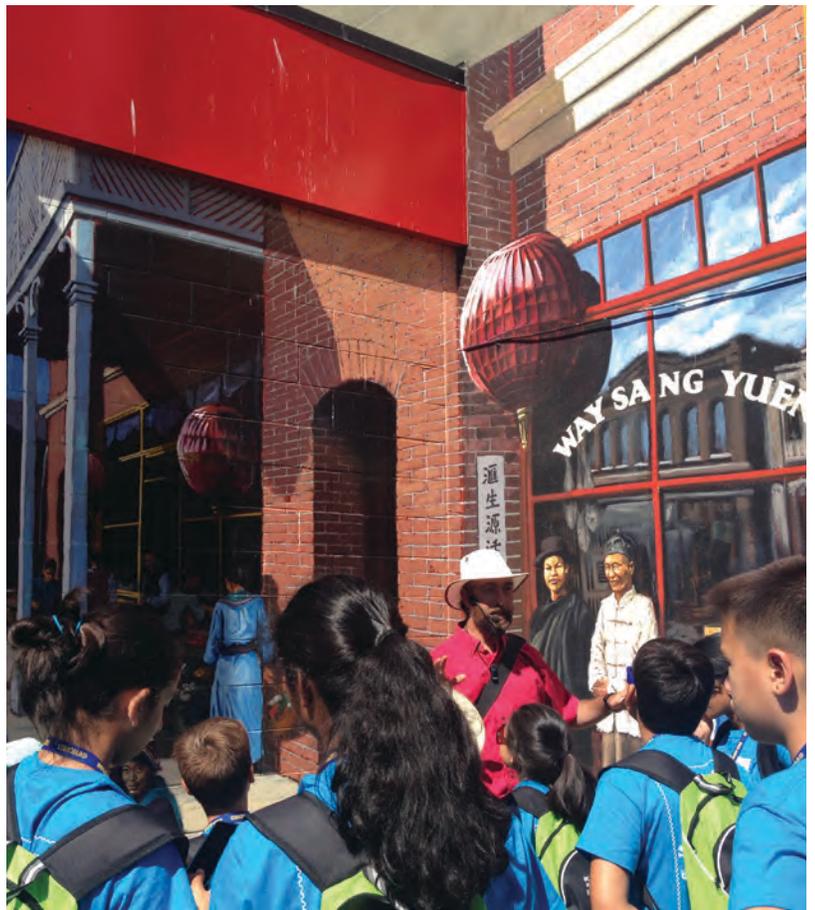
inception in 2016. She has a Masters of Museum Studies from the University College of London and has previously worked at the Museum of Anthropology and the Delta Museum and Archives.

BC Heritage Fair students learn about the history of Victoria's Chinatown with Chris Adams of Discover the Past tours.

*Photo credit: Sarah Carlson*

**Opposite page top:** Named after the Chinese gambling game, Fan Tan Alley in Victoria was once home to a gambling district with restaurants, shops, and opium dens.

*Photo credit: Sarah Carlson*



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