



powell street festival society

パウエル祭協会

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For Immediate Release

## Powell Street Festival Society Welcomes Sophie Yamauchi Latimer as Executive Director

**VANCOUVER, BC – December 2, 2024** – The Powell Street Festival Society (PSFS) is thrilled to announce the appointment of Sophie Kristveig Yamauchi Latimer as its new Executive Director. A fourth-generation Japanese Canadian (Yonsei), Sophie brings extensive experience in non-profit management and community engagement. She succeeds Emiko Morita, who has served as Executive Director since 2015, to lead the Powell Street Festival into its next chapter, building on its legacy as one of Canada's largest and longest-running celebrations of Japanese Canadian arts and culture.

Sophie's appointment comes at a pivotal time as the PSFS prepares for the landmark 50th Annual Powell Street Festival in 2026. Sophie is passionate about merging her lived experience as a Japanese Canadian with her professional expertise in arts administration. With a proven track record in cultural programming, fundraising, and public engagement, Sophie has been instrumental in developing and implementing initiatives that foster community connection and cultural exchange.

Prior to joining PSFS, Sophie worked with several local arts organizations, including the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden, the Museum of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. She also played a significant role in the creation and foundational planning of the newly opened Chinese Canadian Museum. Throughout her career, Sophie has successfully secured millions in funding for cultural and community-based initiatives and has proven expertise in managing complex, high-impact projects. She has also been a member of the board of the Canadian Museums Association since 2021 and is an active volunteer in the arts and cultural community.

As PSFS welcomes Sophie, they also celebrate Emiko Morita, who filled the role for 10 years. Under Morita's leadership, PSFS saw considerable growth, with expanded programming, strengthened community engagement, and increased capacity, creating a strong foundation for the next generation. Morita is staying involved in the community and will be nearby to support the transition.

With a commitment to the PSFS's mission, combined with both professional experience in arts leadership and lived experience as a fourth-generation Japanese Canadian, Sophie is uniquely positioned to lead PSFS into its next chapter. As a representative of the next generation of leaders, she brings fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a deep understanding of the cultural and community aspects of the Festival. Sophie's leadership will not only honor the rich legacy of the Powell Street Festival but will also chart a dynamic new course for its future, ensuring it remains a vital space for Japanese Canadian arts and



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culture for years to come. Her passion for inclusivity, equity, and artistic innovation will guide the Festival through its landmark 50th anniversary and into an era of even greater community impact and cultural relevance.

## About Powell Street Festival Society

The Powell Street Festival first took place in 1977 and has since become one of the largest and longest-running community arts festivals in Canada. Dedicated to celebrating Japanese Canadian culture, the Festival showcases the vibrant arts, music, food, and traditions of the Japanese Canadian community. Held annually in Vancouver’s historic Paueru Gai (“Powell Street”) neighbourhood —now known as of the Downtown Eastside— on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Səl̓ílwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations. The 49th Annual Powell Street Festival will be held on August 2-3, 2025.

### Quotes:

#### **Sophie Yamauchi Latimer, Incoming Executive Director, PSFS:**

“It is a profound honour to step into this leadership role with the Powell Street Festival, an organization that has deeply shaped my Japanese Canadian identity. Built on a foundation of cherished memories—from childhood moments of stick balloons and Tanko Bushi to volunteering at the salmon BBQ during university—I now approach this position with great care and enthusiasm. I look forward to leveraging my arts management experience to steward the festival’s next chapter, working alongside our exceptional team and dedicated volunteers to ensure its continued growth and impact for generations to come.”

#### **Eddy Takayanagi, President, PSFS:**

“Following a robust merit-based selection process Sophie is being hired to lead PSFS as it prepares for its 50th Annual Festival in 2026 and beyond. The Board is excited about the possibilities that Sophie brings as she works with the existing team to shepherd the organization through challenges to reach new heights.”

#### **Emiko Morita, Outgoing Executive Director, PSFS:**

“I grew and evolved alongside the organization. I discovered PSFS’s commitment to Paueru Gai – the historic Japanese Canadian community in the Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside – is the society’s strength and vitality. Through our arts programming, I gained access to my cultural heritage and discovered community beyond expectation. I’m truly excited to be passing the stewardship of this beloved cultural institution to Sophie and look forward to witnessing and experiencing our community’s next chapter.”



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