

# NOISE LETTER

The Newsletter of the Right to Quiet Society  
for Soundscape Awareness and Protection

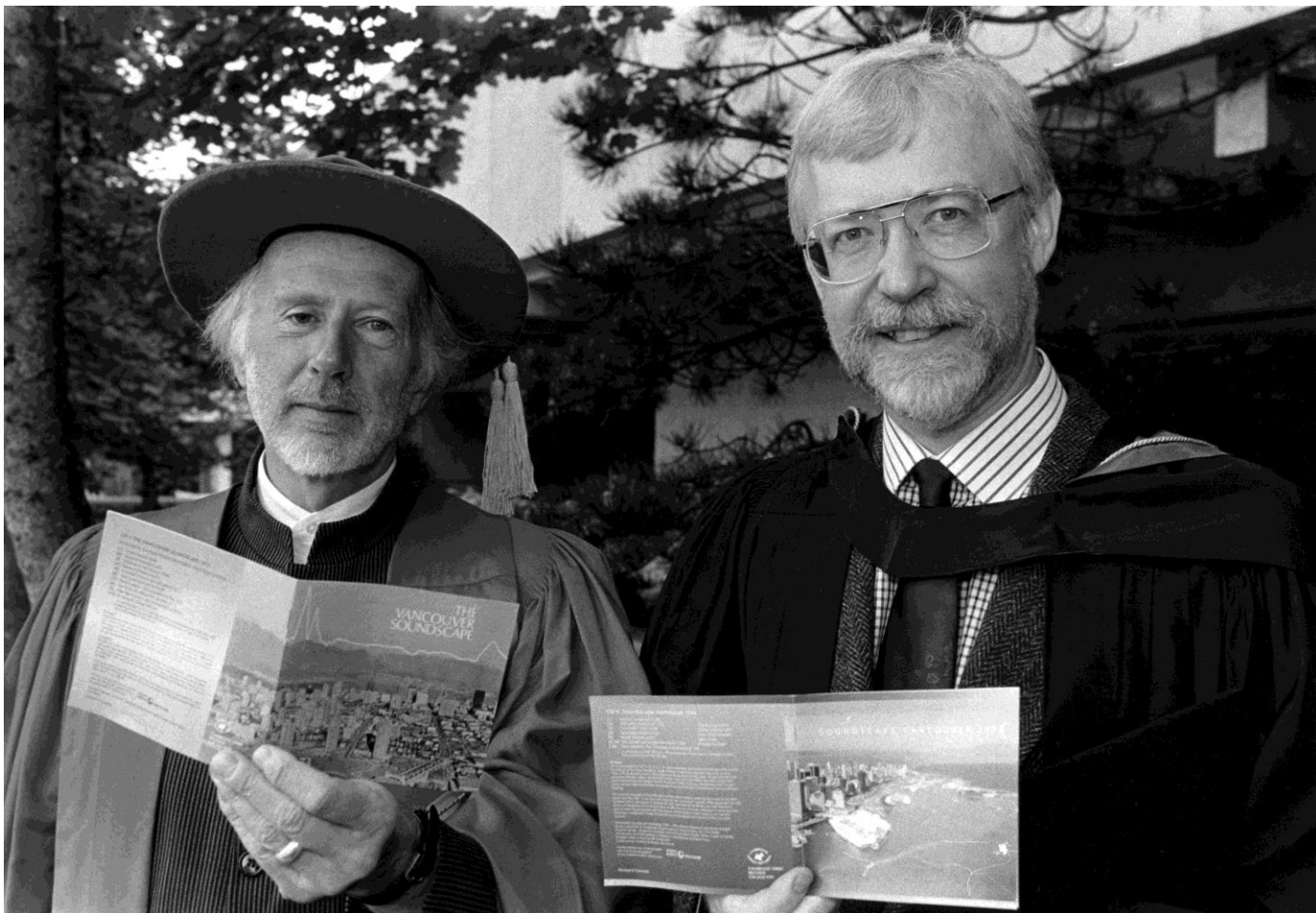
---

4342 13th Ave W, Vancouver, BC V6R 2T9, Canada | [www.quiet.org](http://www.quiet.org) | [info@quiet.org](mailto:info@quiet.org) | 672-514-6753  
Charitable Registration BN: 11915 4680 RR 0001

---

Fall 2021

## Remembering Murray Schafer



Composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer with composer Barry Truax

# Virtual Annual General Meeting

The 2021 Right to Quiet AGM was held via Zoom on November 20. Members approved a favourable financial report and re-elected the current Board of Directors for another term. Plans were announced to stage a public event celebrating its 40th anniversary as well as International Noise Awareness Day, which falls on April 27, 2002. Plans include donation of 40 new books to the Vancouver Public Library and a newly designed soundscape awareness poster.

Eminent environmental psychologist Arline Bronzaft, a Right to Quiet Director at Large, spoke about effects of a healthy sound environment on children's learning and her role influencing noise policy. In the early seventies when Bronzaft's landmark study showed that children's exposure to elevated train noise led to lower reading scores, local government took action. Dr. Bronzaft has a powerful lesson for policy makers whose response to obvious needs is too often, "We need further research." Bronzaft has also been involved in the development of sound and noise education modules in New York City that can be adopted by primary and secondary school educators anywhere in the world.

Keeta Jones, Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Acoustical Society of America (ASA), introduced attendees to the wide range of activities and services ASA provides to the public as her presentation adeptly peeled away some of the mystique with which many regard ASA from outside, including an overview of its 13 technical committees and its policy work.

The Society's recent noise awareness efforts include distributing hearing protection, organizing social media campaigns, improving existing media such as Wikipedia entries. From standards development to educational outreach, ASA has long been involved with noise research.

A recent example is the current project to make an open source wearable sound level meter (WSLM). The prototype has already been developed, and after testing and protocol development, each ASA chapter will have one unit which someone would wear for demonstration purposes in public to raise awareness of sound and acoustics in everyday situations.

## Resources

Both presentations are viewable at <https://youtu.be/qRPJye4pVWQ>

The effect of elevated train noise on reading ability <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1976-21562-001>

The Acoustical Society of America <https://acousticalsociety.org>

ASA Explore Sound features educational resources <https://exploresound.org>

NYC DEP Sound & Noise Education Module <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dep/environment/sound-noise-education-module.page>



Images from Bill Roundy's cartoon in Streetsblog NYC

## This edition of *NOISE*Letter

In the final *NOISE*Letter of 2021, we are privileged to feature a remembrance of the late R. Murray Schafer by composer and acoustic communication researcher Barry Truax, giving readers a sense of Schafer as Truax's mentor, colleague, and friend.

We also provide an update about ongoing efforts to address illegal busking and amplified music in spaces legally designated as quiet, and we provide a snapshot of outdoor dining expansion in three cities, in some cases going well, and in another experiencing conflict in part due to quality of life and noise complaints.

Last but not least, we review a timely guide about finding a quiet home, written by one of our members. We wish you enjoyable reading in addition to peace, joy, and good health in 2022!

## Right to Quiet seeks editorial freelancers

The Right to Quiet editorial committee is seeking freelancers for regular part-time work on our newsletter and website. We welcome inquiries from all interested parties, including professional editorial freelancers, students with experience working on school publications, retirees, and returnees. Helpful skills include familiarity with desktop publishing, Microsoft programs, Acrobat, WordPress, YouTube, and photo editing. Send letter of interest and resume to [editor@quiet.org](mailto:editor@quiet.org).

# Remembering Murray Schafer (1933-2021)

Charter SFU faculty member and renowned Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer passed away August 14. He taught at SFU from 1965 to 1975, first in the Centre for Communication and the Arts, and then in the fledgling Department of Communication Studies, now the School of Communication, where he founded the World Soundscape Project and the Sonic Research Studio. SFU awarded him an Honorary Doctorate in 1997 as shown in the photo. That occasion also marked the publication of the double CD set of *The Vancouver Soundscape* from 1973, and the updated *Soundscape Vancouver 1996*.

Murray's prodigious output as a composer - arguably he has been Canada's most widely known musical creator - is what has been mainly documented in the various articles that have recently appeared, such as one from the CBC. However, in other circles, his writings and activism with regard to the acoustic environment has garnered greater attention and admiration.

The emerging field of sound studies regards the WSP and SFU as the most important pioneers of the field, and often refer to Schafer as the "father of Acoustic Ecology" with his seminal book *The Tuning of the World* as its Bible. His concern for the sonic environment in which we all live has, if anything, become more urgent over the years, and today new generations of students and others continue to find inspiration for their own work in his, whether in research, sound design or soundscape composition. Schafer put the emphasis, not just on being anti-noise, but on listening and what is positive and worth preserving in the soundscape, as experienced for instance in a soundwalk - and in this way, it could be said that he changed the ears of the world.

Here is a more personal reminiscence about his influence on my career:

I arrived at SFU in the summer of 1973, following my postgraduate work in The Netherlands, at the invitation of Murray Schafer to join what he was calling the World Soundscape Project located in the newly formed Department of Communication Studies and the Sonic Research Studio. He assured me, with characteristic understatement, that they were doing "probably the world's most important work" and so the allure was irresistible.

Once at SFU, I joined an enthusiastic group of research assistants who were putting the final touches on the first major publication project.

The Vancouver Soundscape (a booklet and two LPs), soon to be followed up by a cross-Canada recording tour, and in 1975 a European tour which involved studying five villages in different countries which could be regarded as acoustic communities, all now documented in the online WSP Database.

However, I and my new colleagues were also impressed by the intellectual milieu that this new Department offered (now the School of Communication), with scholars coming from a myriad of social science and humanities backgrounds and establishing a new interdisciplinary model of human and social communication. They in turn recognized that those disciplines had traditionally ignored the acoustic aspects of communication, and hence a fruitful exchange of ideas and practices began to emerge within a critical interdisciplinary framework.

Little did I imagine then that after two years I would become Murray's successor when he left SFU in 1975, and that my entire academic career would be focused on what I called Acoustic Communication and Soundscape Composition. Even less that it would grow into a worldwide organization called the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, and that a few decades later, the field of Sound Studies would emerge and regard SFU's early involvement as pioneering and inspirational. With today's concerns over environmental sustainability, these efforts seem more urgent and relevant than ever.

Barry Truax  
Professor Emeritus

## Notes

A set of historical lectures from 1967 by Schafer, Tom Mallinson, C. Nelson, Fred Brown, Jack Shadbolt, Klaus Rieckhoff, and Fred Candelaria are available at [http://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/Historical\\_Faculty\\_Lectures/index.html](http://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio-webdav/Historical_Faculty_Lectures/index.html)

A number of interviews, documentaries, and radio programs by Schafer are available on the WSP Database (contact Barry Truax at [truax@sfu.ca](mailto:truax@sfu.ca) for a guest password).

Read the CBC remembrance at <https://www.cbc.ca/music/r-murray-schafer-composer-writer-and-acoustic-ecologist-has-died-at-88-1.5404868>.

# Quiet Parks and Quiet Places: An update on Vancouver beach noise

Right to Quiet directors Elvira Lount and Karl Raab have been working with the English Bay noise group and the Kits Point Residents Association (KPRA) to address illegal busking and amplified music in Vancouver beach parks, particularly English Bay and Sunset Beach in the West End, and Kits and Jericho beaches on the West Side. This problem had grown since early 2020. It has been impossible to enjoy Kits Beach for much of the year without amplified music throughout the park, primarily from illegal busking, violating Park Board bylaws and City of Vancouver busker license requirements.

Park rangers have no ticketing authority to enforce bylaws, and 15 full-time rangers oversee 240 parks across the city. Despite lacking ticketing authority, the Park Board shut down some unpermitted events and illegal buskers. On July 24 the Ice Cream Truck music collective was shut down and their equipment impounded, with assistance from the Vancouver Police Department (VPD).

Park Board Manager Donnie Rosa has made unpermitted amplified music in the parks a priority, but gaps in the system are still to be worked out with the City, Park Board, and VPD about park rangers being given ticketing authority, and other details. The mayor mandated VPD beach patrols to focus on crime, so the patrols have not focused on noise bylaw enforcement in parks, although they did shut down some raves at Jericho Beach Park.

There have also been anti-mask and anti-vaccine protestors taking over beach parks (Sunset Beach and Vanier Park) during the summer, erecting stages for groups blasting amplified music. According to the Park Board Director of Permits, the Park Board interprets the protests as unpermitted events. A legal opinion from the City states that protestors do not have the right to violate bylaws. But the protestors persist. Park rangers have no ticketing authority or other legal authority to stop them. If VPD does not address the music at these protests, there's nothing Park Board can do. That's what happened at a July 1 Vanier Park anti-mask and anti-vaccine protest that had several stages at Vanier Park. The Park Board was set to act, but VPD did not take action.

The English Bay noise group was able to reduce problems at English Bay over the summer by talking to buskers directly, getting them to lower the volume and turn speakers toward the water rather than nearby apartments. That created noise for Kitsilano residents, as sound carries across the bay.

Sunset Beach, a designated "quiet beach" that does not even allow small radios, has been a hot spot for amplified music from buskers and protestors, causing great discomfort and stress for those living nearby, including residents unable to open windows or use balconies on hot summer evenings due to the noise.

Hopes for Park Board bylaw enforcement next summer rose on October 18, when Park Board commissioners voted to hire 16 new park rangers, doubling their number and allowing for more patrols to deal with safety, homeless encampments, and amplified music. Staff had proposed that some rangers take on ticketing authority as peace officers, but commissioners voted to send that proposal back for further study due to concerns about adding another layer of policing.

Staff was directed to request \$1.8M in City funding for 16 new rangers through the 2022 Service Planning and Budget Process. But the City cut this request out of the budget proposal presented to Council on November 2 in order to keep property tax increases for 2022 below the 5% ceiling requested by Council. On December 8, the City Council approved the 2022 budget, designating \$300K for the Park Board to hire 2.5 more rangers in 2022, well below the \$1M requested. Additional funds might be raised by increasing user fees. However, given the small increase in park ranger staffing, advocates for quiet parks fear that \$300K will not be sufficient to support an increase in bylaw enforcement in 2022.

In response, the English Bay noise group, KPRA, and Right to Quiet decided the best way forward would be to host a public educational forum and invite City, Park Board elected officials, staff, and other stakeholders to participate, to raise awareness, find common ground, and to seek solutions.

Right to Quiet plans to host a Zoom event, "Quiet Parks and Quiet Places" in spring 2022, to address the health impacts of noise and the need for quiet spaces in urban parks, especially as density increases. Details will be posted on our website at <https://quiet.org/news-and-events> later.

## Sources

Park Board bylaws

<https://parkboardmeetings.vancouver.ca/files/BYLAWS-ParksBylawsConsolidated-20210621.pdf>

City of Vancouver Busker license requirements

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/street-entertainment-application.pdf>

Ice Cream Truck Music Collective

<https://www.createastir.ca/articles/ice-cream-truck-live-free-concerts-mauvey>

Vanier Park anti-mask and anti-vaccine protest

<https://m.facebook.com/FreedomOrganization/photos/gm.287015986489954/293452075512422/?type=3&source=44>

Park Board aims to double size of park ranger program

<https://bc.ctvnews.ca/we-need-more-rangers-vancouver-park-board-aiming-to-double-size-of-ranger-program-1.5630219>

The City cut this request from the budget proposal

<https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/local-news/vancouver-councillor-shocked-by-preliminary-budget-for-2022-4720854>

# Expanded outdoor dining brings much needed cheer and some challenges

Early in the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chicago Tribune published a photo gallery of outdoor dining spots around the world. The featured locales were elegant, upscale, romantic, and inviting. A more recent article in the Tribune features more casual, creative, rustic venues, and asks, "With restaurant dining rooms open, will outdoor tents and igloos be back this winter? 'We'll just have to see how hardy our customers are.' As outdoor dining venues created to accommodate pandemic safety requirements begin to officially operate every year or even year round, we take a look at how outdoor dining has been going in Toronto, Vancouver, and New York City.

Arezoo Talebzadeh, a soundscape researcher based in Toronto, reports that Torontonians are happy that patio dining "received a new life during the pandemic." She wrote in an email, "The city of Toronto lets restaurants use part of the sidewalk or street as their patio under an initiative called CaféTO. The city recently voted to keep the CaféTO alive beyond pandemic time. You sit right beside traffic (car, bus, bike, and streetcar in so many places), garbage truck movement, and construction. So many of them have no quality, yet people are so happy with them!"

Talebzadeh reports that the noise level from cafes and patios is lower than traffic and construction noise, and that many restaurants close by 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. during the pandemic. Additionally, patio dining sound levels are regulated by the Sidewalk Cafés, Parklets and Marketing Displays Bylaw, and the Noise Bylaw. Talebzadeh also reports that she is happy that patio dining is becoming part of life in Toronto, but says that "building them with good quality needs investment and design thinking." She adds that many restaurants in the commercial core of Toronto already had high quality patio dining before the pandemic

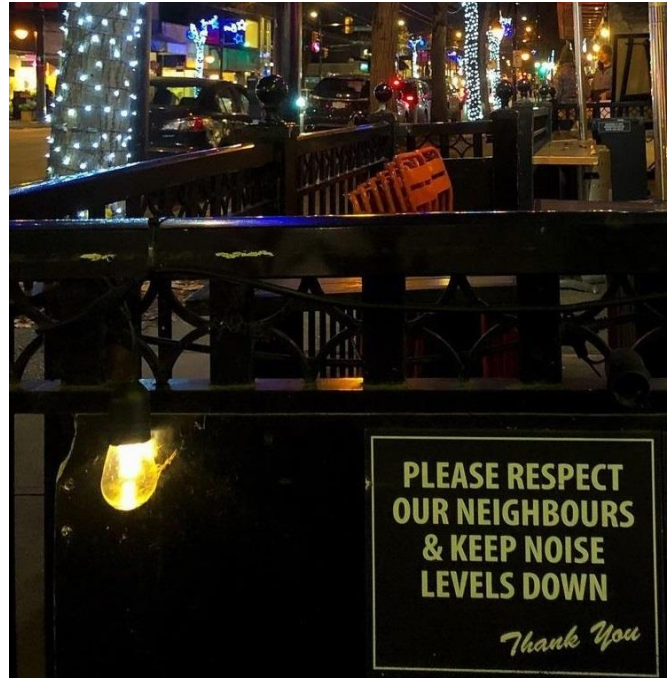


Photo of signage at Yaggers Restaurant in Vancouver: Elvira Lount



Photo of curbside dining in Toronto: Arezoo Talebzadeh

According to the CaféTO website, businesses are prohibited from projecting amplified sound from inside onto the patio. If amplified sound is playing inside, doors and windows must be closed as required by the Sidewalk Cafés, Parklets And Marketing Displays Bylaw. Acoustic sound is permitted on patios but must remain compliant with the Noise Bylaw.

On September 22, 2021, the Vancouver City Council unanimously approved continuing the summer patio program launched in 2020 to create safe dining outdoors early in the Covid-19 pandemic. The program will run annually from April 1 through October 31.

As in Toronto, existing establishments are required to submit applications that will be reviewed for transit, traffic, and safety concerns. Vancouver residents welcome the expanded patio dining program, and there haven't been significant quality of life complaints, including noise complaints. Most patios are located on busy commercial streets, while a few are found on arterial streets in mixed use neighborhoods. One concern has been access to patios for people with disabilities, and Scott Edwards, Manager, Street Activities Branch says that additional resources will ensure the enforcement of accessibility requirements.

The pandemic has also given life to a separate City of Vancouver initiative, pop-up patios and pop-up plazas that provide spaces for people to eat, chat, rest, or enjoy the outdoors while maintaining a safe distance from each other. One Right to Quiet member described a pop-up plaza installed in a closed street between a residential neighbourhood and a commercial street.

(Continued on page 6)

# Expanded outdoor dining brings much needed cheer and some challenges

(Continued from page 5)

Each picnic table is outfitted with a sign mounted under its umbrella reminding visitors that pandemic-related restrictions are in effect, and discouraging the use of amplified sound. At the entrance, another sign reads "sound travels." For more information about patio dining, pop-up patios and plazas, and other initiatives see <https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/making-streets-for-people-program.aspx>

In New York City, as in Toronto and Vancouver, there has been discussion among stakeholders about use of public and private land by restaurants, and sometimes loss of parking spots, which represents free private use of public space. Many outdoor dining sites in New York are doing well, especially those that offered sidewalk and backyard dining before the pandemic. And many have complied with health and safety and quality of life requirements. These venues deserve to be credited with saving jobs and bringing economic recovery to the city. At the same time, there is conflict and great acrimony as a diverse group of stakeholders work to have permanent year-round outdoor dining in New York City because many restaurants have not complied with standards for health, safety, sidewalk space, trash disposal, and noise.

Throughout the summer of 2020 when outdoor dining began in response to Covid restrictions, the public submitted significant numbers of valid quality of life complaints, including but not limited to noise complaints. There was some overlap in complaints as takeout only venues served alcohol to large loud gatherings of drinkers. The response among some outdoor dining advocates is to discredit and disparage those who fight for respect for quality of life. Unfortunately, doing this is easy, because complaints and people who complain about noise are generally discredited and stereotyped despite attempts to frame noise as a public health issue. Identity politics are brought into play as outdoor dining advocates frame quality of life advocates as selfish, affluent elites, some with a secret goal of reclaiming parking spaces. As someone who worked as a NYC311 agent for the first 10 months of the pandemic speaking with countless callers, I can attest that those fighting for respect for quality of life standards were and are ordinary working people whose claims deserve to be heard.



Photo: Eveline Raab

## Further reading

The Coalition United for Equitable Urban Policy <https://www.cueupny.com>

The Grinch Who'd Steal Outdoor Dining

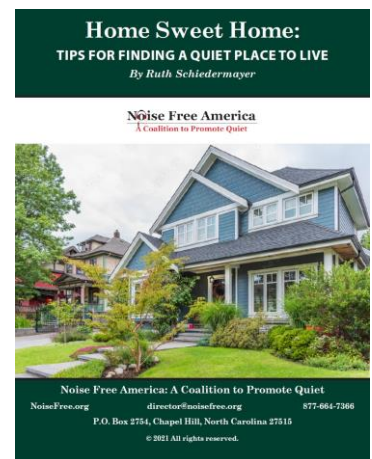
<https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2021/07/27/around-and-a-roundy-the-grinch-whod-steal-outdoor-dining>

Jeanine Botta  
Right to Quiet

## Home Sweet Home: A manual on finding a quiet place to live

Ruth Schiedermayer is a member of Right to Quiet and Noise Free America, and she served as organizer of Pipedown-USA, editing the *Please PIPEDOWN* newsletter from 2008 through 2011. Working with NFA Director Ted Rueter, Ruth has written a guidebook that everyone should read before buying or renting a new home. *Home Sweet Home: Tips for Finding a Quiet Place to Live* is a collection of lessons learned while Ruth and husband Kevin moved house several times over the years for their careers.

The manual covers a lot of ground, and addresses many noise sources that are out of our control and that we might encounter unexpectedly, and advises visiting properties more than once. There are also suggestions about being a good neighbor by considering sound you may create without awareness. Written in Ruth's uniquely calm, friendly, nonjudgmental voice, the manual is an enjoyable read. Ruth suggests readers use its guidance as a starting point. "The manual doesn't cover every sound source - for example, being mindful of living on corners with traffic lights. Use it as a starting point, and add to it."



## Further reading

Noise Free America press release

<https://noisefree.org/noise-free-america-issues-a-manual-home-sweet-home-tips-for-finding-a-quiet-place-to-live>

Home Sweet Home: Tips for Finding a Quiet Place to Live

<https://noisefree.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NFA-Home-Sweet-Home-manual.pdf>

Links to all issues of *Please PIPEDOWN* can be found on this page under "Reports" <https://noiseoff.org/library.php>