

The village of 100

If metro Vancouver were a village of 100 inhabitants, there would be:

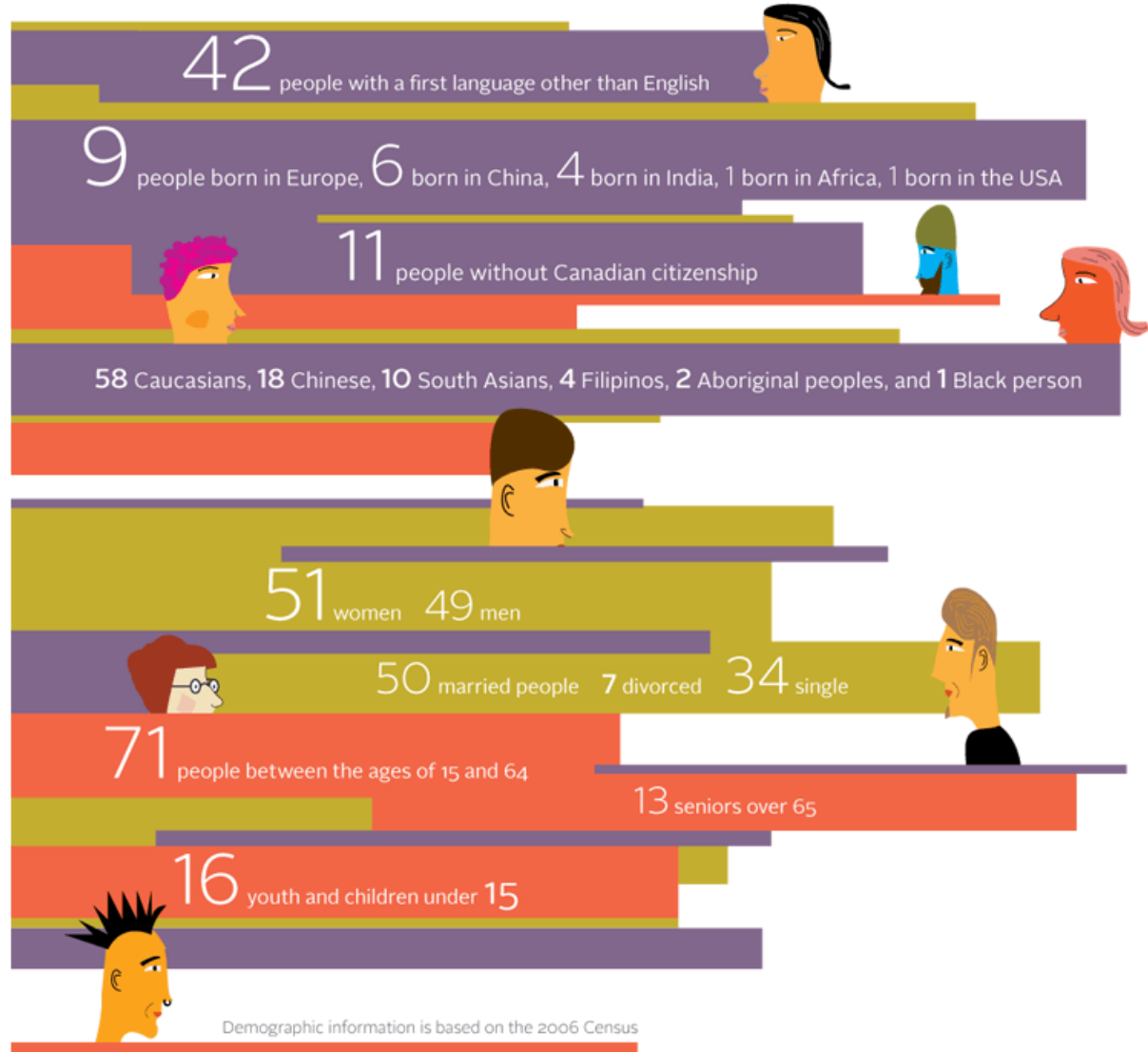
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VANCOUVER FOUNDATION'S
VitalSigns
For Metro Vancouver

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Community Conversations

If Vancouver were a Village of 100...

Public Opinion Poll

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Re-Imagine Day

In a World of Cities, Every City is a World

If we were a random sample of the world's urban population, one third of us would live in slums, about 0.000016 percent of us would be on the *Forbes* list of the World's wealthiest billionaires, just over three percent of us would be international immigrants, and about 0.70 percent of us would live in Canada.

But of course we're not a random sample of the world's urban population. We're not even a random sample of urban Canadians. We are a very particular kind of sample. We are students and aging students [i.e., professors] at a distinctive university that is trying to achieve elite global distinction ("a place of mind") on the edge of a distinctive

city (a place that inspires authors to write city planning books with titles like *Dream City*, *The Vancouver Achievement*, *City Planning in Paradise*, and *Vancouver Special*). All city-regions are unique, but to capture the particular mixture of things that are here “uniquely unique,” the Vancouver Foundation recently created the nice little “Vital Signs” graphic shown above: “If metro Vancouver were a village of 100 inhabitants...”

Maybe for the time we’ve been meeting these past few months, we’ve experienced just one slice of urban life. And in an increasingly urban future, all of you will be colleagues out there -- all fellow city-zens.



Thanks very much for all that you’ve taught me in this class, this small city we’ve built. It’s been a very busy and fascinating autumn, hasn’t it? Our university has been going through a wave of scandals that are by turns bizarre, confusing, and infuriating (everything from membership in the President-of-the-month club to subtle violations of academic freedom to a horrific case of sexual harassment). Connect went down, and a big protest banner -- ‘F I X C O N N E C T’ -- quickly appeared in the windows of one of the residence halls. UBC’s tuition increases marched along like the bulldozers of all urban growth machines (I spoke to a gathering organized by the AMS Social Justice Centre, reprising my ‘Students not \$tudent\$’ manifesto from last year’s protests). Our class walking tour this past September went longer than ever before, which obviously means that I’ve lived here long enough to yap on about anything and everything we see in the urban environment for ... well, it was almost six hours. But I rewarded those who stuck with me the whole way with a nice beverage and lunch at the Craft Brewery in the Olympic Village, one of the crown jewels in this charming little City as an Image Creation Machine. Grace Lee Boggs, the powerful and eloquent philosopher who moved to Detroit in the middle of the twentieth century, died at age 100. The prominent urbanist Ed Soja also

died, and then just a few days ago I received word that Victor Winston, who launched the journal *Urban Geography* back in the 1970s, died as well (I think he was 91 or 92). On the walking tour, I often find myself pointing to a brand new shiny building -- usually it's the second or third or fourth structure to occupy that particular spot -- and about those in previous previous generations who lived, worked, or organized in that location: Jim Green's work establishing the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, Walter Hardwick's effort to do something new and daring in the development of Granville Island (there's now an avenue named for him in the Olympic Village) and his establishment of UBC's Urban Studies Program back in 1971, the poet Bud Osborne's inspired rage at how the poor, working classes, and indigenous are pushed aside to make way for the luxury gentrification of the Downtown Eastside, or Jimi Hendrix and the disappearance of Hogan's Alley as the first phases of a huge freeway system began to consume the city in the 1960s. Each year on the tour I see ever more vivid reminders of Lewis Mumford's simple but chilling insight that cities endure while every individual dies: "The city of the dead antedates the city of the living," he writes; "In one sense, indeed, the city of the dead is the forerunner, almost the core, of every living city." Every city is a palimpsest of knowledge, stories, and achievements -- passed from one generation to another. The longer you stay in one city the more clearly you can see those intergenerational layers, those inheritances, those gifts. The palimpsests look very different as we move between cities, but you can still learn a great deal by exploring the interplays between the accelerating transformations of the present in light of the past -- the "future of the past," as the author Alexander Stille put it a few years ago.

We had a federal election. We have a new Prime Minister. "Camelot has come to Canada," a columnist wrote in the *New York Times*; "For a moment at least, the duller part of North America looks sexier than its overweening cousin to the south." Duller? Not long ago, the *National Post* carried a story in which an undergraduate classmate recalled that Stephen Harper was deeply inspired by Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, and "later, he said, the future prime minister would nurture dreams of going into city planning, then destroying it from the inside as a service to free enterprise." Good-bye, Harper. Just a few weeks after the election I had to miss class to take the Oath of Citizenship, to swear allegiance to the Queen. Hot damn! I've never met the queen, but a few years ago I did get the chance to sit two seats away from someone who *had* -- Sir Peter Hall, the legendary legendary city planning scholar who for years split his time between London and the University of California, Berkeley. Jatinder sat next to Sir Peter. "So, what was it like to meet the Queen?" she asked. Sir Peter didn't seem all that star-struck by the experience. I was, needless to say, star-struck by Peter Hall.

Thanks very much for an exhilarating semester. I learned a lot from good questions asked in class -- although, I know, there is never enough time for questions given how much I am trying to pack into our brief time together. I'm sorry about that (this is a lecture course, but in my fourth-year seminars I work hard to refine my shutting-up-and-listening skills). If the class is to be like a city, it has to be busy and overflowing with stimuli and questions and possibilities. I also learned a lot from those of you who stopped by during my office hours, or chatted with me in the halls, and occasionally on the bumpy ride on the 99 B-Line. After asking me a question or two, most of you were pretty quickly beginning to look for the off switch on my face! "Will rant on about anything," one student wrote an evaluation a while back. But I do also try to listen carefully when you have things to tell me -- and I've learned a lot from those conversations, and also from working with our Teaching Assistants and reading your work. Every year I revise what we do in this course, and it also changes because *you* change -- not just as individuals, but as aspiring scholars and professionals who must compete to gain admission to this place of mind, and who then must try to keep up with what we do in this course. I've been at UBC for many years now, and you're the best I've ever seen. And part of the reason is that because last year's students taught me, and now next year I hope to use what I've learned from you to do the job a little bit better for *them*. So in the moments before I hand out the examinations, turn to the people around you and say hello and good-bye ... there's a chance we may never again find ourselves -- everyone in this large room -- in exactly the same place at the same time ...!