

vancouver foundation

Spring 2012

stories of modern philanthropy

*the
connections
issue*

A WAY HOME

At-risk youth find
stability in community

THE QUIET MENTOR

Helping skilled immigrants
build their network

WALKING IN TWO WORLDS

Carrier Nation culture
in the boardroom

ORIGAMI KID

Paperwork attracts
the neighbours



The First Word . . .

Bridges connect, fences divide

How many really close friends do you have? When was the last time you had a neighbour over? What stops you from being more active in community life? Vancouver Foundation has been asking people these questions – and more – as part of our effort to understand how people across metro Vancouver experience their personal friendships, neighbourhoods and communities, and the extent of their connection and engagement to the larger community.

This comes from a consultation we did last summer. The majority of participants told us the issue that concerned them the most was a growing feeling of isolation and disconnection from each other and from their community.

Throughout this summer, we'll release the results of our survey on just how connected – or disconnected – people in metro Vancouver feel, and what they need to become more engaged neighbours and citizens. On page 6 you can read more about this important project and get a peek at the survey results.

Strong fences make good neighbours. That's true. We all need our space. And over the last 20 to 30 years, we've become very good at building fences – and not just the obvious ones that carve up our cities. Now it is the Internet, smartphones, condo living – the subtle fences that can isolate as much as they connect. We are also increasingly separated by barriers of ethnicity, language, age and income.

The consequences of social isolation can include a corrosion of caring, a retreat into enclaves, and civic malaise.

This year, Vancouver Foundation will continue to work to connect and engage residents of metro Vancouver. Our goal is to support projects and initiatives that connect neighbours to neighbourhoods, marginalized people to the life of the larger community, and people from different ages, cultures and backgrounds.

We feel so strongly about this that we have dedicated this entire issue of *Vancouver Foundation* magazine to the theme of making connections and engaging people in their communities. This is our “connections” issue. Its pages are filled with examples of people and projects doing just that:

- “Origami Kid” on page 8 is the story of how one 11-year-old boy's desire to share his passion for paper folding is helping turn strangers into neighbours.
- Homelessness is one of the most isolating and lonely experiences a person can have. Read how our donors are helping connect young people to safe, supported housing in “A Way Home” on page 10.
- It's hard to make friends and it's hard to find work, especially for new immigrants. “The Quiet Mentor” on page 17 is about a special project for skilled immigrants, connecting them to employment opportunities – and more.
- And when you read the story of Paul Lacerte on page 22, you will meet a man who is “Walking in Two Worlds” and uniting them.

We know that when people are connected and engaged in their communities, those people and their communities are healthier, happier, safer and more resilient. With your support, we will work to help build more bridges between our various communities, because bridges, not fences, will help people connect and engage for the greater good.

One more item of note: Vancouver Foundation is among the first group of charitable organizations in Canada to be accredited under Imagine Canada's National Standards program. Accreditation demonstrates to the public and to all our stakeholders that we operate in a transparent and accountable manner, and that their trust and confidence in our work is well-founded. This is quite a coup, and something we are very proud of.



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AERIOSA

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FINISH THE MISSION

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Here are a few of the projects Vancouver Foundation and our donors recently supported

Children of the Street

The Youth Engagement Art Project will involve at-risk youth in creating an art event to raise awareness about sexual exploitation. At the same time, the project will foster youth leadership and voice among participants.

The type of creative project undertaken will be chosen by the youth themselves. It might be a skit, mini-play, visual art piece, written work or social media campaign.

Over eight weeks, youth will have the chance to develop and focus on critical thinking, leadership, empathy, social responsibility and youth voice, while participating in a safe learning environment. The process will culminate in a final art exhibition event to share the project with the larger community.

Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council provided a grant of \$5,000 for the project.



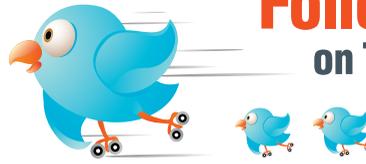
From survivor to supporter to success

Victoria Brain Injury Society

Peer support is vital for people who are dealing with the devastating effects of brain injury. At the Victoria Brain Injury Society, a peer support worker is available Monday to Thursday. This volunteer, who has experienced a brain injury, is trained to support new members and facilitate group conversations. The worker also passes on useful coping techniques, shares experiences with other brain injury survivors and their families, and refers survivors to other community resources.

"Survivor, Supporter, Success!" is a program that will teach brain injury survivors how to mentor and support their peers. This mutually beneficial program will not only provide recent survivors with mentors to help support their recovery; it will enhance the capacity, skills and self-confidence of existing workers, and can be a stepping stone to paid employment.

Vancouver Foundation awarded a grant of \$10,000 for the project.



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Uncovering Still Creek

Evergreen is a not-for-profit organization that makes cities more livable. Its mission is to bring communities and nature together for their mutual benefit.

Through the "Uncover Still Creek" program, Evergreen will work with the City to rehabilitate this local Burnaby creek. The specific intent is to provide vital habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species, and thereby improve urban biodiversity, as well as mitigate high stormwater flows and improve water quality.

Overall, the program aims to connect citizens with their watershed, encouraging community engagement through education and outreach events. **Vancouver Foundation's** environment committee recommended a grant of \$15,000 for the project.



Sassy gets a new roof

The Turtle Valley Donkey Refuge Society provides a safe home for rescued, abused and unwanted donkeys in British Columbia. Located near Chase in B.C.'s interior, the facility is home to 24 donkeys.

One of these is "Sassy" (both by name and temperament).

"Sassy's quite a character," says Shirley Mainprize, who runs the Donkey Refuge with her husband Harold. And although she arrived with a host of health problems, "she is now a very happy and healthy donkey enjoying her home at the Refuge."

Donkeys have recently become popular as pets or work animals (partly due to the movie *Shrek*). Typically, they live for 50 years in warm climates. However, the temperate climate of B.C. causes health problems for donkeys and can lead to abandonment.

Turtle Valley provides a safe and permanent home for these abandoned animals. **Vancouver Foundation** provided a grant of \$13,000 to add a covered overhang roof to one of the barns. This small improvement will provide a weather-protected area for the resident donkeys and increase their comfort during bad weather. The project also includes a water system to allow the donkeys to have clean water on demand.



Sassy (second from left) expresses her feelings at being photographed.

are we
connected
& *engaged?*



Highlights from our survey of metro Vancouver residents

| BY FAYE WIGHTMAN

As a community foundation, it is critical we understand our community – its strengths and its weaknesses. It is also important to know where we can make the best investments and have the most impact.

Last year we learned about a growing concern: residents in metro Vancouver are becoming increasingly disconnected, and more and more people are withdrawing from participating in community life (see November 2011 article “Connecting the Pieces”). While we heard this concern from a wide range of community leaders, we wanted a measurable answer to the question “how connected and engaged are people in this region?”

This past spring, Vancouver Foundation undertook a poll of 3,841 people across metro Vancouver. We explored three levels of connections and engagement: personal friendships, neighbourhood relations, and connections to the larger community of metro Vancouver. We also looked at barriers to being connected and engaged.

At the time this magazine was going to press, we had received only preliminary results, but even then we found a mixed picture. We discovered a community where neighbourhood relationships are polite, but the connections are not particularly deep. And we learned that, for one in four residents, metro Vancouver can be a lonely place.

We also uncovered a community that is outwardly tolerant but feels some ethnic groups would be more welcome than others. And we found that many residents believe people prefer to be with others of the same ethnicity.

Lastly, we found a relatively unengaged community with many people not participating in community activities. When asked what stopped them, a large number felt they had nothing to offer. But we also discovered many residents preoccupied and stressed by finances.

We wanted to know, for example, whether people do favours for one another as neighbours; whether they are ever invited over for a drink or barbecue; whether they ever have their neighbours over to their place. To all but two of our questions, the majority said no. Almost half said the reason was that they rarely see their neighbours.

Most people said they know the first names of at least two of their immediate neighbours. Yet only a slim majority think the ties in their neighbourhood are growing stronger. This all suggests that neighbourhood relations, while cordial, are not particularly strong or deep. It's one thing to smile and wave across the fence; quite another to give a neighbour a spare key to your house in case of an emergency or work together to tackle a local problem.

We also probed residents' attitudes toward diversity. Just over one-third of people said that all new immigrants and refugees would be welcome in their neighbourhood – but others felt that certain ethnic groups would be more welcome than others, and

identified which groups they felt would be most welcome and least welcome in their neighbourhood.

The survey also suggests people want people of all ethnicities to try harder to fit into their neighbourhoods, meaning something as simple as saying hello to neighbours when you see them on the street.

This reflects what we heard in 2011 when some people lamented how much their neighbourhoods have changed. They said they saw many of the old houses coming down, replaced by large gated houses, or homes had been bought by people who rarely live there.

We also asked a series of questions about what activities people had participated in during the last 12 months – and if they weren't active in their community, what held them back. These were activities such as: attending a community or neighbourhood meeting; taking part in a neighbourhood project like a local clean-up or community garden; attending certain cultural events, religious services, or city council or school board meetings. The majority said they had done none of these things.

A major stressor is money. More than half of respondents said they are finding it difficult or just getting by financially. Of those, most said it is because of rent or mortgage payments.

It is clear from the survey that our connections, particularly in our neighbourhoods, are cordial but casual. Our engagement in community life is weak. And there are a number of barriers to being connected and engaged that we must explore and help address.

Why does any of this matter? Because there are significant benefits to both individuals and the community when residents feel connected and engaged in the life of the community.

In communities where people have strong connections to others outside their own circle of family and friends, there is generally less crime, and people are happier and healthier on a number of levels. As well, a connected and engaged community is critical to addressing the larger challenges facing our region.

In metro Vancouver, which is becoming increasingly diverse, we need to find ways to strengthen connections between different types of people, and look for ways to engage all our residents in building a healthy, vibrant and livable community. We cannot afford to ignore this challenge.

We will be analyzing the data from the survey and releasing reports throughout the summer. We will be looking for ways we can invest, with the help of people in the community, to build a more connected and engaged community across metro Vancouver. **VF**

The full report on the survey is on our website at:
www.vancouverfoundation.ca/connect-engage

Origami



kid

Nathan Coburn is great on paper: His NSG project – an origami workshop – attracted more than 25 people who learned that some paperwork can be fun.

Nathan Coburn is the Origami Kid – and a stealth community nurturer.

The enthusiastic 11-year-old with the nimble fingers paws through a vat of his brightly coloured origami creations to show off some of his favourites: a surfer on a wave, two grooving dancers and a sheet of complicated folds that create a shimmering optical illusion.

“That’s a tessellation,” Coburn explains. “Oh, and I like this one, too,” he says, pulling a blue monster with chomping jaws out of the jumble of hundreds of origami pieces he’s made. “It’s another Jeremy Shafer design . . . I learned how to do it off YouTube.”

Origami is a passion for Coburn. After learning origami basics from a family friend at the age of five, he started ploughing through origami books and YouTube tutorials. Soon he was spending every spare minute meticulously folding squares of paper into intricate designs. People loved his creations, and he was coming home from school with lists of origami requests.

Then Coburn heard about Vancouver Foundation’s Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program that supports initiatives by residents to improve their neighbourhood through grants of up to \$500. The rationale for the program is simple: when residents become active in their neighbourhoods, communities are strengthened from the ground up.

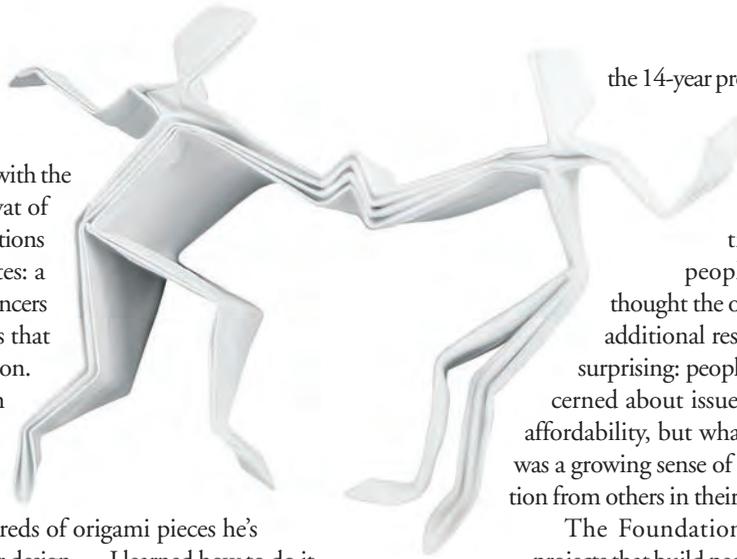
Coburn learned that NSG funds have been given to host block parties, build community gardens and hold workshops on everything from model-making for kids to Chinese brush painting for seniors. He decided to apply for funding to give an origami workshop, to enable the many people who had expressed an interest in his origami to give it a try on their own.

“I just thought it would be cool,” he says, shrugging and fiddling with a carefully constructed star shape. He was awarded a \$60 grant, which covered the costs of renting a space, putting up flyers and supplying origami paper and snacks.

Even though the workshop was held during the busy pre-Christmas period, it was a big hit – 25 people showed up and learned how to make origami cranes. (Coburn had modified the design to incorporate a bell, so that the cranes could double as Christmas ornaments.)

“It brought together a bunch of people from Nathan’s different worlds,” says his mother, Susan. “He has friends from different schools, from ballet, church and neighbours . . . It was a great excuse for all these different people to meet each other, get together and have a great time.”

The NSG program has a reputation for connecting people from “different worlds.” This is part of its popularity, and one of the reasons



the 14-year program has been expanded two years running.

In 2011, Vancouver Foundation undertook a community consultation to find out where people in metro Vancouver thought the organization should focus additional resources. The results were surprising: people were, predictably, concerned about issues like homelessness and affordability, but what concerned them most was a growing sense of isolation and disconnection from others in their communities.

The Foundation decided to focus on projects that build people’s connections to each other and engagement in their community. Expanding the Neighbourhood Small Grants program was a natural first step toward that goal.

“NSG offers great value for the investment,” says Lidia Kemeny, who co-ordinates the program.

For example, not only did the origami workshop bring 25 people together for \$60, it had positive ripple effects. Emboldened by his success, Coburn now plans to apply for a larger grant to organize a summer block party that will help people on his street get to know each other. He’s even willing to work through the intimidating process of applying for a City permit to shut down his street. His confidence and his community leadership skills are burgeoning.

Adults, too, were encouraged. One woman says her own NSG project was inspired by the success of the origami workshop. “This woman said she had heard about a 10-year-old giving a workshop and thought, ‘If a 10-year-old kid can do it, I can do it too,’” says Kemeny. “So she applied, got a grant and taught a series of free meditation workshops.

“In 2011, we expanded the NSG program to four new neighbourhoods: Kitsilano, the West End, the North Shore and Surrey. We gave out a total of 604 grants in 13 neighbourhoods. This year, we are expanding the program to New Westminster.

“The grants themselves are very small amounts of money. But the community they create? To steal a line from a popular ad campaign, ‘that’s priceless,’” Lidia concludes with a laugh.

Nathan Coburn has been a real success on paper, and in his community. At Vancouver Foundation, we’re looking forward to seeing the ripple effects that he and the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, as well as our new Connect and Engage priority, will have in communities across metro Vancouver. **VF**

For more information on Neighbourhood Small Grants, visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg

Broadway Youth Resource Centre

When Yosef Spivak laughs, he makes a sound like warm wind, and his eyes completely disappear behind red, round cheeks. He's a cheerful guy. It's his nature, even though, at 22, he's had a lifetime's worth of hardship.

Spivak first went into foster care when he was seven years old. He's a little vague about the reasons but his family was breaking up and he says he started acting out. He was diagnosed with an attention deficit disorder and prescribed Ritalin, along with other drugs that he says made him even wilder.

"I was a violent child," he says, an image that is hard to reconcile with this young man, happily chatting about his past.

For the next decade, Spivak went back and forth between his mother's home and foster and group homes, and spent time in a minimum security group home for youngsters with violent tendencies.

When his mother would take him back, she would also move him – to Montreal, to Israel, back to Richmond. Then the cycle of foster and group homes would begin again, and the school moves – too many to count.

It didn't help that he had also been misdiagnosed as a youngster with a rare genetic disorder that included reduced mental ability among its many conditions. It wasn't until he was a teenager that he was finally diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder. "I'm great at math and knots. I'm great at languages. I learned Hebrew and Yiddish in Israel. But I'm not great at spelling. Or grammar."

Spivak says he was relieved to get that diagnosis, even though it only came after two stints in the children's psychiatric ward. "It explained a lot of things. The problem was that I was already branded in the system as something else – a troublemaker with emotional issues."

At 19, Spivak became an adult and that meant he could finally move into his first apartment. "It was horrendous and awful. I was not ready at all. I freaked out the first night. I didn't know what to do."

It's hard to imagine how being in your own apartment could be worse than shuttling between foster and group homes, sleeping on friends' couches or finding temporary beds in safe houses and shelters, but this part of Spivak's story is shared by many other youth at risk of homelessness.

Kristine Kredba, Supervisor of the Youth Transition and Housing Program at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre (BYRC), has seen it many times. "Young people like Yosef who have been bounced around the system most of their lives often have large gaps in learning the basic skills they need," she says. "Like how to shop for groceries, budgeting and paying their bills on time or keeping their home clean. When it's just housing without support, or just support without housing, it almost always fails."

Vancouver Foundation helped the BYRC establish a supported housing program for at-risk and homeless youth. The goal is to secure safe housing for young people, and to provide them with the skills necessary to successfully transition from supported to



A way

independent housing. The program targets high-risk youth, specifically those who have experienced challenges finding and maintaining housing. These tend to be young people, like Yosef Spivak, who have lived in government care, "couch surfed," or lived in a safe house or shelter at some point in their lives.

The 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count found 397 unaccompanied young people on the streets. That's the highest number ever found in the region, and it's probably lower than reality as it does not count young people sleeping on a series of couches in a series of basements, and it does not count young people moving in

Yosef Spivak has found a home,
and stability, at the Broadway
Youth Resource Centre.



**“This place means everything to me. I’d
be either homeless or dead without it.”**

– Yosef Spivak

particularly for youth who have spent much of their lives in foster care or disconnected and isolated from a stable network of friends and family – all these factors make finding and keeping a home very difficult.

“Homelessness is one of the most isolating experiences a person can endure,” says Mark Gifford, director of grants and community initiatives at Vancouver Foundation. “Our region still relies on too many wet blanket, bus stop, train track and couch surfing options for kids trying to grow up and make sense of a world that has been cheap with love and opportunity.”

It’s the wasted opportunity that Kristine Kredba regrets. “When you’re living in fear, all the wonderful opportunities to become exceptional or even just to become a regular contributing member of society . . . well, it just can’t happen.”

She has seen what can happen when a young person suddenly has a place to live and can start to think about the future. “We have kids who have been in our programs who are in college, in university, who had their own kids returned to them and are good parents. Once they can exhale and stop worrying, they make plans.”

Addressing youth homelessness is one of Vancouver Foundation’s priorities. In 2012, this will mean more than \$1 million in grants to community partnerships, public policy, and community leadership strategies that connect young people with housing and support.

“Everyone deserves a first chance, let alone a second one,” says Gifford. “For young people, connecting to a safe, accessible and affordable home is a foundation for life – a base camp for climbing new mountains.”

Two years ago, Yosef Spivak was teetering on the brink of homelessness. He was kicked out of an apartment, slept on couches, even spent one night on the streets of Surrey when he got lost looking for a safe house. Then he found the Broadway Youth Resource Centre. “I was looking for a bathroom. Instead, I found a program that saved me.”

He is currently living in subsidized housing in one of the BYRC’s buildings for youth aged 16 to 24. He gardens, planting and tending roses, tomatoes and herbs. And he’s planning his future. He would like to go to culinary school, unless his love for the Broadway Youth Resource Centre wins the battle for his heart. “I would love to be a youth worker here. This place means everything to me. I’d be either homeless or dead without it.” **VF**

For more information on how you can help stem the tide of youth homelessness in metro Vancouver and find out how you can have your donation matched, call Kristin Helgason at 604-629-5186.

home

BY DENISE RUDNICKI | PHOTO TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

and out of homelessness. Some estimates put the number at 700 or even higher.

These young adults are exposed to significantly more physical abuse, sickness, injury and mental health problems than their peers with stable housing. And they can each cost society anywhere from \$55,000 to \$135,000 a year in public services like policing, health care, emergency services and jails.

There are many reasons why young people are vulnerable to the risk of homelessness. High housing costs; relatively low wages; lack of education; lack of employment and mental health supports,

Aeriosa

The suspension of disbelief

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTOS TIM MATHESON, DOMENIC SCHAEFER



Gravity is the bane of most dancers and choreographers. They struggle against it for years. Many will spend countless hours in the studio perfecting their technique. All in a vain effort to loosen gravity's tenacious grip – to lift the body higher, to leap farther, to spin longer and faster, and to make it all look effortless.

But over the last 10 years, a small Vancouver-based dance company has taken a radically different route.

Julia Taffe and her group of dancers use mountaineering skills and climbing hardware to work *with* gravity, rather than against

it. No pointe shoes, no skirts of tulle and feathers. Instead, they have carabiners, pulleys, mechanical braking systems, climbing harnesses, rope and running shoes. These are the tools the dancers of Aeriosa use to perform.

With gravity as a partner, the company creates vertical dance – awe-inspiring spectacles on the sides of buildings, or on sheer cliffs of rock; performances that are strange, disconcerting and breathtaking at the same time.

Twenty years ago, Taffe was in Winnipeg on the same well-worn career path that most young dancers follow – a slow progress from

student, to company apprentice, to a place in the corps and, hopefully one day, to soloist. Until, on a visit to the West Coast, she tried rock climbing for the first time and was immediately smitten.

She began climbing seriously in 1991. In 1993, she received a grant to study with two choreographers who specialized in vertical dance in the U.S. The boundaries between the disparate worlds of rock climbing and dance began to crumble.

For the next two years, Taffe performed on buildings in New York, Texas, Istanbul, Taipei, São Paulo, and on the granite domes of Yosemite dangling 1,000 feet above the valley floor.

In 1997, she was certified as a professional rock guide. The Squamish Chief – Canada’s premier rock climbing area – became her “office” and stage. When she wasn’t guiding clients up routes on the Chief, she was choreographing pieces on its sheer flanks.



Aeriosa performs on the outside of the Vancouver Public Library in downtown Vancouver.

When Julia Taffe says she likes to hang around buildings, she’s not kidding.

“I started developing my own voice,” says Taffe. “And I wanted to connect to others who were doing this work. Creating Aeriosa was a way to do both.”

The company’s first public performance was *Let’s Dance* in 2001, to celebrate the opening of the ScotiaBank Dance Centre at Davie and Granville. Taffe and three other dancers perched atop the

building, like gargoyles, then lowered themselves onto the facade and performed eight stories above an audience of open-mouthed, amazed and appreciative fans.

Aeriosa has since made an international reputation of dancing in vertical environments, having worked with Cirque de Soleil and Banff Centre for the Arts, won awards, and performed at dance, music, art and mountain festivals across North America.

The performances question the traditional definitions of dance, space and performer. It’s groundbreaking work, literally. By dancing on the walls, by harnessing gravity, Aeriosa challenges the very nature of what constitutes the “ground,” both for performer and audience. It creates a world where the normal rules don’t apply, where it’s no longer clear what is up or down, where bodies hover in space or soar like spiders ballooning on the wind. These are powerful, three-dimensional statements, often best viewed lying down, looking up the face of the building. For 30 minutes, everything is suspended: dancers, disbelief, gravity, reality itself.

“The choreography of each work is recreated and adapted to highlight each venue. It’s a creative process that promotes our connection with the communities we visit,” Taffe explains. “We try to engage communities through free performances and workshops. We believe art enriches lives and that all people, regardless of income, status or other barriers, should have access to dance.”

Last fall, with help from Vancouver Foundation and its donors, Aeriosa celebrated its 10-year anniversary by commissioning a new work – *Being* – and premiering it at the Dance Centre’s 10th-anniversary celebration.

“We started in the theater as a more traditional performance,” says Taffe. “The audience could decide where they wanted to sit in the theater. Then one of the dancers led everyone outside, around to the back of the building. One hundred feet above, the other dancers proceeded to cascade down the wall. We used all three danceable sides of the building as well as the interior.

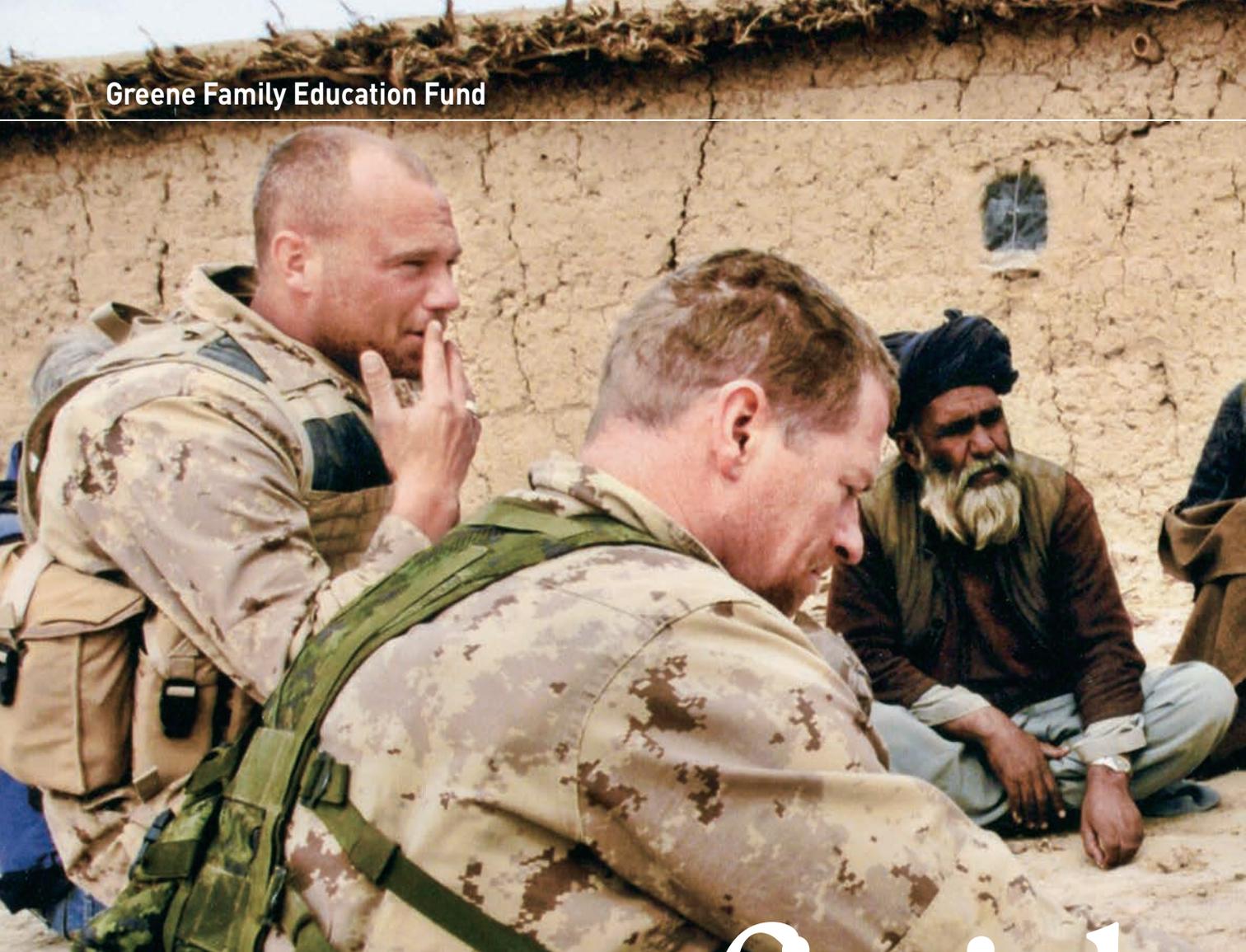
“The \$15,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation enabled us to use original music, costumes, lighting and projections. And it enabled us to offer the piece for free.”

Taffe has strong opinions about performance in general, and about dance in particular: She eschews the traditional notion of a concert where the audience is passive, sitting statically while the artist creates all the action. She believes performances should be free and presented in public, not just to people who have chosen to purchase a ticket.

“Part of what I and the other dancers of Aeriosa have to offer is a broadening of that idea,” says Taffe. “I feel like there are bridges that have to be built because there’s a lack of education about dance. It’s not part of general school programming. In some places it’s not even offered at all, and it becomes very alien.

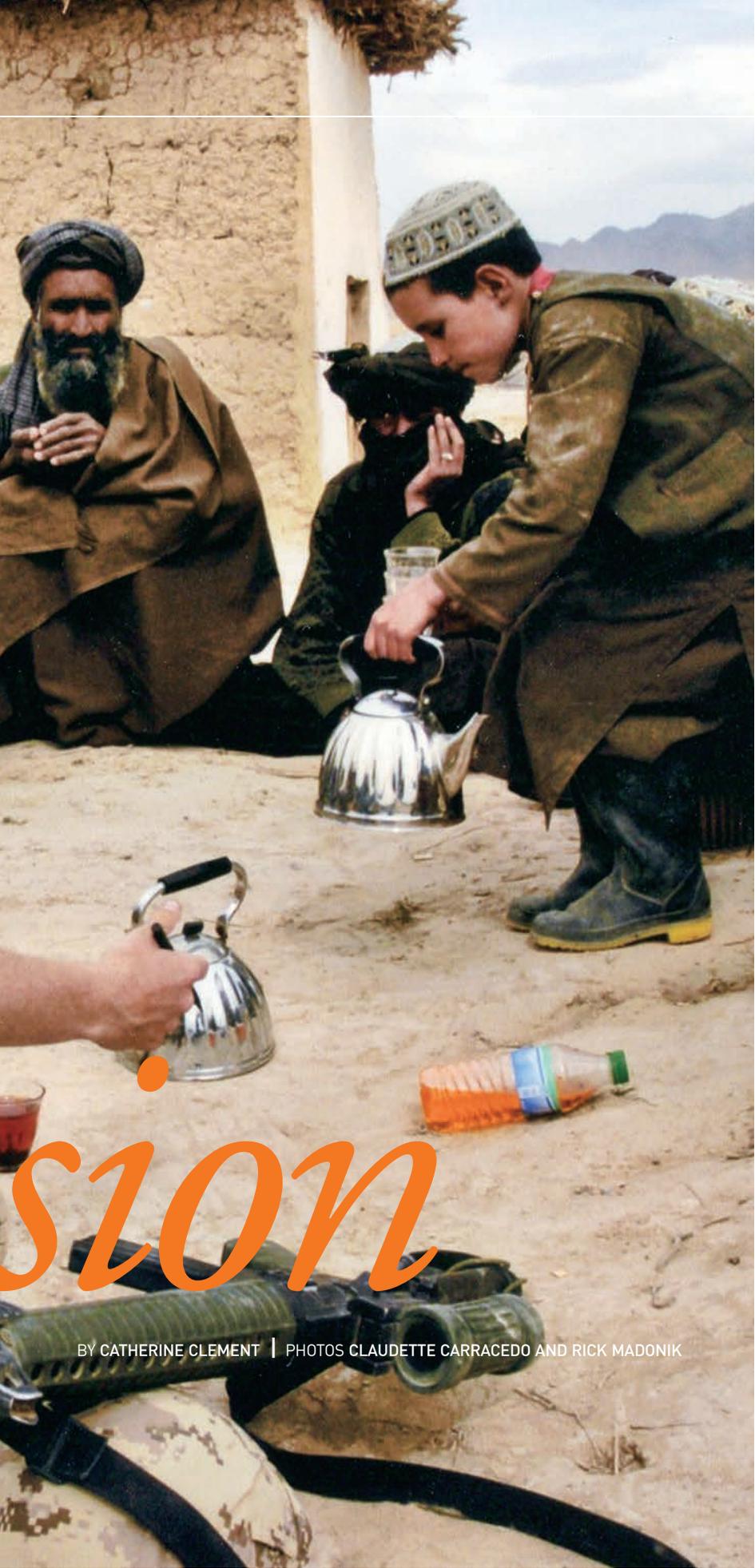
“Dance is part of being human, and our culture would be better served if there were more opportunities for everybody to feel connected to dance and be part of dance.” **VF**

For more information on how you can support arts and culture in B.C., and have your donation matched, go to www.vancouverfoundation.ca



finish. the *MIS.*

Captain Trevor Greene (above) meets with village elders in Afghanistan. Trevor and Debbie (left) set up the Greene Family Education Initiative Fund to pay for scholarships for women in conflict zones to become teachers.



MISSION

BY CATHERINE CLEMENT | PHOTOS CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO AND RICK MADONIK

January 15, 2006: a Sunday in the dead of winter. But for Canadian soldier Captain Trevor Greene this was a winter day like nothing he had experienced before. Rather than cold winds and blankets of white snow, the winter he stepped into was blazing hot and dusty – a monochromatic landscape of brown.

The 41-year-old had just arrived in Afghanistan, stepping off the plane at the Kandahar air base and straight into a barn-sized, corrugated-metal building with holes in the roof from rocket-propelled grenades. He was attending his first briefing.

“It felt like walking into a sauna, but with lots of dust,” Greene recalls.

Despite the hostile surroundings, the need to wear hot, protective gear and lugging around heavy weapons, Greene was enthusiastic about his mission. He had come not to fight, but to help Afghans rebuild – one village at a time. A former journalist, Greene was fulfilling a lifelong dream to do humanitarian work with the armed forces.

He would be forced to leave Afghanistan a mere 48 days later – his brain split in half by an axe – unconscious, clinging to life and seemingly defeated, his mission cut short.

Six years later, I’m perched at a dining room table in a modern, tidy little house outside Nanaimo. Greene is sitting across from me in a wheelchair, good-looking, fit and alert. Debbie, his pretty wife with a megawatt smile, is running errands and popping in and out of the conversation while their daughter Grace gets ready for ballet lessons.

I’ve read the many newspaper articles and watched the documentaries about what happened to Greene on his last day in Afghanistan. It’s a story familiar to many Canadians.

It was March 4, 2006, and Greene and his platoon were meeting with village elders. It was their third meeting that day, although this one was not planned. The villagers and soldiers gathered in one of the few shady spots available.

It was at these gatherings that Greene, in his role as rebuilding specialist, would have an opportunity to ask villagers about their needs and develop plans to help them with such things as accessing fresh water and medical supplies.

To show respect during these meetings – called *shuras* – all soldiers would remove their helmets. Greene sat down on the dirt and laid his helmet to the side. Just as he started to ask his first question, a 16-year-old boy stalked up behind him, and with all his force pitched an axe into the back of Greene's head.

All hell broke loose. The young attacker was shot on the spot. Greene lay on the ground, part of his skull missing and pieces of brain matter splattered on the ground.

His life became a dizzying array of emergency airlifts, surgeries, hospitals and rehabilitation centres. He almost died three times and, in the early days, there was little hope he would emerge from his coma.

Greene has defied the odds. He is not only still alive, but has recovered his ability to speak, to move, to stand and to squat. This spring he released a book with his wife Debbie, called *March Forth*. Together, they document his life story and the ups and downs of his remarkable recovery.

With a gym in his garage, Greene religiously dedicates several hours a day to his physical rehabilitation. The part of his brain damaged by the attack is the area that controls movement in his limbs.

"I begin my morning at 7:30 on the bike using my hands to cycle," he says. Then he goes on to several other exercises and movements to build muscle, flexibility and control. "My right side is still not as good as my left. I was right-handed before."

Meanwhile, he is also part of a study with the University of Victoria. Researchers there have been using magnetic resonance imaging to study how other areas of Greene's brain are slowly taking over for the damaged part.

Like the rest of Greene's story, the researchers are in awe at how he is defying conventional medical wisdom. For years, physicians believed brains only had a short window for recovery after an injury. But six years later, Greene's brain continues to rewire itself and he continues to improve. Being able to walk again is the next goal.

Not surprisingly, Greene has little memory of the actual attack. In fact, he has no memory of events between March 2006 and August 2007. Even his days in Afghanistan are hazy. "The memories are like small vignettes. Brief bursts of grainy images."

It is interesting what memories have lingered. Greene tells me about a night when he and some other soldiers were shooting the cannon on their LAVs (light armoured vehicles) as part of an exercise.

"The rounds were flying into the desert, and kids were scrambling to collect the steel casings," he recalls in his soft, measured voice. "They would turn them into objects or sell them for the scrap metal. But they were collecting these while we were actually still firing."

He also remembers how his interest in educating young Afghan girls was often met with laughter or scorn. Prior to the deployment, Greene had read several studies on how investments in girls yielded the greatest long-term benefits to a community. He made it his

personal mission to find a way to improve opportunities for girls while in Afghanistan, a country notorious for its oppression of women.

All those dreams were cut short by the blade of an axe. His mission would remain unfulfilled. There would never be another opportunity – or so it seemed.

In 2010, Greene and Debbie got an unexpected call. It was from a lawyer who told them that his recently deceased client, a James Motherwell of Vancouver, had heard Greene's story and was so moved that he had left the former soldier a \$100,000 bequest in his will.

"At first we thought it was a joke," recalls Greene. But when it became apparent the money was real, there was no doubt in their minds as to what they would do with it.

Rather than put the funds toward meeting their own needs, Greene and Debbie used the gift as seed money to create the Greene Family Education Fund. They set up an endowment fund at Vancouver Foundation, where the income generated from the fund is used to support scholarships for women in conflict zones to become teachers. "And to ensure that children have access to education to break the cycle of poverty that makes them beholden to their oppressors," says Greene.

"We did research and picked the Vancouver Foundation because of its long history, being Canada's largest and one of the oldest on the continent," says Debbie. "As well, we wanted to stay close to home with a reputable organization with years of experience."

The Greene Family Education Initiative recently awarded its first scholarship; it went to a 16-year-old Afghan girl named Farifa, who is currently studying English and computers, and aspires to become a teacher in her country.

Over time, they hope to raise \$1 million for the initiative. Sales of the book should help with that.

"I want to finish the mission," Greene says affirmatively. "This is my way of doing it."

We end our two-hour conversation on the subject of forgiveness. Is it possible to forgive someone who has done so much harm to you? Who has changed your life forever? Greene replies without hesitation: "I needed to forgive that young boy in order to move on.

"He was the kind of kid I was there to help," Greene adds with an empathic tone in his voice. "His only hope for a better life was to kill an infidel. That was what he was brainwashed to believe."

Greene – the "peace warrior," as he has been called – went to Afghanistan to help people in that war-torn country have a better life. He will never go back. As he puts it, "I barely made it out the first time with my life. I don't want to push my luck."

But Greene is finishing the mission, although in a different way than he could have ever imagined. **VF**

If you want to help Captain Trevor Greene finish his mission, go to www.vancouverfoundation.ca/greenefamily. Or, if you have a mission of your own, call Peter Jackman at 604-629-5357

the quiet mentor

Building bridges for skilled newcomers

BY ROLEY CHIU | PHOTO JAMIE KOWAL

When Kassie Sambaraju arrived in Canada, she was on the outside looking in.

It's been 20 months since the veteran research assistant with the short dark curls said goodbye to her family in Bangalore, India. She left a comfortable position back home, working in the social development sector, to start anew in an unfamiliar city.

A move this bold exemplifies just the kind of confidence you'd expect from a seasoned professional with a management degree, a masters in science and a desire to build thriving communities. But when Sambaraju arrived in Canada, her ambition was met with disappointment.

"Coming here, I feel under-utilized," she says, with a measure of patience befitting her research background. "I had a good position back home. Here, the pay is lower and it's very frustrating [trying] to find the right job."

In Bangalore, Sambaraju had a substantial personal and professional network – something many of us take for granted. A strong network is not an easy thing to discard, but for her, it was a reasonable exchange for the opportunity to live and work abroad.

"It's just that I know the job markets back in India, and I don't have a network here. That's the only difference," says Sambaraju, whose fluency in English is not betrayed by her southern Indian accent. "As a newcomer, there are very limited programs with organizations that help me build these networks and it's somehow harder to make friends and connections in Vancouver. I've talked to other newcomers and they feel the same way."

It's a familiar story. Skilled immigrants entering the province struggle in the labour market and are often underemployed, despite a growing skills and labour shortage in B.C. But with help from her new mentor, Sambaraju's confidence has been restored.

Four months ago, she signed up for a mentoring program delivered through the Immigrant Services Society of B.C. and co-ordinated by the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. (IEC-BC is overseen by Vancouver Foundation, which supports the organization by providing a home.)

IEC's mentoring program works with employers and immigrant-serving agencies to match skilled newcomers with mentors who are Canadian-born and currently employed. Sambaraju was matched with Patrick Tobin, regional executive director for Canadian Heritage, who recently spent three months travelling in India.

"When we met, we quickly realized that we had things in common," says Tobin, who has been with the federal government for 11 years. "We share a desire to contribute to the public good. I found it really interesting that a person as talented as Kassie was

With help from mentor Patrick Tobin (left), talented and ambitious newcomer Kassie Sambaraju is building a professional network in Canada.



looking for work in public service, and not for the obvious reasons such as job security and good compensation, but really because she feels she can give back and contribute through government."

Sambaraju and Tobin meet roughly once every two weeks at Library Square, among students, families and business people. "Our relationship evolved over time," says Tobin with a chuckle. "We moved through many stages and talked about public service hiring, how job postings are structured and Canadian workplace norms."

Sambaraju would often present a specific opportunity, and they would work on it together. Tobin would reach out to his network of contacts, provide glowing introductions and request intelligence on specific organizations on her behalf.

"Seeing the arrival experience through Kassie's eyes has taught me a lot," he says. "There are some very pervasive perceptions about immigrants on the part of employers, who have a tendency to discount immigrant labour."

What began as a professional relationship eventually grew into a friendship that included social outings, where they introduced their significant others over dinner.

"He's a very kind person. He's always there to help me," says Sambaraju with an infectious smile. "And I am glad that this mentoring process has helped me see these 'hidden' or 'unspoken' rules in the job market. I feel more grounded in my job search."

With renewed vigour, Sambaraju now feels comfortable picking up the phone to call an employer, whether it be to seek information or schedule an information interview.

"Do you know the expression 'priceless confidence'?" she asks with the poise of a college professor. "That's what Patrick has given me – it has been empowering. I now have the fishing skills to fish," she says with a hearty laugh. **VF**

To find out more about the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C., call 604-629-5364, e-mail info@iecbc.ca or visit the website www.tapintalent.ca



Capturi



Bill Nimi's memory isn't as good as it used to be.

But even at 80 years old, he can still recall many details about his father's drugstore.

"The address was 331 Powell Street," he says without hesitation.

It was one of dozens of Japanese businesses that operated in the area of Vancouver once dubbed Japantown. Today, the area located near the Downtown Eastside's Oppenheimer Park bears little evidence of the prosperous Japanese community that existed here before the Second World War.

"Drugstores for Asiatics, they were not allowed to dispense medication, just patent medicines. Things like Aspirin," Nimi recalls while holding a faded black-and-white picture of the storefront. "We even sold Minolta cameras and we were Kodak film sellers. One of the big items was 78 [rpm] records. We ended up selling a huge amount."

He fondly describes the other businesses on the street including a mechanic's shop called the Safety Garage, owned by the Otsuji family. "In those days, auto repair was not like today. You didn't just replace some parts, you fixed it piece by piece."

Nimi Drugstore, with its simple entrance of white octagon tiles and black letters that spelled "NIMI 331," was opened in 1918 by Bill's father, Torgoro, who had arrived in Canada from Japan around 1905.

It would be forced to close, along with all the other Japanese businesses in the area, in December 1941, shortly after the Japanese Imperial Army bombed Pearl Harbor.

Despite any evidence of sabotage or espionage by Japanese living

in Canada, an irrational and racist fear gripped B.C. after the attack in Hawaii. Leaders of local government, businesses and the media demanded that Japanese Canadians be forcibly removed from the coast. Even those born here were not spared suspicion.

Within a few weeks, Nimi's parents lost everything – their business, their home and most of their possessions.

At only nine years old, Bill joined approximately 22,000 other Japanese-Canadians in the province who were forcibly shipped off to internment camps in the rugged and remote B.C. interior. There, left to fend for themselves, they crowded into tiny, wooden cottages with other families. There was no running water, no food and no government support. Allowed to carry only 25 pounds each, families took only the basics: brown wicker or leather suitcases filled with clothes, linens and cooking utensils.

For four years they languished in what looked like a prison camp, only to be told at the end of the war that their choice was either to "return to Japan, or move east of the Rockies."

By 1951, only 7,100 Japanese remained in B.C. Their businesses, fishing boats, houses, finances and other possessions were never returned to them.

Documenting these stories, and collecting the photos, papers and other artifacts from early Japanese-Canadian families, is the mission of the Nikkei Museum in Burnaby. Headed up by Beth Carter, its enthusiastic, multitasking director/curator, the museum undertakes a number of projects each year to gather and make accessible a wide array of material that showcases Japanese-Canadian history, culture and arts.

ng the past . . . for the future



BY CATHERINE CLEMENT | PHOTOS COURTESY OF NIMI FAMILY AND NIKKEI MUSEUM

Carter is proud to show off the thousands of items the museum has gathered so far. Besides a vast array of family photos and documents, the museum's storage room also includes clothing, suitcases, household items and tapes of interviews all stacked neatly on the museum's floor-to-ceiling shelves. Even the entrance tiles from Nimi Drugstore (the original building was torn down) have found a home at the Nikkei Museum.

Over the years, Vancouver Foundation and its donors have supported a variety of projects organized by the museum. Most recently, the Foundation helped fund a community outreach project with a grant of \$30,000. The museum's goal was to reach out to other, smaller Japanese-Canadian organizations in B.C. to help properly document and preserve their holdings and then share them through a central, online database.

"Most people don't want their artifacts to leave their community," Carter explains. "By helping these small groups gather, digitize and catalogue these artifacts, we are preserving them and making them more accessible to future generations."

Last year, Carter and her small team worked with the Japanese-Canadian Cultural Centre in Kamloops. This year, they will turn their attention to New Denver, one of the last remaining sites of an internment camp that still has structures standing. There, the Internment Memorial Centre has a vast collection of artifacts that desperately need to be itemized.

"Anyone who experienced the internment camps is a senior today. They understand the significance of some of these photos and artifacts," explains Carter. "As they pass away, we will lose this knowledge unless we properly catalogue it now."

Carter admits the work is slow and methodical, but rewarding. Missing pieces of history are found in the back of a photo album. Treasures are recovered at the bottom of some old, dusty box: a coat worn to the internment camp with money sewn inside the lining; a box of recipes; a hand-sized doll dressed in purple and

Torgoro Nimi (far left) opened his drugstore at 331 Powell Street in 1918. The business thrived until December 7, 1941.



red brocade. These are the objects of a troubled past that the Nikkei Museum is preserving: an archive of memories; a catalogue of commemoration; pieces of a lost puzzle lovingly laid out for future generations to discover. **VF**

Vancouver Foundation and our donors have supported many archival projects; you can help preserve the past for future generations by going to our website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca

Umbrella Mobile Clinic

Growing trust



The Umbrella Mobile Clinic makes accessible the health care services temporary farm workers are entitled to.

| BY DONNA BARKER



Every year, approximately 2,000 temporary farm workers from Mexico come to the Fraser Valley on a government work program. Most of us never see these men, working on tree farms, in nurseries and greenhouses, and in fields far from the main roads. But they are out there, sunrise to sunset, planting, weeding and picking crops like strawberries, raspberries and blueberries.

These temporary workers play a vital yet invisible role in providing us with affordable berries all summer long at our local grocery stores. Their tremendous contribution to the local food system entitles these workers to basic health care services. But “being entitled” and “having access” to health care are two very different things.

Two obstacles stand in the way of these Mexican farm workers accessing basic health care when they need it. First, the distance they work and live from medical clinics, on rural roads without public transportation, requires taking an unpaid half-day from work to reach a clinic during regular hours. And second, a cultural and language barrier that makes it next to impossible to communicate their health concerns to local doctors.

That’s where the “Umbrella Mobile Clinic” comes in – an innovative program supported by Vancouver Foundation that brings health care to the men who work the fields. On weekends during the eight-month growing season, the part-time staff and volunteers of the Umbrella Mobile Clinic rent a cube van, transform it into a medical clinic and park it in a central location where farm workers gather on their day off.

When they enter the clinic, the farm workers are met not just by the volunteer doctor but also by the clinic’s “cross-cultural health broker,” Jorge Perales, a youthful-looking 32-year-old.

Perales came to Canada in 2010 as an international student to improve his English. Being Mexican, having recently immigrated to Canada and holding a degree as a general practitioner and surgeon back home, he is much more than a simple Spanish-English interpreter. And his passion for helping others shines through when he talks about his role with the clinic.

“The farm workers are out of their realm here. It is my job to grow their trust so they feel safe in a medical appointment. These men have all left their homes and their families. They feel isolated and their experience of the rules in Canada is sometimes difficult,” says Perales.

“They are trying to navigate a very different culture and have no idea how to work with the health care system here. Most are too shy to even ask for a straw at a fast food restaurant. How can they have the confidence to talk to anyone about their health care needs? So my first job is to build *confianza*, trust, to get them to open up.”

Like any population of physical labourers, the farm workers have a variety of health needs, from the flu to minor infections to

repetitive injury damage to their muscles and nerves. In many cases, a trip to a pharmacy is needed after the doctor visit. Again, Perales and other Umbrella Mobile Clinic team members are there to help the farm workers fill prescriptions and understand possible side effects, dosing and other concerns.

In some situations, the doctor will recommend further tests at the hospital: an X-ray or a blood test, for instance. In these cases, Perales’ second critical job as the cross-cultural health broker is to help negotiate what the doctor would like the patient to do as follow-up, and what the patient is actually able and willing to do.

For instance, if tendonitis is suspected, one of the treatments the doctor will recommend is rest. But taking a week or more away from work is an impossible request of a temporary farm worker whose family at home is relying on his income to maintain their own health and well-being. So Perales helps the doctor and the patient agree to a middle ground where the medical condition can be addressed, perhaps not perfectly, but enough to allow the worker to keep planting, weeding and harvesting.

“I empathize with this situation and I help the patient make an informed decision about his treatment,” explains Perales. “I continuously follow up. I give them my cell number and they call me when they need more information or support. Being a cross-cultural health broker is something important I can provide to society.”

Standing behind Perales and all the volunteer doctors and staff of the Umbrella Mobile Clinic is Vancouver Foundation and its donors, who provided grants in 2011 and 2012 totalling more than \$73,000. This support has a ripple effect, far beyond the health of the individuals who access the clinic’s services.

Mexican migrant farm workers play a critical role in building local food security and providing us with the fresh, B.C.-grown ingredients that we rely on to make our own healthy meals. Food is one of the many things we take for granted here, and most of us have no idea where our food comes from or how it gets to market. Health care, too – for most of us, medical help is as close as a phone call, as near as the nearest hospital. But some don’t – *can’t* – take either of these for granted.

When we buy berries grown in the Fraser Valley, there’s a good chance Jorge Perales and the Umbrella Mobile Clinic saw the workers that picked them. They are keeping these workers healthy, so we can have healthy food and the workers can continue to send money home to their families. **VF**

This project funded through Vancouver Foundation’s Health and Social Development committee. To help support projects like this, call Peter Jackman at 604-629-5357

walking in two worlds

BY CHRISTINE FARON CHAN | PHOTO VINCENT L. CHAN

Paul Lacerte proudly wears a traditional button vest of the Carrier Nation. He brings the wisdom and perspective of Aboriginal Peoples to Vancouver Foundation's Board of Directors.



Confident, self-assured, polished – Paul Lacerte

looks like he belongs in a corporate boardroom, dealing with tough negotiations and strategizing mergers.

At 40, he is one of the youngest members of Vancouver Foundation's Board of Directors. But don't let the youthful face fool you. He leads one of the largest aboriginal service organizations in Canada. He negotiates with government leaders and influences large charities. And thanks to his efforts, Canada earned a coveted seat on an important United Nations forum. When Lacerte talks, people listen. His presence is at once calming and authoritative, and he imparts a wisdom that is steeped in ancient traditions.

But it wasn't always this way.

Lacerte grew up in northern B.C., in a small town straddled by two reserves of the Carrier Nation. Born to a Lebanese mother and a First Nations father, he was one of six children. A family of mixed heritage was still a rarity in those days.

"For the majority of my life, it's been profoundly challenging," he says. "Growing up as a 'half-breed,' you deal with the violence at home, having a parent who is a residential school survivor. And when you go to school, you have no place to go. You're not with the white kids, and you're not with the aboriginal kids. The white kids call you 'chief' and the aboriginal kids call you 'the dirty white boy.'"

In his twenties, transitioning from small town life to the big city of Victoria, Lacerte tried to navigate his mixed heritage differently. He joined the native student union at the University of Victoria, where he studied political science. But he was disturbed by what happened in the classroom.

"Students and professors thought they could say anything about aboriginal people because it didn't appear there were any aboriginal people in the room," he recounts. He responded by growing his hair long, and becoming "a really long-haired, angry traditionalist."

With maturity and experience, however, Lacerte's approach to his dual heritage changed. "It was really about self-acceptance," he says.

This was due in part to the spiritual training he received from his uncle Jack, who, like his father, was a residential school survivor.

Under Jack's mentorship, Lacerte became a student of his people, learning the Carrier language, traditions and ceremonies.

He took part in the summertime fasting ceremony – four days and nights in the bush with no food or water, a process he likens to a "controlled near-death experience." The practice is a rite of passage for the Carrier people, and it continues to be a source of spiritual strength for Lacerte today.

It is this spiritual grounding that has changed his perspective on his mixed heritage. "Now, I just see it exclusively as a gift," he says. "I'm a genetic bridge, so I feel I can play the reconciling role and walk in both worlds."

In his 17 years at the helm of the B.C. Association

of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Lacerte has grown the centres into the important service providers and gathering spaces they are today. "At the Friendship Centre, everyone's invited and you're accepted," he says. "Nobody says, 'show me a card' or 'show me a status number' to get a certain service. That validation, especially for mixed-blood people, is so critical."

He has also extended this work to the international stage, collaborating with the national executive of Aboriginal Friendship Centres to earn a seat for Canada on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He also became the aboriginal representative on B.C.'s Government Non-Profit Initiative. It was at those meetings that he came to the attention of Faye Wightman, Vancouver Foundation president and CEO, who co-chaired the initiative. She invited him to sit on the Foundation's Board.

"I was honoured, and yet I was more than a little intimidated by the wealth," remembers Lacerte. "I came from a poor family. And then you go to a table like that where most have likely not had an aboriginal person in their home."

Lacerte sought advice from his uncle on how to approach his new role. "He told me, 'When you start a journey with somebody that is important, you do two things: you give a gift – a gift that comes from the heart, that has integrity to it – and you eat together. These are two things that connect you, that let the person know what kind of person you are, and prepare you for a long journey – a sustained journey – together.'"

At his first Foundation Board meeting, Lacerte gave everyone a pouch decorated with a feather. It contained dried moose meat that his family had hunted, prepared and cured during a recent summertime visit to the Carrier community. The gesture was warmly received. "Next thing you know, they're all sitting there chewing on this moose jerky," Lacerte recounts, grinning widely.

Lacerte has also brought a fresh perspective to meetings at the Foundation. He always includes a declaration about his people and the work that he is doing with Vancouver Foundation and in the community.

"It's partially a duty and partially to try to ground people," he says. "I go into all sorts of meetings and people want to hurry up and get down to business instead of understanding who it is that they're with and building a little bit of humanity in the space. Sometimes they don't even introduce themselves . . . the more connectivity and synergy you build amongst well-intentioned people, the better chance you have at the outcome."

Lacerte's philosophy of connectedness and human compassion is what makes him such a strong ambassador for Vancouver Foundation. He believes there is a need for change in how we view the care of people in our community; that we must move away from relying on the 'system,' and take more personal responsibility.

"Then we start to change how we think and feel about our neighbour," he explains. "And replace fear and suspicion with love and compassion, and a spirit of sharing with our neighbour."

Lacerte takes this message everywhere he goes. He has lived it, and knows the sentiments intimately. He has come a long way in the journey to find his rightful place. As a successful leader, he straddles two worlds, two cultures – the Carrier Nation and the boardroom – and has won the respect of both. **VF**



*speaking
up for*
youth

Diego Cardona, 16, has already gone from child refugee fleeing violence to community organizer and youth advocate. Now he has his sights set on a political career.

When Diego Cardona was four, his father went to a meeting . . . and never came back.

The meeting was with members of a Colombian insurgent group to discuss a parcel of family land the insurgents had appropriated. His father is presumed to have been murdered.

Cardona's remaining family moved to another part of Colombia, but death threats followed them until they finally left the country altogether. The extended family applied to immigrate to Canada, but only Diego, his younger sister and his mother were accepted.

That was more than seven years ago. Diego Cardona is now 16, with bright brown eyes and a charming wide grin. He looks like a typical Canadian teenager in his T-shirt and blue jeans. But he relates the horrifying events that are part of his personal history matter-of-factly, with less drama than many other teens might describe a trip to the mall.

Murder, violence and intimidation were indeed facts of life for Colombians – particularly those who, like Cardona's family, dared to be politically active. But it hasn't made young Diego callous or inured to injustice. Nor is he cynical about politics. Given how much his family's political involvement has cost him personally, it would be understandable if Cardona wanted to avoid politics altogether. Instead, he actually has his sights set on a political career, encouraged – at least in part – by his positive experiences with Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council (YPC).

"When we came to Canada," he explains, "we started out in Toronto, then we moved to Montreal, then Vancouver. My mom got cancer, and the rest of our family was back in Colombia. It wasn't easy at first. But later on, I got involved in a great program for immigrant and refugee youth – funded by Vancouver Foundation, actually. Then through that, I got involved in YPC. And YPC gave me tons of connections to people who make things happen."

The YPC consists of volunteer youth who, with adult allies, decide on the allocation of grants for many of Vancouver Foundation's youth-focused projects.

"YPC is what I call meaningful youth engagement. Youth decide what will work for youth. Our judgment is respected, and the projects we've funded have been very successful. It's empowering."

Cardona's sense of personal empowerment received another boost recently after serving on the advisory committee for a youth summit organized by Vancouver Foundation and the office of the provincial government's Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

"Seven thousand new immigrant and refugee youth enter B.C.'s school system each year," says Cardona. "But how often does our government hear what is and isn't working from their perspective?"

Organizing the summit was challenging. "We only had three hours a week over three months to set up a two-day summit," says Cardona. "Together, we determined the issues we wanted to address: education and the ESL system, community services, LGBTQ issues and women's issues (because most immigrant and refugee families are headed by single moms). We picked the speakers, and we made sure we had at least one youth speaker on each panel. We also invited key bureaucrats from ministries like the Ministry of Education."

Cardona is an astoundingly articulate young man, especially considering he only started learning English at the age of nine. But when he talks about the summit itself, the smile that lights up his face and his buoyant body language are as eloquent as his words.

"I heard youth speak and I got to speak. I felt so powerful," he beams. "The people in government who were there didn't know how the system is working, or how it isn't working. They were shocked by what they heard. Mary Ellen said 'Let's do something about it right now.' That felt really great."

Turpel-Lafond was so moved by her experience at the summit that she organized a Youth Advisory Day at the B.C. Legislature. One month after the summit, Cardona and another summit advisory committee member made a presentation to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. Two weeks after that, he and five other youth members made a presentation to high-level government officials, including George Abbott, B.C.'s minister of education.

"The officials liked all our recommendations, but they said, 'There's one recommendation we can take action on right away.' So they changed "English as a Second Language" to "English Language Learner." For many immigrants and refugees, English is not our second language. Sometimes it is our third, or fourth. So that name was not very accurate. That recommendation has been around for a while. But it felt amazing that we were the delegation that actually got the name changed," says Cardona.

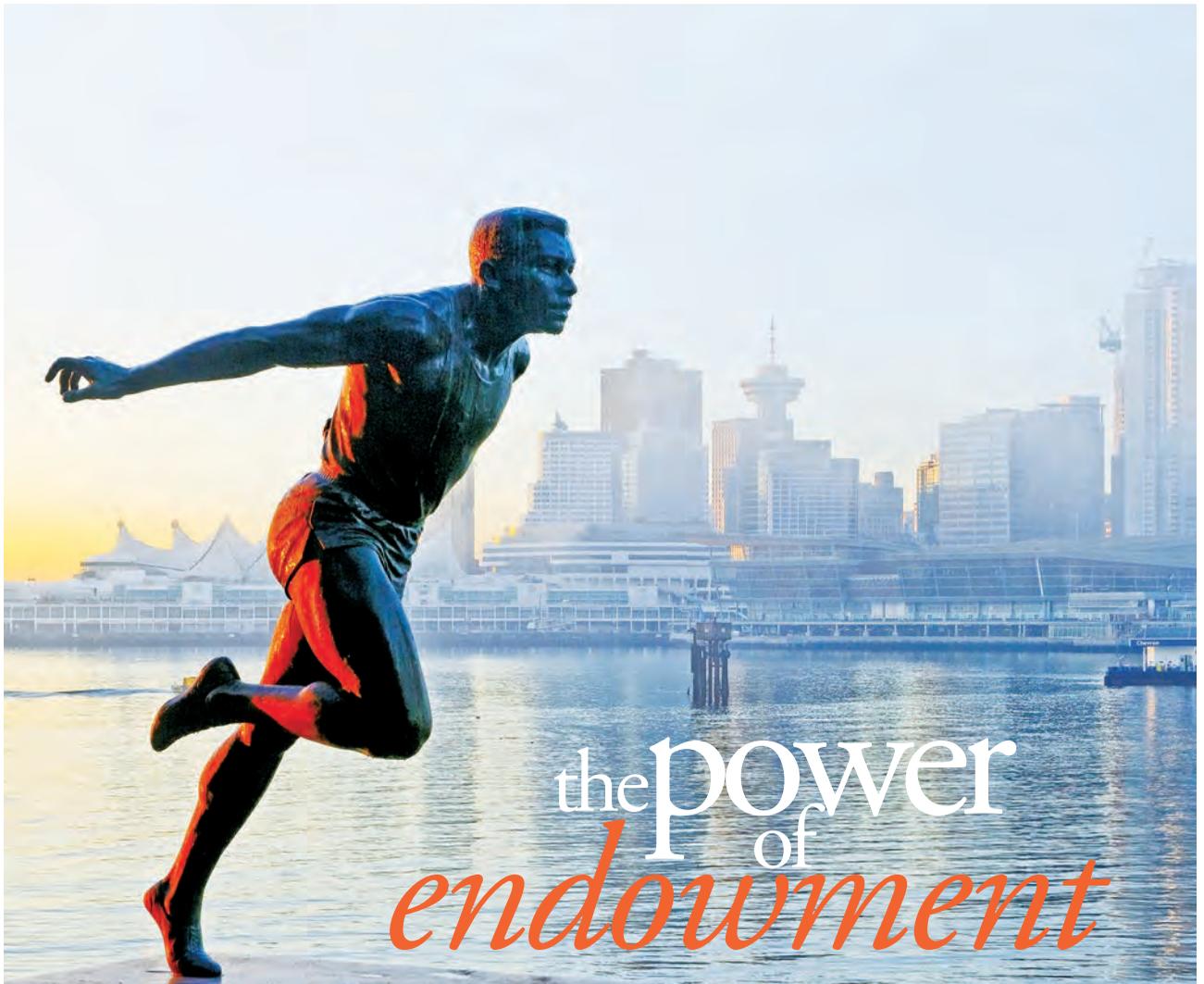
Turpel-Lafond has also committed to working with the Youth Advisory Committee to set up one-day regional conferences across B.C. to get more input from youth. "We're also working on getting to Ottawa, because we'd like to see some reforms of the immigration system," he explains.

Getting to Ottawa is also part of Cardona's long-term plans in a different sense. "I'm getting more and more into advocacy," he says. "A big part of what I do is immigrant and refugee stuff, but I have a lot of opinions about other things, too. Mainly because of YPC and Vancouver Foundation, I've been exposed to a lot. And in 10 years, I do see myself trying to get into the B.C. Legislature or onto Parliament Hill.

"There's this quote I love that says, 'The way to understand people is not by doing research about them, it's by listening to them.' Listening is huge. A lot of people in power talk, but they forget to listen. I want to be the kind of politician who listens."

From child refugee fleeing violence to community organizer and passionate proto-politician in only seven years, Diego Cardona's life has already had an incredible arc. His "adult allies" at Vancouver Foundation are honoured to have played a role in nurturing his abilities via the Youth Philanthropy Council, and we all look forward to seeing where his spirit and skills take him next. **VF**

To find out more about Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council, see www.vancouverfoundationypc.ca



Harry Jerome was a Canadian track-and-field athlete who competed in the 1960, 1964 and 1968 Summer Olympics. He won bronze in the 100 metres in 1964, and gold in the 1966 British Empire and Commonwealth Games and the 1967 Pan American Games.

During his career, Jerome set a total of seven world records in sprints. He lived in North Vancouver and was a tireless advocate for getting young people involved in sport.

In 1963, BC Athletics set up a fund in Jerome's name to support promising young athletes. They started the fund at Vancouver Foundation with a donation of \$27,000. That money began earning income right away, and the Harry Jerome Scholarship Fund soon began to distribute grants.

Harry Jerome passed away in 1982 – far too young at the age of 42 – but his fund lives on. Fifty years later, and 30 years after his death, the Harry Jerome Scholarship Fund has generated more than \$35,000 in scholarships to dozens of young athletes – far more than the original investment. And the fund itself is still valued at about \$40,000.

That's the power of endowment.

By choosing to endow a gift, you can make a difference in your community during your lifetime and provide a gift that lasts forever.

Harry Jerome was a great athlete and a wonderful role model for young people. His athletic achievements will live on in the record books. His name will also live on in the community, as his scholarship fund continues to support B.C.'s best and fastest. That's a legacy worth running for.

For almost 70 years, Vancouver Foundation has been giving people the chance to invest in a community foundation, to donate to worthwhile B.C. charities, and watch their investment grow – all at the same time. **VF**

For more information on the **Harry Jerome Fund**, call **Kristin Helgason** in Development and Donor Services at **604-629-5186**. If you would like to start your own fund at Vancouver Foundation, call **Peter Jackman** at **604-629-5357**

power of attorney – ask an advisor

| BY MARY HAMILTON

I gave my daughter power of attorney a few years ago. Do I need to do a new one because the law changed last fall?

Good question. On September 1, 2011, the enduring power of attorney laws did change significantly in B.C. However, your existing document should still be valid, as existing powers of attorney were grandfathered under the new provisions of the *Power of Attorney Act*.

The law still permits you to authorize an attorney to make decisions for you, and do certain things, while you are incapable (that's the "enduring" part).

What has changed is the signing requirements and that, when your daughter acts as your attorney, she will be governed by the new law and will have different powers and limitations. If you do not want those particular changes then you may have to revoke your power of attorney and make a new one on different terms.

For example, under the new law, your attorney may make gifts, loans and charitable donations that you would have made, but only up to a maximum of \$5,000 and only if you will have sufficient property left over to meet your needs (and anyone you are supporting). If you want your attorney to be able to make more generous gifts – to your children, grandchildren, favourite charities or anyone else – then you will have to spell that out in your power of attorney.

Under the new law, from the time your daughter first acts as



your attorney, she must keep an ongoing list of all your assets and liabilities, including an estimate of their value. She will also have to keep track of every receipt and disbursement. The duty to account is no different, but it's now set out in the legislation. And the duty begins when your daughter first acts, even if you are still capable. (So if you are out of town and your daughter helpfully uses your power of attorney to renew your house insurance, she may now be obliged to keep a list all of your property and accounts.)

Your daughter will not be paid for her duties as attorney, unless your power of attorney sets out the rate or amount of compensation. If the document is silent on this, she can't be paid from your money. Many of our clients will want the attorney to receive some modest compensation.

The new law has other changes you should discuss with your lawyer. Many of the changes are aimed at permitting attorneys to better manage the assets of adults who trust them as attorneys to look after their financial affairs. Other changes are aimed at protecting those adults in our society who, particularly as they age, may be vulnerable to financial abuse. **VF**

Mary Hamilton is associate counsel with Davis LLP and leads the firm's Wills, Estates and Trusts group. She has almost 25 years experience in matters relating to wills, trusts and estate administration, and was named Vancouver Trusts and Estates Lawyer of the Year 2011 by Best Lawyers.

GREENEST CITY FUND



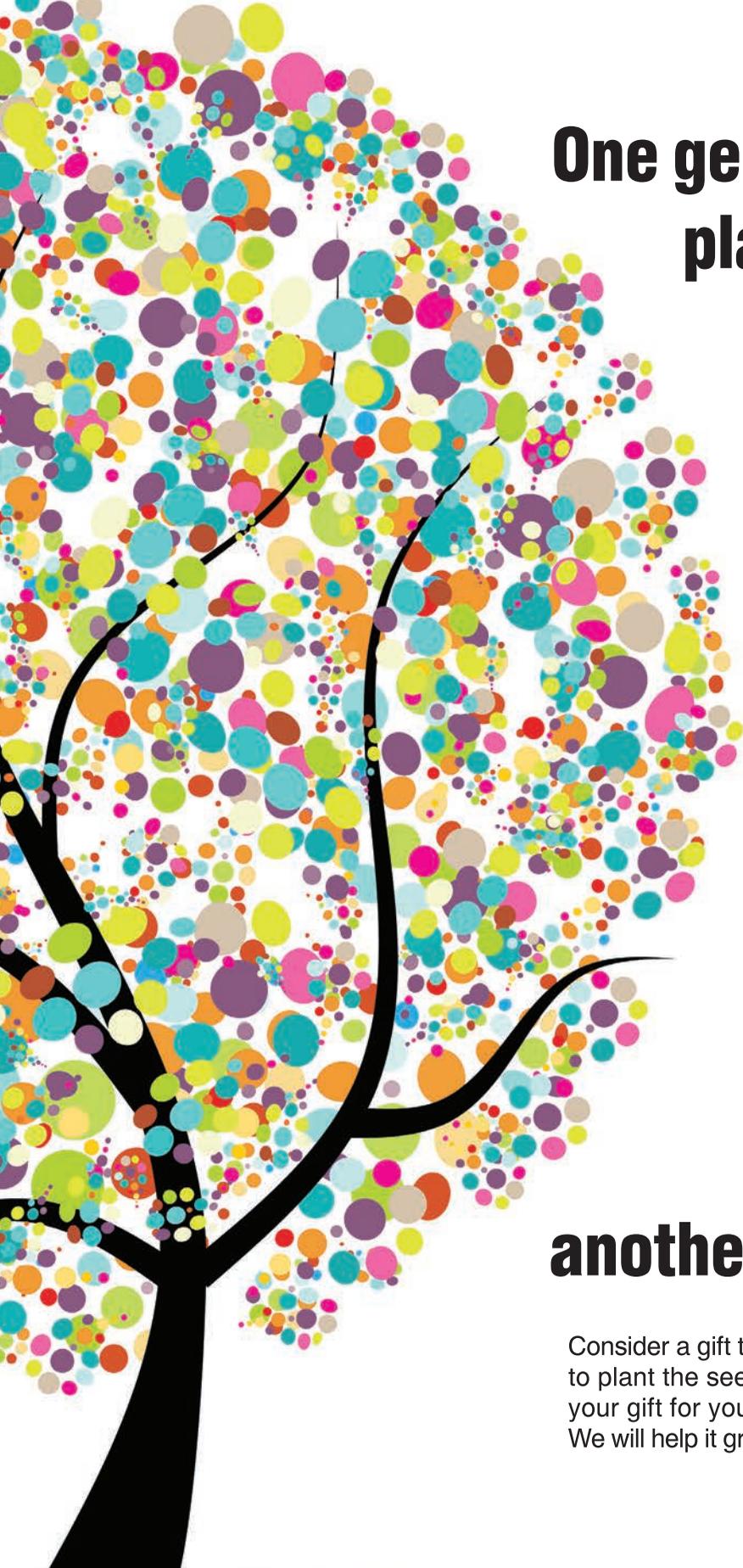
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