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equinox vigil



A woman with short, curly grey hair, wearing a dark top and a patterned vest, stands outdoors at night, speaking into a microphone. She has her right hand raised in a gesture. The background is dark with some trees and a blurred light source.

The silt of language slips away as I attempt to convey all that the Equinox Vigil is for my family and others like us. The initiation into grief can be harrowing. Death sets down different pathways that we're hesitant to proceed along. Just as love continues to define our relationship with those we've lost, it also forms the compass points by which we might find ourselves again in the unknown. The ache we recognize in one another lies rooted in our very humanity. When it seems there is no here and no home left outside of our departed ones, we locate others that have been similarly unmoored by grief. The Vigil provides a source of light in balance against the deepening dark of bereavement. As the autumnal equinox approaches the leaves exhale and the days gradually grow dimmer. We celebrate this pivotal shift in the seasons as a time to gather together around our collective experiences of grief, emitting our closest-held stories into the night to be shared. Lantern processions convey the names of those we miss, entrusting our imperfect tribute into each other's hands. The night accepts all that passes through—Union Cemetery made vivid by our revelry and our mourning alike—a fluid path of light taking shape in the middle of all that dark...

—Jenna Swift

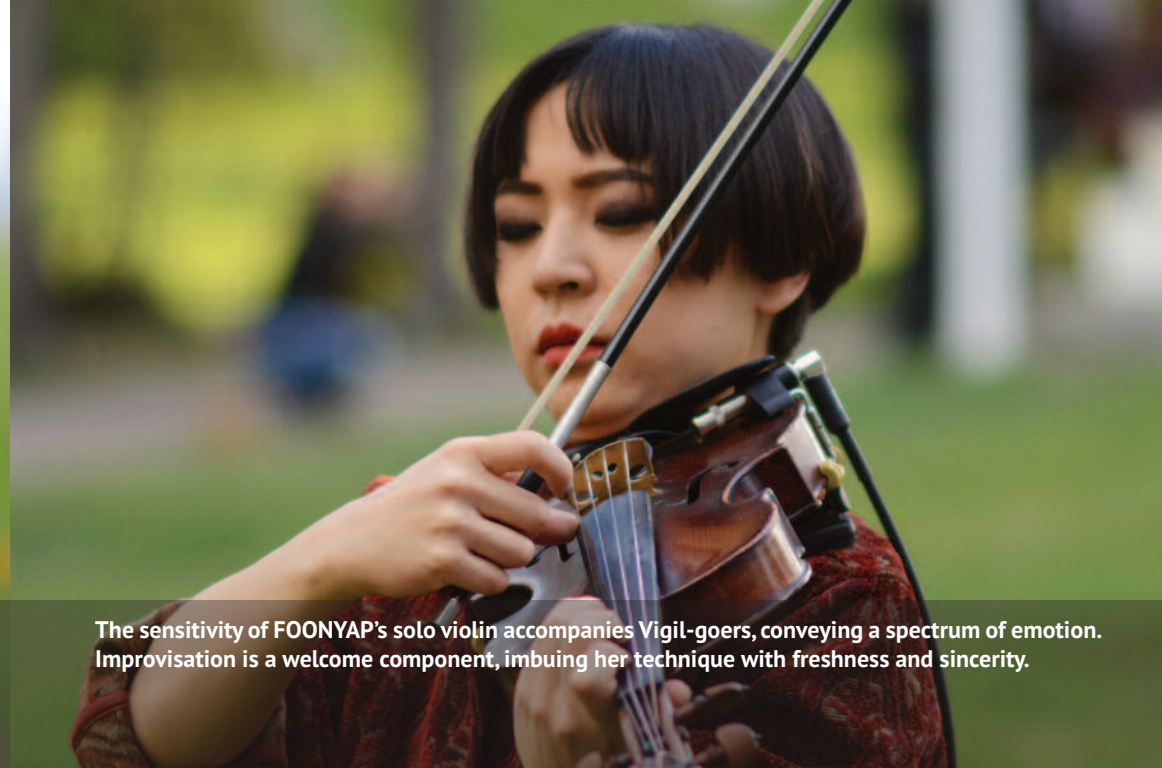
Sharon Stevens, Founder and Artistic Director of the Equinox Vigil, offers some opening remarks setting a tone of empathy, humour and humility. Somehow, as we gather each year around the communal acknowledgment of our grief, we achieve something together that approaches grace.



Glowing among the headstones, Eveline Kolijn's monument-esque sculptural works *Breath of Life* and *Bleached Coral Color* feature organic patterns excised from blocks of styrofoam. Negative spaces articulate the branching forms of coral and pulmonary systems. If stone breathes, Kolijn's illuminated pieces also respired permeably into the night.



Colourful tributes are crafted by the community, in direct dialogue with their dead. The warmth of these tender missives is communicated both through their message and their tactility. Rendered in elegant cursive and wobbly handwriting, adorned with feathers and popsicle sticks – we perceive glimmers of commonality among each others private pain.



The sensitivity of FOONYAP's solo violin accompanies Vigil-goers, conveying a spectrum of emotion. Improvisation is a welcome component, imbuing her technique with freshness and sincerity.



Filtering between the mature pines, we proceed together towards a merry assemblage of tents, banners and flower garlands. The immense scale of Union Cemetery enfold a series of discreetly-sited art installations. Strains of music seeping through...



Local historian Harry Sanders enlivens the discussion around cemeteries as civic space – contextualizing Union Cemetery as a place for the living to socialize with the dead, conversing with our past to better understand where here is.



The Equinox Vigil has become an emotional guidepost in our community's calendar year. Arriving in sync with the seasonal shift that marks the autumnal equinox, each year the Vigil provides an inspiring and supportive environment in which are able to support each other in acknowledging our grief.



Light ushers out an exiting procession led by mother/daughter duo Chantal and Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes. Traditional frame drums sound a timeless beat, deepening the resonance of place within Treaty 7 territory.



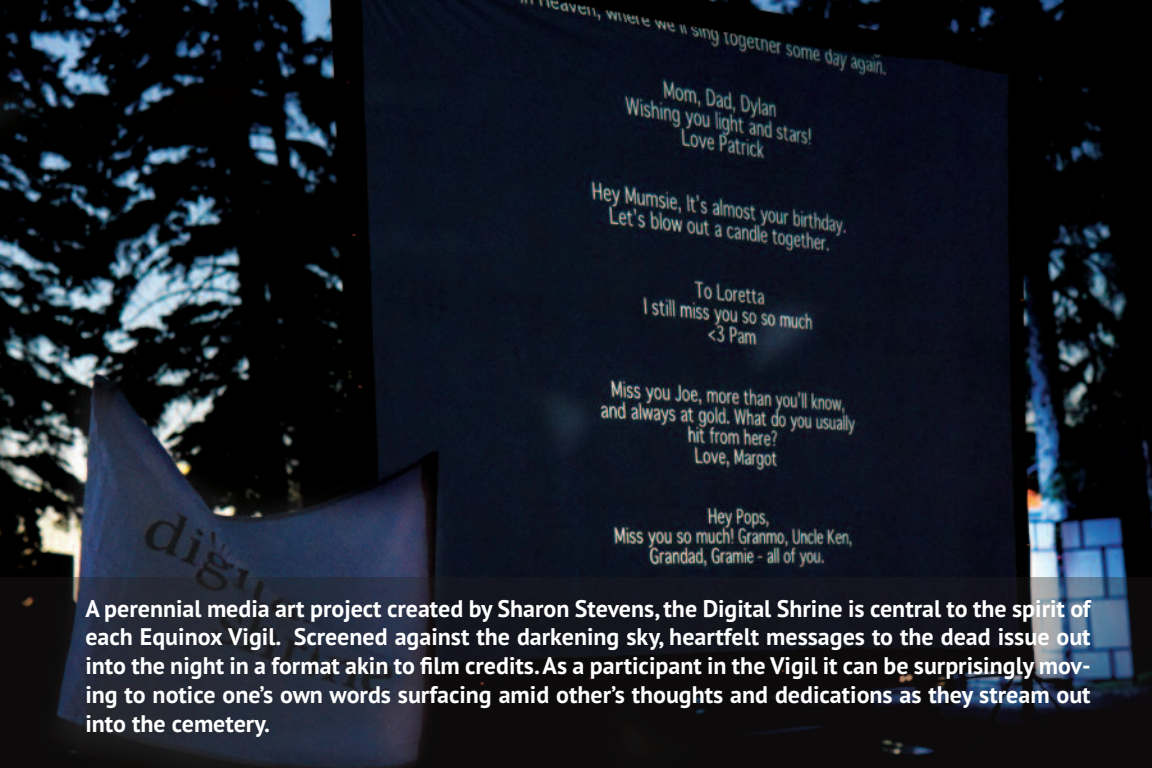
An ascending arbour of interwoven pine bows awaits us as we receive the blessing of Chantal and Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes' Cree welcome song.



Calgary's Threshold Choir utilize the instruments of breath and voice to 'make kindness audible,' bringing comfort and kinship to the bedsides they visit. As one song in the choir's repertoire repeats, "we are all just walking each other home..."



Acclaimed Canadian poet Sue Goyette travelled from Halifax to collaborate on this year's *Digital Shrine*, synthesizing text fragments contributed by members of the public as messages to their dead. Hearing these entries threaded together and read back as one long poem was tremendously emotional – resulting in a kind of collective portrait in which the I is everyone.



A perennial media art project created by Sharon Stevens, the Digital Shrine is central to the spirit of each Equinox Vigil. Screened against the darkening sky, heartfelt messages to the dead issue out into the night in a format akin to film credits. As a participant in the Vigil it can be surprisingly moving to notice one's own words surfacing amid other's thoughts and dedications as they stream out into the cemetery.



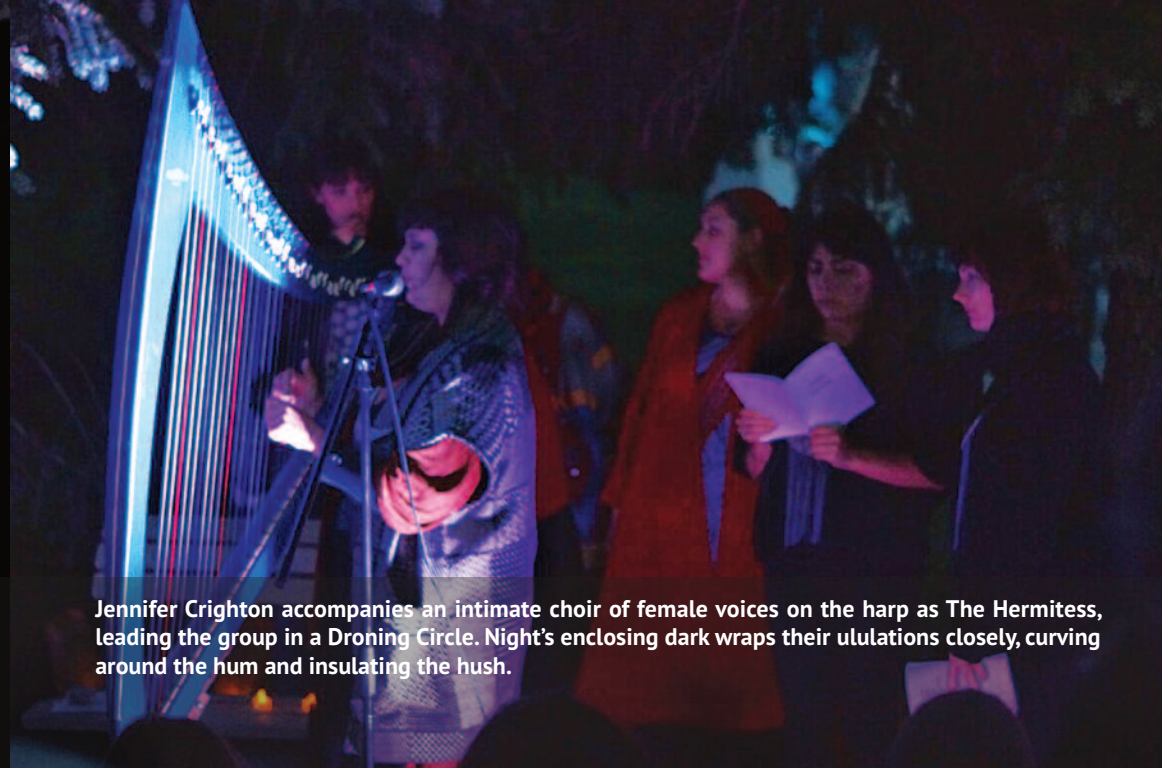
Calgary-based artists Caitlind r.c. Brown and Wayne Garrett brought their light installation *The Deep Dark* home from the deeper dark of Dawson City YT for its Calgary debut as part of the 2016 Equinox Vigil. Composed of a series of illuminated portals, Brown and Garrett's work beckons viewers to traverse a series of thresholds, threading our bodies through the interstitial zone between light's amplification and the nullification of dark.



Self is an unstable concept when viewed through the frame of Brown and Garrett's *Deep Dark*. Cool white light floods our senses, cancelling our vision beyond the frame as we step through each doorway, momentarily illuminated. A scanning effect created naturally by the participant's own pace as they walk through each passage works to heighten the contrast – bright/dark, warm/cool, there/gone.



Tyler Klein Longmire's animation titled *Renderrabbits* plays on a closed loop, suspended casually in a lantern along the pathway. Its glow is an invocation and an invitation to draw nearer. Inside a video plays on a tablet depicting core members of beloved Calgary theatre company One Yellow Rabbit, including the dearly departed Michael Green - a face we welcome among us again even if only made possible via this reflection through glass.



Jennifer Crighton accompanies an intimate choir of female voices on the harp as *The Hermitess*, leading the group in a Droning Circle. Night's enclosing dark wraps their ululations closely, curving around the hum and insulating the hush.

Equinox Vigil is indebted to the talented and thoughtful members of Calgary's professional arts community who join with us in creating this cherished annual event.

Whether through delighting us with music, creating participatory art installations, or inspiring us through poetry and stories, they provide a beautiful sanctuary for remembrance and reflection.

We gratefully acknowledge each of the visual artists, musicians, performers, poets and installation artists who have contributed their time and talents to Equinox Vigil.

Thanks also to the production team and the many volunteers whose dedicated efforts in the days, weeks and months leading up to Equinox Vigil make this beautiful event possible.

Sharon Stevens • Founder, Equinox Vigil in Union Cemetery

PRODUCTION Jodie Stevens • Lizzie McGovern • Victoria Sanchez • Stewart Stevens • Meagan Boisvert
Katie Kimber • Amy Ferris • Yvonne Kustec • Natalie Boterman

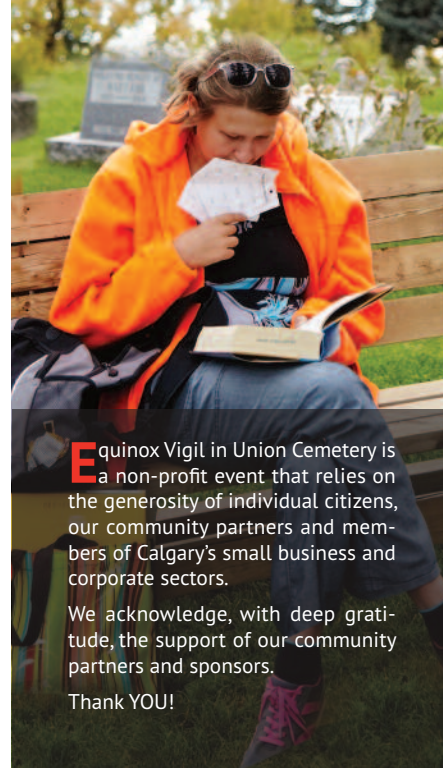
ARTISTS & PERFORMERS Caitlind r.c. Brwon & Wayne Garrett • Sue Goyette • Eveline Kolijn • Harry Sanders
Aran Wilkinson-Blanc • The Hermitess • FOONYAP

CHOIRS Kenna Burima • Jordan Domoslai • Union Choir • Agnieszka Wolska • Calgary Threshold Choir • Jane Perry
Calgary Renaissance Singers & Players

LIGHTING & TECH SET Alexandria Inkster • Kathryn Smith • Joe Kelly • Levi Mayerle • Jigme Phunkhang
Duncan Kenworthy

MARKETING & DEVELOPMENT Johanna Schwartz • Sandra Vida • Peter Moller / Egg Press Co. • Vicki Chau
Kelsey Fraser

DOCUMENTATION Monique de St-Croix *Unique Perspectives* • Phil Bowen • Kristen Foran • Miriam Johnston
Brian Jensen • Caitlind Brown



Equinox Vigil in Union Cemetery is a non-profit event that relies on the generosity of individual citizens, our community partners and members of Calgary's small business and corporate sectors.

We acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the support of our community partners and sponsors.

Thank YOU!



EQUINOX VIGIL SCHEDULE SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 17, 2016

6:30 PM Opening Ceremony with Chantal Chagnon & Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes

7 PM The Threshold Choir until 8:30 PM

7:15 PM Calgary Renaissance Singers and Players

7:45 PM Choirs perform *Come to Me in Cold Dark Slumber*
by Kenna Burima

8:00 PM Procession led by Chantal Chagnon &
Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes/Union Choir

9:00 PM Digital Shrine performance with poet/author
Sue Goyette (Halifax)

9:15 PM Procession led by Chantal Chagnon &
Cheryle Chagnon-Greyeyes/Union Choir

POETS BENCH

7:30 – 8 PM Harry Sanders the Historian

8:15 – 8:45 PM Droning Circle led by Jennifer Crighton

MUSICANS

FOONYAP – Instrumental Improv, The Hermitess – Harp
CHOIRS

The Union Choir – led Kenna Burima

The Calgary Renaissance Singers and Players – led by Jane Perry

The Calgary Threshold Choir – led by Agnieszka Wolska

VISUAL ARTISTS

Eveline Kolijn - Breath of Life & Bleached Coral Color Infusion

Caitlind r.c. Brown and Wayne Garrett – The Deep Dark

Aran Wilkinson-Blanc – Frog

FILMS

Deconstructed Piano Laurin Döpfner

Renderrabbits Tyler Klein Longmire

