

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Vancouver celebrates contributions of Canadians with mixed Asian heritage during national Asian Heritage Month**

*Media are invited to join the official festival kick-off on **Saturday, April 22, 10:00AM**, at Fei & Milton Wong Experimental Theatre, Goldcorp Centre for Arts, Simon Fraser University, 149 West Hastings Street, Vancouver. Please contact Ken McAteer or Patricia Lim at [media.vahms@gmail.com](mailto:media.vahms@gmail.com).*

**APRIL 3, 2017, VANCOUVER, BC** - The Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society (VAHMS) is pleased to focus on the growing community of Canadians with mixed Asian heritage during the 21st annual **explorASIAN** festival, celebrating national Asian Heritage Month in May. Each year the festival puts the spotlight on a different Asian Canadian community to raise awareness for the contributions of multicultural communities to Canadian society. The decision to highlight the community of Canadians with mixed Asian heritage during **explorASIAN 2017** was the result of a unanimous vote by the VAHMS Board of Directors to celebrate the changing dynamics of Canadian identity during the country's 150th anniversary.

"We are very excited to be working with the mixed Asian heritage community because they literally embody the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society's vision to celebrate the hybridization of all arts and culture in Canada," said VAHMS President Ken McAteer. "explorASIAN 2017 stands to be one of our most inclusive festivals yet as it seeks to highlight those cross-cultural and cross-generational stories that are so common among all Canadians."

VAHMS has organized an advisory panel of distinguished members from the Canadian mixed heritage community including award-winning filmmaker, Jeff Chiba Stearns, writer/editor, Anna Ling Kaye, and writer/editor, Brandy Liên Worrall-Soriano, to assist with special programming features related to their unique community. The May celebrations will include many free family-friendly arts and cultural activities for communities of all cultures and backgrounds in Metro Vancouver. For more information about specific festival events and activities, please visit [www.explorasian.org](http://www.explorasian.org).

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **Advisory Panel Biographies**

**Jeff Chiba Stearns** is an Emmy® nominated and multi award-winning animation and documentary filmmaker. Born in Kelowna, BC, of Japanese and European Heritage, he graduated from the Emily Carr University with a degree in Film Animation in 2001. Soon after, he founded Vancouver based boutique animation studio Meditating Bunny Studio Inc. where his many films including *One Big Hapa Family* and *Mixed Match* have broadcast around the world, screened in hundreds of international film festivals and garnered over 35 awards. In 2011, Jeff was awarded the Cultural Pioneer Award from Harvard University for advancing the dialogue on multiracial identity through his work. In that same year, Chiba Stearns

co-founded the Hapa-palooza Festival to raise awareness, explore and celebrate mixed heritage and hybrid cultural identity.

**Anna Ling Kaye** is a writer, editor and 2015 Journey Prize finalist. Her fiction has appeared in *Prairie Fire*, *emerge* and *Culture* magazines, and her journalism has appeared in *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Tyee* and *subTerrain*. Her translations have been set to music by contemporary composers. Kaye is co-founder and a director of Hapa-palooza Festival, former prose editor at *PRISM international* magazine and former editor of *Ricepaper* magazine. The Vancouver-based writer identifies as Taiwanese and Jewish-American.

**Brandy Liên Worrall-Soriano** is author of *What Doesn't Kill Us*, a groundbreaking memoir about growing up in the din of her Vietnamese mother and American father's trauma from the Vietnam War, and how it related to her breast cancer experience as a young adult. She is also the author of eight collections of poetry (the *podBrandy* series), as well as having served as editor of numerous magazines, journals, and anthologies. She is the owner and editor of [Rabbit Fool Press](#), a small publishing company that specializes in mixed race and Asian North American writing and art. In 2015, Rabbit Fool Press published a wide-ranging anthology, *Completely Mixed Up*, which features over 70 Asian North American writers and artists of mixed heritage. Worrall-Soriano received her MA in Asian American Studies from UCLA in 2002 and her MFA in Creative Writing from UBC in 2012.

### **About the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society**

Founded in 1996, the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society (VAHMS) is a non-profit society that is dedicated to recognizing Asian Canadian participation as an integral part of Canadian society. VAHMS organizes **explorASIAN**, an annual festival celebrating national Asian Heritage Month, to promote understanding and appreciation of Asian Canadian arts and culture in the month of May. The festival includes programs, activities and events produced in collaboration with various partners from the diverse communities in Metro Vancouver.

#### **Media contacts:**

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