

Fall 2015

# vancouverfoundation

stories of modern philanthropy



## LEAVING A LEGACY

A city planner paves the way for youth

---

## BRANCHING OUT

Everyone deserves a chance to try something new

---

## HEALING MOMENTS

Discovering new life after loss

---

## GRASSROOTS ECONOMICS

Fostering businesses that make dollars and sense

---

FINDING  
*inspiration*  
IN GENEROSITY

# The First Word . . .

## Changing perspectives

**Prior to joining Vancouver Foundation** as president and CEO two years ago, I thought I knew a lot about the organization. But it turns out I had a lot more to learn. Over the last two years, I've had the opportunity to broaden my perspective on how we operate, and it has helped me to strengthen our Foundation's impact. Here are four interesting things I've learned:

### 1. Our donors advise the majority of our granting

Vancouver Foundation grants \$50 million per year to B.C. charities. But I always assumed the Foundation directed those funds. I've learned that it's our donors who direct 70 per cent of our granting through their Donor Advised Funds, and the remaining 30 per cent is directed by the Foundation.

This realization has really changed the way I think about our role. To a large extent, we are stewards not only of funds but also of our donors, helping them to build endowments and support charities that align with their values and passions. With the 30 per cent we direct, we focus on helping charities build capacity by developing ideas, funding pilot projects and expanding into new areas.

### 2. Our investments are generating exceptional returns

Before joining Vancouver Foundation, I had heard that our investments weren't performing very well. It turns out that's not true at all. We had a challenging year in 2008, along with everyone else, but our funds have generated a 10 per cent annual return over the last five years. Our distribution policy helps us wade through tough markets and provide a steady flow of income.

### 3. Our foundation was more diverse than I thought

When I joined the Foundation, it was acting both as donor and as doer. In addition to funding charities and working with donors to fund projects, it was receiving government funding to run its own projects. That can be a tricky position to be in, so we decided to trim the projects to allow more focus on our core purpose. My philosophy is that we do our best work by helping B.C.'s 12,000 charities to be excellent at what they do.

### 4. Despite our name, our mandate is province-wide

With a name like Vancouver Foundation, it's easy to see why people often think our work is citywide. But with a provincial mandate, as well as board members and volunteers across the province, I knew we should be reaching beyond city boundaries.

One key aspect of my approach is to partner with community foundations throughout the province to build on our mutual strengths. One way we've started doing this is by helping them copy grassroots granting models that have worked in the Lower Mainland, like our Neighbourhood Small Grants program, which has funded everything from block parties to lending libraries to community gardens.



**Kevin McCort**  
*President and CEO*  
Vancouver Foundation

Of course, not everything I thought about Vancouver Foundation turned out to be wrong! Notably, I had heard that the board, staff and volunteers were an exceptional group of people – and that, I can happily attest, is true.

The 50 staff and 150 volunteers who devote their time to Vancouver Foundation are a key reason for our success. And working with them is one of the best parts of my job. I've been grateful for their support during my first two years here, and I'm looking forward to continuing our relationships, partnerships and granting work in the years to come. ∞



**VANCOUVER FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE**

Kevin McCort, PRESIDENT & CEO  
Diane Fulton, VP, CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER  
William Hallett, VP FINANCE & OPERATIONS  
Craig Hikida, VP DONOR SERVICES  
Deborah Irvine, VP GRANTS & COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

**VANCOUVER FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Jason McLean, Chair	The Honourable Christopher Hinkson, Chief Justice
Paul Lacerte, Vice-Chair	Miranda Lam
The Honourable Robert Bauman, Chief Justice	Sarah Morgan-Silvester
Kevin Bent	Lisa Pankratz
Tom Bradley	Barry Rivelis
Tung Chan	Sarah Sidhu
Anna Fung	Malik Talib
	Eric Watt



PUBLISHER Kevin McCort  
PROJECT MANAGER Tyler Davis  
EDITOR Tiffany Sloan  
ART DIRECTOR Scott Laurie  
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Matt Coté, Carol Crenna, Andrew Findlay, Wendy Goldsmith, Lisa Manfield, Valerie McTavish, Sonu Purhar, Robin Schreffel, Lena Sin, Barb Sligl, Corey Van't Haaff, Ross Young  
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS Claudette Carracedo, Tiffany Cooper, Robert Karpa  
EXECUTIVE CREATIVE DIRECTOR Rick Thibert  
PRODUCTION MANAGER/STUDIO Kristina Borys  
IMAGING TECHNICIAN Mandy Lau

VF magazine is published once a year by Vancouver Foundation  
Suite 200 – 475 West Georgia Street, Vancouver BC V6B 4M9  
Tel: 604.688.2204

Email: [info@vancouverfoundation.ca](mailto:info@vancouverfoundation.ca)

[www.vancouverfoundation.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca)

Charitable Registration No. 119281640RR0001



CANADA WIDE MEDIA LIMITED | [canadawide.com](http://canadawide.com)

CHAIRMAN, CEO	Peter Legge, O.B.C., LL.D (HON)
PRESIDENT	Samantha Legge, MBA
CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER	Charlene Rooke

Vancouver Foundation magazine is produced by Canada Wide Media Limited for Vancouver Foundation. Send change of address notices and undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
200 – 475 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 4M9.  
Publications Mail Agreement No. 40065475.

Advertising Policy: Vancouver Foundation will not be responsible for the claims of, nor does it provide endorsement for, the advertisers, products or services advertised in Vancouver Foundation magazine.

Vancouver Foundation is printed on paper containing 10% post-consumer recycled content. Thanks to green choices, this issue of Vancouver Foundation saved the following resources:

- 2.72 fully grown trees
- 26,509 litres of water
- 8 million BTUs energy
- 251.29 kg solid waste
- 718.96 kg greenhouse gases



Environmental impact estimates were made using the Environmental Paper Network Calculator.  
FSC® is not responsible for any calculations on saving resources by choosing this paper.

COVER STORIES

**6 A Camp to Remember**  
From tragedy comes hope at a summer camp dedicated to healing bereaved families  
*By Barb Sligl*

**12 Branching Out**  
Novel learning experiences inspire adults with developmental disabilities to discover new hobbies, passions and even vocations  
*By Robin Schreffel*



PAGE 6

**16 Catching Air**  
One of Vancouver's senior city planners is shaping a legacy not just for the city he loves but also for the people who live there  
*By Andrew Findlay*

**24 Grassroots Economics**  
The Groundswell training network is working to recreate the economy based on values of community and social impact  
*By Matt Coté*



PAGE 24

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

**4 Grants at a Glance**  
*By Sonu Purhar*

**9 Fostering Change**  
*By Carol Crenna*

**10 Making Time for Philanthropy**  
*By Lena Sin*

**14 Sharing 101**  
*By Valerie McTavish*

**20 Going Green**  
*By Corey Van't Haaff*

**22 Strings Attached**  
*By Wendy Goldsmith*

**27 Ask an Advisor**  
*By Ross Young*



PAGE 10



PAGE 22

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



### All-inclusive

*Unity is our strength, diversity is wealth.* The slogan for the Inclusion Festival held at Burnaby's Ernie Winch Park echoes the ethos of volunteer co-ordinator Marleni Gomez. Gomez travelled here from Peru in 2012, and was immediately captivated by what she calls "the Vancouver lifestyle": caring for the environment, cultivating and maintaining strong community ties, and taking time to enjoy life. Inspired by her new city, Marleni created the family-friendly Inclusion Festival as a way of encouraging locals to come together in celebration of ethnic, economic and social differences, and to allow people from different walks of life to experience and learn from each other's rich cultures.

With the help of a \$500 Neighbourhood Small Grant from Vancouver Foundation, the second annual festival – which took place in June 2015 – attracted more than 600 people, twice as many as anticipated. Gomez has already started planning for next year's festival, opening doors between neighbours and organizations, fostering understanding and appreciation between cultures, and creating a more tightly knit community than ever before.



### Deconstructed digs

Habitat for Humanity's ReStore has earned a reputation across North America as a socially conscious retail space housing high-quality building supplies and home accessories – but what many don't know is that most of the store's products are repurposed, returned or donated items that would have otherwise ended up in landfills. In fact, ReStore has spearheaded a slew of eco-minded initiatives across its nearly 1,000 North American stores that aim to engage the public in environmentally friendly practices and educate building professionals about city bylaws related to diverting waste. The non-profit's latest endeavour is the Deconstruction Program, which salvages detritus from demolished homes, then sells the material or repurposes it for

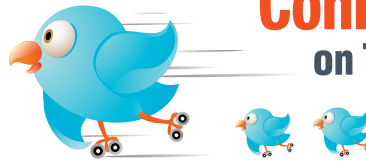
public projects that demonstrate how garbage can be given new life.

A \$50,000 Greenest City Grant from Vancouver Foundation is allowing ReStore's Vancouver venues to take the program one step further by helping to fund the ultimate deconstruction project: an entire house made solely from repurposed materials, which will be given to a family in need. Who knew a bit of recycling could do so much good?





Indicates a project funded by a Neighbourhood Small Grant



# Connect with us on Twitter and Facebook

@vancouverfdn  
www.facebook.com/VancouverFdn

## Art enlightenment

Luminosity, Kamloops’s groundbreaking, weeklong art event, debuted in fall 2014, lighting up the city’s downtown core with awe-inspiring video projections, engaging musical performances and mind-blowing new media conceived by artists from around the globe. Aiming to broaden and diversify the Kamloops Art Gallery’s viewership while connecting established and emerging artists, curator Charo Neville, along with her team at the gallery, installed artwork on and around 13 public sites, including storefronts and building facades, then encouraged the community to interact with and explore the pieces at leisure. The massive exhibition was crowned by a seven-channel video created by a Vancouver-based artist that radiated from both within and outside the gallery – a visual reminder that art can be accessible and relevant to everyone.

Vancouver Foundation’s \$36,500 grant brought Luminosity to fruition, and inspired Neville to plan for its continuation on a biannual basis, lighting up the community for years to come.



## Found art

Creativity is king, but sometimes you want the freedom to make a masterpiece without having to find wall or floor space to house it. Enter Art Abandonment, a Kitsilano-based volunteer organization that encourages budding and seasoned artists alike to express their creativity and channel it toward the greater good.

Organizers encourage individuals and groups to draw, paint or sculpt to their hearts’ content, then package up their artwork and leave it in public spaces, like coffee shops and libraries, free for the taking. Anyone who happens by and takes a liking to a particular piece can either bring it home or pass it along to someone who needs a boost.



But that’s just the beginning: Art Abandonment has taken this simple pay-it-forward initiative to the next step by hosting regular workshops at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, teaching community members how to create different forms of art – a notable example being a recent sock monkey workshop honouring the passing of Art Abandonment co-founder and accomplished sock monkey artist Larry Hnetka. And with a \$1,000 Neighbourhood Small Grant from Vancouver Foundation, Art Abandonment is now able to help artists purchase supplies so they can continue pursuing and sharing their artistic passions. ∞



# A Camp to Remember

From tragedy comes hope at a summer camp dedicated to healing bereaved families

By **BARB SLIGL**



Healing moments at Camp Kerry are inspired by the 2007 passing of Kerry Kirstiuk (opposite page, with husband Bob and kids Hudson and Avery).



**This is a love story.** One with ups and downs and twists and turns that go from joy to tragedy and then back again. A man and woman meet, fall in love, marry, have kids. Then she's diagnosed with terminal cancer. She dies a year later at the age of 32, leaving behind her husband and two young children. And yet, there's a happy ending. It's Camp Kerry.

Kerry Glade Kirstiuk is the inspiration for what's now the Camp Kerry Society, an organization that's grown beyond all expectations since its inception after her death in 2007. It began with Kerry's brokenhearted family, alongside nine other similarly grieving families, over one healing weekend on Keats Island in Howe Sound. Today, nearly a decade later, that initial, therapeutic retreat has evolved into year-round bereavement programs, a camp in Ontario and even a private social network called Circles of Strength Online.

While she was ill, Kerry and her husband, Bob Kirstiuk, met Dr. Heather Mohan through the Lion's Gate Hospital's family bereavement program. Mohan would come to the Kirstiuks' house every few weeks and spend time with the kids, Hudson and Avery, who, at just one and three years old, didn't fully understand what was happening to their mom. As a registered clinical counsellor and accredited music therapist with a master's degree in music therapy and a PhD in arts education, Mohan connected with them through music and art.

At the celebration of Kerry's life, Bob asked people to make donations to the bereavement program that had helped his family,

stipulating that any funds be used under Mohan's guidance. After just two weeks, the outpouring of support was so great that the donations were enough to finance Mohan's dream of a bereavement camp – a place where people could grieve together. She named it after Kerry.

"The people who knew Kerry and those who hear her story understand that the Camp honours her legacy of courage, compassion and generosity – her capacity to find hope and focus on the joys of life and love and family even as she faced the devastating progression of her terminal illness," says Mohan.

The camp has since evolved beyond one muse, and yet an aura remains around its namesake. Bob is now remarried, and his family still attends the annual camp. His daughter shares her story with kids who are in awe that Kerry is her mom. "The connections that those kids have in those conversations are pretty powerful," says Bob, and Avery and her brother return each year with a message of hope. "My kids thought, growing up, that they were the only kids that didn't have a mom," says Bob. Now the Kirstiuks are a "peer mentor family," having come a long way from Keats Island.

Bob describes that first camp as magical. He remembers quietly sitting on a boat en route to Keats, families with young kids huddled together in the rain. But once ashore, people started connecting. There was art and music, the sun came out and, after a beautiful weekend, everyone was sad to leave. "You think you're the only person on the planet that's going through this type of tragedy," says Bob. Camp Kerry shows that you're not.

## Camp Kerry



For Mohan, the camp is about finding light in darkness, hope in the midst of despair, and the courage to carry on despite life-changing events. She says, “all of this becomes possible when we engage with a community that understands, a community that cares and meets our pain with love and compassion.” And she knows this intimately, as shortly after Camp Kerry was founded, her own husband, one of the camp’s strongest advocates, was diagnosed with incurable lung cancer.

“The incredible 27-month journey Bas and I shared until his death at our home in March 2009 inevitably shaped everything that Camp Kerry has become and everything that I have to offer as a professional therapist and as a human being to the families I work with through Camp Kerry,” says Mohan.

The doctor became the patient in need of the very balm she dispensed. After Bas’s death, there was even more impetus to keep going. A second camp came together with another round of donations from a group of women in West Vancouver. And from there, Camp Kerry took off, evolving into an independent entity and charitable organization with year-round initiatives as the Camp Kerry Society.

But the big weekend camp every September, now at Zajac Ranch in Mission, is still the centrepiece. And it keeps getting bigger. This year, there were 35 families and 120 people, including volunteers – and a nine-month waiting list beforehand. “Our challenge right now is that demand is exceeding our ability to support everybody,” says Bob. “It’s a pretty unique program.”

In fact, it’s the first program of its kind in Canada, says Mohan, who’s also on the board of directors of the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association and an instructor in the UBC Department of Medicine in the Division of Palliative Care. Her work is in such high demand that she’s been asked to present her clinical work and research on music therapy and palliative and bereavement care at conferences as far afield as Japan.

That’s because the Camp Kerry Society is making a contribution to the long-term health and wellness of the community – at home and worldwide. “We are doing prevention work,” says Mohan, “diminishing the chances that children will have to be alone in their sadness, that teens will become suicidal or fall into cycles of substance abuse because they have nobody to talk to, that adults will become immobilized by depression and grief and thus unable to parent well or contribute fully in their workplace environments.”

And it’s not just those who have lost a loved one who benefit. “When you hear about other people’s tragedies, it’s a reminder that you have to live life and enjoy every day – that whole idea of being mindful of what great things we have to appreciate in our lives,” says Bob.

Vancouver Foundation CEO Kevin McCort was certainly affected after meeting Bob: “People like Bob are the ones who created every single charity in B.C. – passionate about a cause, and willing to put time, effort and money into bringing their dream to fruition.”

That dream lives on because Bob’s parents decided to set up an endowment with Vancouver Foundation. As one of 850 charities with an endowment like this, Camp Kerry is now financially viable long into the future. “Little did I know it would turn into the program it is today,” says Bob, still somewhat amazed that something so tragic has turned into something so positive.

Or, as Mohan sees it, “a legacy of love and hope rather than a legacy of loss.”

Yes, this is indeed a rather grand love story. ∞

For more information about Camp Kerry visit [campkerry.org](http://campkerry.org). To support projects like this, call Kristin in Donor Services at 604.629.5186 or visit [vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give).



# fostering CHANGE

**At the same moment** that one 19-year-old Vancouverite is being chauffeured to his new university campus residence by his parents, toting school supplies they've purchased together, another 19-year-old is being told that he no longer has a home, financial support or relationships with supportive adults, and he has little chance of higher education. This second scenario describes the fate of 700 19-year-olds in foster care in British Columbia each year.

According to provincial law, foster children are cut off from government support and must leave their surrogate parents' home on their 19th birthday – whether they're ready or not. And research overwhelmingly reveals that these young people face dire outcomes compared to their peers, as a result of not only difficult past experiences and current circumstances, but of the stigmas that follow them.

"It is unreasonable to think that these young people are going to be ready to leave home faster than those raised in a traditional, supportive family. We have higher expectations for those who have faced traumatic disruptions than for those who haven't," says Mark Gifford, director of grants and community initiatives at Vancouver Foundation. "A good life takes a good foundation – which doesn't start at 19, but it doesn't end at 19 either."

Vancouver Foundation's Fostering Change initiative is dedicated to seeing that foster children who "age out" (turn 19) have the support and opportunities they need to thrive as adults. It provides \$1.4 million annually to fund grants, research and collaboration with partners working to improve their quality of life.

According to Gifford, Fostering Change evolved from Vancouver Foundation's Youth Homelessness Initiative launched in 2008, shifting the focus from "reacting to homelessness" (funding shelters, food banks, and mental health and addiction services, for example) to preventing it from happening in the first place. Forty to 50 per cent of youth living on the streets are former foster children, says Gifford, so to end youth homelessness, we need to better support this aging-out transition. And Fostering Change is doing this in a number of ways.

**Community grants:** One innovative non-profit funded by Fostering Change is Aunt Leah's Place, where youth are allowed to progress gradually until independent, and are never cut off from services that include housing, education, and life skills and relationship training. Another is Lu'ma Native Housing Society, an intergenerational housing community that mentors young people within a supportive, traditional culture.



## Securing the future of vulnerable youth

By CAROL CRENNNA

**Youth engagement:** A Youth Advisory Circle is involved in all aspects of Fostering Change. "There is a great need for young people to feel they have influence, and to make a difference. And they have a right to a meaningful voice in decisions made about them," says Gifford. These young volunteers (who all experienced homelessness in their past) assist in program development, grant-making, communications and community outreach.

**Collaborative learning and research:** All organizations that receive long-term funding (currently eight) meet to determine priorities, assess gaps and work together toward a unifying vision. "This year's focus was mental health, so they discussed shared interests in learning and complementary strategies to achieve it," Gifford explains.

**Public engagement:** Fostering Change hosts public dialogues that "provide the voice and expertise of young people" to increase awareness of issues, and recently hosted community planning sessions in five cities involving 350 people. It's also seeking to change provincial legislation to ensure that young people in foster care retain a home, supportive relationships with adults and financial assistance until age 24.

To improve outcomes, we need to not only support their housing, education, employment and well-being, but to be cognizant of the time it takes to grow up, according to Gifford. "They should have just as much of a shot at a good life as you or I." ∞

For more information about how you can help stem the tide of youth homelessness in British Columbia, call Calvin in Donor Services at 604.629.5357 or visit [vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give).



# Making Time for Philanthropy

## Jason McLean, Vancouver Foundation's board chair and one of Vancouver's most in-demand professionals, knows the value of giving back

BY LENA SIN | PHOTOS CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO

**It's not every day** a former prime minister shows up unannounced, but for Jason McLean, it's just another day at the office.

When former prime minister Jean Chrétien recently arrived at the entrepreneur's Gastown office, no doubt it raised a few eyebrows, but McLean, who once worked for the prime minister, knows better than to be surprised.

"He initially asked for my dad and – even though I worked for him for a couple years and spent a lot of time with him around the world – when he found out my dad wasn't here, he said, 'Well, I'll talk to the young guy,'" laughs McLean. "He never uses my name."

McLean worked closely with Chrétien as a special assistant for two years, scouting out places in advance of the prime minister's arrival. While it was a job to remember (in fact, one of McLean's

television production companies is now developing a show based loosely on his experience), the call of home eventually trumped the glamour of travelling the globe and meeting politicians like former U.S. president Bill Clinton.

In 2002, McLean returned to Vancouver to join the family business his father, David, started in 1972. The younger McLean is now president and CEO of The McLean Group, a large conglomerate with its reach extending to real estate, film and television production, telecommunications and aviation.

Needless to say, McLean, 42, married and father of a two-year-old girl, is a busy man. Yet he added one more title to his already-crammed resumé this year when he became chair of Vancouver Foundation's board of directors.

For McLean, the decision to step in was easy.



“Vancouver Foundation has a terrific reputation, both obviously as an enterprise in the charitable sector, but also just as a great board to be involved in,” he says from his elegant office overlooking Canada Place. “So it was a real treat to be asked.”

McLean is routinely asked to join various community organizations. He mostly says no.

Not because he doesn't believe in giving back – on the contrary, he considers philanthropy so important that he prefers giving everything he's got to one cause at a time. “I think it's really important to focus and not spread your extracurricular self too thin. So I try to do one or two things at a time,” he explains.

McLean has previously served on the University of British Columbia Board of Governors and the Vancouver Police Board. In 2010, at age 36, he also became the youngest person to chair the Vancouver Board of Trade.

He joined Vancouver Foundation's board in 2014, enticed by the opportunity to volunteer with Canada's largest community foundation, and impressed by the tremendous impact it has on charities across the province thanks to its approximately \$1 billion in assets under management.

When asked why he donates time and energy, rather than just money, McLean is clear on the rewards: “You get out what you put in. Actually, you get out more than you put in. I find investments of time and energy and talent – not just money – to organizations that could really use the help is tremendously rewarding,” he says.

When it comes to philanthropy, he models himself after his parents. While his father, a lawyer who began dabbling in real estate as a side business, always kept a full schedule, McLean remembers he always made time for community causes. “He felt that being an engaged citizen was really important, and he argu-

ably didn't have the time to do it but he made it happen.”

McLean's mother, Brenda, has also kept philanthropy close to her heart. She is responsible for The McLean Group's McLean McCuaig Foundation and the decade-old Brenda and David McLean Chair in Canadian Studies at UBC. More recently, their son was instrumental in establishing the McLean Group Employee Fund at Vancouver Foundation.

These days, McLean's parents are still involved in the company, but it's McLean and his younger brother Sacha who lead the way. Proving themselves to be as innovative as their parents, the brothers were recognized by Ernst & Young for the Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the category of entertainment and hospitality in 2014. Jason McLean was also named one of the city's “Top 40 under 40” by *Business in Vancouver* in 2010.

While The McLean Group started out as a real estate investment and development firm, its expansion into film production was a “happy accident,” says McLean. With 30 acres of industrial land in Vancouver that they couldn't get permission to build residential towers on, it was necessary to think of alternative uses for the land. In 1997, Sacha proposed renting out facilities to film companies. Today, The McLean Group owns Vancouver Film Studios, a production facility in East Vancouver with 12 sound stages. It also provides a full suite of services to the film industry, including aviation charters.

But even as his professional life forges ahead, McLean will always make time for community causes.

“It's about being an engaged citizen. It's about giving back. It's about supporting things that you care about that are important to you,” he says. “And for those of us who have enjoyed a certain amount of success and good health and gotten so much from this community, it's also a responsibility.” ∞

# Branching Out



**Novel learning experiences inspire adults with developmental disabilities to discover new hobbies, passions and even vocations**

BY ROBIN SCHROFFEL  
PHOTOS TIFFANY COOPER

**When a research team** from InWithForward moved into a social housing complex in Burnaby for three months last year, their research revealed that many people with cognitive disabilities were feeling bored, stuck and curious about what else is out there.

Jordana fell into that category. The 36-year-old New Westminster resident had long been attending the day programs at the Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI), but doing the same thing, day in and day out, had left her feeling stagnant. “[I was] frustrated,” she says. “How many times can you take the same program over and over?”

Collaborating with non-profits BACI, the Simon Fraser Society for Community Living and posAbilities, the InWithForward team began building a solution to address the needs they’d uncovered. The result is Kudoz, an innovative new program that aims to shift how adults with developmental disabilities see themselves and the future by providing novel learning experiences.

It’s a user-friendly website, like Airbnb meets Netflix, but packed with live experiences that a user can choose and book – for example, “First Aid Training,” “Bake Irish Soda Bread,” or “Let’s Learn a Few Words in Japanese.” The experiences are provided by volunteer hosts – individuals, businesses, even the mayor of New Westminster – and are organized in sets to deepen knowledge in specific areas, with an emphasis on creating meaningful, ongoing outcomes. The end goals for users are to widen and deepen interests and discover passions, to develop an independent sense of self, and to increase purpose and possibility. Designed as a lifelong learning experience, Kudoz allows participants to stream in and out at any time.

Coming on board in the early stages with a grant of \$110,000, Vancouver Foundation enabled the Kudoz team to build a prototype and run a three-month trial from March to June 2015. During those months, Kudoz evolved rapidly through an agile

process of trial-and-error and feedback, shifting through more than 100 versions of materials and developing a set of indicators that can be visualized to measure progress.

Jordana joined Kudoz as one of its 16 pioneering participants, personally sampling seven of the 110 experiences in the catalogue. With the experiences currently on pause following the trial run, she can't wait until Kudoz is up and running again. Why? "It's new, it's different. New experiences, new friends, new opportunities. Just new, period," she says with infectious enthusiasm.

For people like Jordana, Kudoz means the chance to discover and explore a wide range of interests – like languages and history, which overall have been the most popular categories in the catalogue to date. Richard Faucher, co-executive director of BACI, explains that mainstream education often excludes those with cognitive disabilities from the liberal arts and streams them into a more practical curriculum. "Because they think we won't be able to understand it," Jordana says. She's managed to shatter that notion, excelling in three levels of Japanese, trying out German, and looking forward to learning Russian Mennonite history once Kudoz is rolling again. "I have close Russian friends who are like family, so I want to learn more about their culture," she explains.

Unlike typical day programs, Kudoz blurs the traditional lines between caregivers and clients. Jordana also hosts a Kudoz experience, sharing her love of live wrestling. Kudoz is all about making the most of participants' strengths; for example, those passionate about transit can become "transitologists," helping others get to and from experiences. Others act as "tasters," photographing and providing feedback on new experiences. Some roles are paid, creating employment opportunities.

Dr. Sarah Schulman, sociologist and InWithForward partner, believes that leveraging strengths is essential. "We think if Kudoz is going to scale, it can't run like a traditional staffed program. We need to find some creative pools of resources where people can help each other to do things," she says.

Kudoz's online dashboards track the progress of participants and hosts, who earn achievement badges once sets of experiences and challenges are completed. Through the data collected, Kudoz staff can measure progress and changes. More importantly, participants can get a sense of their own achievements and track their growth.

After just three months, Kudoz led its pilot participants to bespoke employment opportunities, the kindling of new interests, and increased feelings of hope for the future – Jordana aspires to volunteer at Massey Theatre after a backstage tour during a Kudoz experience. The program has also given hosts an opportunity to give back and share their passions. And along with these successes, Kudoz's own evolution has been impressive. Faucher reveals, "We've never worked at a pace like they do, where every week, not only do they come up with ways that people can learn more or reflect more, there's a new set of tools or interactions that are designed."

With the trial wrapped up, Kudoz is currently applying its learnings by building up the backend technology, crafting an app, curating new experiences, deepening learning outcomes and

**Kudoz participant Jordana aspires to volunteer at Massey Theatre after a backstage tour during a Kudoz experience.**



developing new ways for participants to reflect. The team is cementing partnerships with educational institutions to offer the most comprehensive suite of opportunities possible. The next iteration will bring Kudoz to scale and open it up to the public, furthering its ambitious purpose.

"This is not going to sit on the side, but can actually start to change how practice happens within the agencies, and tap into people's passions and skills," Schulman says. "Kudoz is not just for the Jordanas of the world. All of us need to be in environments that inspire us to learn and grow and develop. Let's tap into and leverage what people can really do, in new ways."

Schulman is grateful for the early support. True innovation, she says, happens when the investment is in the process rather than the product. "Our process is rigorous – we use ethnographic methods, we have social scientists and designers on our team, but what it means to be participatory is we're learning as we go," she says. "That's how we get people like Jordana to be such great advocates. It's not that we're imposing a new solution on them – they've seen it develop and they're part of our team as well."

Faucher concurs. "Vancouver Foundation was willing to take a bit of a risk so we could test this out. Almost a year later, we have something that is really promising." ∞

For more information about Kudoz, visit [kudoz.ca](http://kudoz.ca). To support innovative projects like this, call Calvin in Donor Services at 604.629.5357 or visit [vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give).



# Sharing 101

## Neighbours in Surrey discover they have a lot to learn from each other

BY VALERIE MCTAVISH

**Take the concept** of the old “take a penny, leave a penny” trays that used to sit on cashiers’ counters and apply it to practical skills. That’s the basic premise of the Surrey Skill Share Fair – learn a skill, share a skill. No pennies required.

It’s an event that Fair co-ordinator Peter Leblanc developed after he attended the Whatcom SkillShare Faire in Washington state. “I attended that a couple of times and I found it a fascinating event – an opportunity for different people to come together from the community and teach [each other] about something they knew about,” he recalls. “I just enjoyed the event so much and thought it would be good to have something like that in Surrey.”

He suggested the idea to two of his friends, David Dalley and Janine van Ryn, and they were game to help out. Thanks to a \$1,000 Neighbourhood Small Grant from Vancouver Foundation, they were able to hold the inaugural event in October 2014.

During the free event, visitors could attend a variety of presentations and workshops to learn a new skill or hobby presented by community members. There was something for everyone with 18 options including beekeeping, reiki, bike maintenance and even learning to sing a cappella.

Jennifer Swanson was one of the presenters. She shared two of her skills – podcasting and public speaking. Her booth proved to be a popular one because of both the novelty of being interviewed for a podcast and the universality of public speaking as a skill. “There were all ages – everything from little children to seniors,” Swanson recalls of the people with whom she was able to share her expertise. “I felt it was a community-building event and it was something that was accessible to anyone. It didn’t matter if you had money or not because there were things that you could participate in,” she says as she reflects on the event.



Community members attending the Surrey Skill Share Fair learned everything from how to fix a bike and knit a scarf to artistic endeavours like bookmark making and wood burning.



Attracting a diverse crowd was one of the main goals for Leblanc, who wanted both the attendees and the presenters to represent both the ethnic diversity and age range of the community in Surrey. It's one of the reasons it was decided not to limit what types of skills could be presented. The result was an eclectic group of skill-sharers who were happy to teach the curious but who were also keen to learn, too, says Leblanc.

It's that kind of community connectivity that Leblanc gets excited about. "There are lots of events where someone from the outside comes in and they'll host a workshop or a lecture or a performance," says Leblanc. "We just had this idea that 'Let's have a forum where people in the community can connect with each other' . . . We don't have any greater visions to change society, but rather just to have a simple, local, celebratory event of what's going on in our community."

Two to three hundred people showed up to learn a new skill or hobby in 2014. Leblanc was quite happy with the turnout and was buoyed by such an enthusiastic response from the community. Initially, the organizers thought it would be a one-time event, but the feedback changed their minds. "A lot of the presenters and the people who were there came up to us and said, 'I think we should do this more regularly' – like once a month or once every two or three months or something,"

Leblanc says. "And you know," he laughs, "time passes and you forget about all the hard work it took, and so then you're up for doing it again."

In addition to the "buckets and buckets of volunteer hours" Leblanc says the core group put in, it's also numerous other volunteers and the donated space provided by Surrey Nature Centre that make the event possible. Not to mention the unpaid presenters who do it simply for the love of sharing their knowledge and a nice lunch. But, none of it would be possible without the \$1,000 grant from the Vancouver Foundation, says Leblanc. "For that we are grateful."

The next skill-share offering promises to be equally as diverse as the first year's. Some presenters are returning, and others are bringing completely new skills, including balloon-dog making, solar oven cooking, laughter yoga and sewing with a 1920s hand-crank sewing machine. ∞

Find out if there's a Neighbourhood Small Grants program in your area at [vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg). You can also help support Neighbourhood Small Grants with a donation. Call Calvin in Donor Services at 604.629.5357 for more information.

# Catching Air



One of Vancouver's senior city planners is shaping a legacy not just for the city he loves but also for the people who live there

By ANDREW FINDLAY  
PHOTOS ROBERT KARPA



**Michael Gordon wears many hats.** He's an avid skateboarder, a professor and an amateur documentary filmmaker. He's also a City of Vancouver planner, and has devoted his career to shaping the city and its evolution into one of the country's most vibrant and exciting urban centres. Though Gordon was born in Ontario, he has worked as a Vancouver city planner for 35 years – the last two decades as senior planner for the downtown peninsula, an area with one of the highest population densities among North American cities.

Now, Gordon is taking his passion for Vancouver a step further by dedicating a portion of his estate to two endowment funds, established recently at Vancouver Foundation and earmarked for helping university students and urban youth.

Civic duty and leaving a legacy are important to Gordon. Vancouver has been the focus of his professional life, and is also where the Gordon family roots run deep. His grandfather's oldest brother owned a haberdashery in the Fraser Canyon community of Boston Bar. Afterwards, he relocated to the then-frontier port city of Vancouver to open a shop on Carrall Street, and went on to be named to the city's first voters' list and also serve as a school trustee.

"When it came to writing up a will, my family was very supportive of the idea of establishing these funds," says Gordon, 61, who is an adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning, where he teaches housing policy.

After careful consideration, Gordon chose to create two funds. His strong belief in the value of post-secondary education is the impetus behind the Gordon Family Education Fund. As a young man in Ontario, he earned a bachelor of environmental studies in urban and regional planning from the University of Waterloo, before moving to Vancouver where he pursued a master of science in community and regional planning at UBC. Gordon believes studying abroad and attending academic conferences provided the opportunity for a powerful exchange of ideas that enriched his education (he attended Neuchâtel Junior College in Switzerland as a Grade 12 student.) Throughout his working life, he has always looked beyond his city to share ideas and best practices with colleagues and peers, and has lectured on urban planning and design in cities as diverse as Memphis and Montreal. Gordon hopes his fund will help select university students to enhance their education in a similar fashion.



### **Young at heart**

Gordon also has a passionate interest in the lives of city teenagers, in both his professional and non-professional life. So it's not surprising that his second fund, the Gordon Family Youth Park and Recreation Fund, has youth in mind. According to Gordon, one of the marks of a great city is that it is comfortable, safe and fulfilling for young families. However, through his community involvement and planning duties, he still regularly encounters at-risk and street-involved youth in Vancouver.

Gordon's empathy for the city's young people deepened when he became hooked on skateboarding at the age of 47 – ripe in skateboarding terms, and a time of life when most of his middle-aged friends were considering golf club memberships rather than perfecting ollies and kickflips at the skate park. Gordon's immersion in skateboarding also exposed him to skater culture's unique blend of music, fashion and attitude, which at times can be at odds with formal government structures. That's why he sat on the board of Vancouver Skate for 12 years, ensuring that skating interests and concerns were given a voice at City Hall while helping to nurture a less antagonistic and more positive relationship between the skating community and the establishment, be it business owners or city officialdom.

"I remember in 1965 being quite interested in skateboarding but none of my friends were into it. Instead, I took it up in mid-life and I actually got quite good at it," Gordon says, admitting that he has toned down the skateboarding a little since hitting his seventh decade. "The body gets a little stiffer these days."

### Teens in focus

Gordon has given much thought to youth issues. Between teaching at UBC, skateboarding, and the responsibilities of a senior planning position at Vancouver City Hall, he also finds time for making documentary films. For Gordon, it's not about pursuing a secondary career in cinema so much as documenting the nuances and character of the city he loves. His second documentary effort, *Through a Young Lens*, released in 2006, is a revealing glimpse into Vancouver youth culture – a pastiche of interviews conducted with 15 teenagers from King George Secondary School, in the heart of downtown.

“They were really articulate kids, and I discovered a lot about the positives and negatives of living in such a densely populated area. There's not a lot for some of these kids to do when school is over and the recreation centres close. Some of them still feel pretty marginalized at times,” says Gordon, who is now working with colleague Mark Pickersgill on his fifth documentary, a history of Vancouver's live music venues.

Gordon has a concept for how his youth fund could be deployed to make a difference. He believes the 10-and-under age group is already served well by playgrounds and schoolyards. However, it's not always the same for the 12-to-18-year-old set, which can sometimes be left to hanging out on the streets, in shopping malls and in other impromptu gathering spots. Though neither a location nor plans have been drafted yet, Gordon envisions a public outdoor space somewhere in the city that would include a skate park, plaza and other teen-friendly infrastructure.

As for why he chose to establish the funds with Vancouver Foundation, Gordon says it was a natural fit. The Foundation enables donors to determine the timing, type of fund and method of financing to best suit their needs.

“Vancouver Foundation makes it very easy to establish a personal legacy fund,” Gordon says.

And a legacy is exactly what Gordon hopes to leave for the young students and youth of Vancouver. ∞

“I remember in 1965 being quite interested in skateboarding but none of my friends were into it. Instead, I took it up in mid-life and I actually got quite good at it.”



A Legacy Fund at Vancouver Foundation is an excellent way to support your favourite charities and help future generations at the same time. We can show you how a Legacy Fund offers flexibility and peace of mind. For more details, contact Kristin in Donor Services at 604.629.5186.

# Create your own fund

Four easy steps to leave a lasting legacy

1

## CONSIDER YOUR CHARITABLE INTERESTS

What are you passionate about? Arts and culture? Helping children? Medical research? When you establish a Donor Advised Fund at Vancouver Foundation, you will have the flexibility to support the charities and causes you care about most.

2

## ESTABLISH YOUR FUND

It's easy to establish your own Donor Advised Fund at Vancouver Foundation. With a gift of \$10,000 (or \$1,000 to start), a fund can be set up in just a day or two. The fund's capital is endowed and only the income is granted out, so the fund keeps on giving year after year.

3

## GRANT FROM YOUR FUND

With a Donor Advised Fund, you can have as little or as much involvement as you want. You can support any registered Canadian charity, or you can focus on a charitable cause and leave the decision-making to our volunteer advisors who will evaluate hundreds of projects on your behalf.

4

## PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Planning for the future is important, as your Donor Advised Fund is a lasting legacy that will continue to support the community for generations. You can appoint a trusted friend or family member as your successor fund advisor, or ask Vancouver Foundation to carry out your wishes in perpetuity. You will also have flexibility and ease if you are planning an estate gift to Vancouver Foundation.

For more information, visit [vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give) or call our Donor Services department at 604.688.2204



# Going Green

## Vancouver is on its way to being the world's greenest city by 2020 with the help of projects funded through Greenest City Community Grants

By COREY VAN'T HAAFF

**We depend on bees for a lot more than honey.** In fact, bees pollinate the plants that supply up to one-third of the food we eat, so it's important to both global food security and our local economy to protect their habitat. And yet, even the very act of beekeeping can be to our own benefit – a fact proven by Pollinators and People, a therapeutic beekeeping project funded by the Greenest City Community Grants program. In addition to creating forage and habitat for native pollinators, the project connects people from around the Lower Mainland on an equal playing field.

“Executive chefs and homeowners work alongside [people who are] street-entrenched and unstably housed – both learn from the other,” says Sarah Common, chief community officer at Hives for Humanity, which created the Pollinators and People project with a \$28,800 grant. “The bees, the gardens and the pollinators – they connect the people.”

This is a key element of the Greenest City Community Grants program, a collaboration between Vancouver Foundation and the City of Vancouver. The projects it funds tend to build bridges and nurture partnerships that may not otherwise exist – in addition to making the city more environmentally sustainable.

The program was established to further Vancouver's ambitious goal of becoming the greenest city in the world – with the best air and water quality and good access to healthy, locally grown food – by 2020. But when the City of Vancouver introduced the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan in 2010, it knew it couldn't achieve it alone.

“We needed every resident and non-profit organization to explore ways to pursue these goals,” says Sadhu Johnston, acting city manager.

The best way to do that was to partner with Vancouver Foundation, which had already established strong ties to existing

community organizations. The City contributed \$1 million to the Greenest City Community Grants program, and it was matched, dollar for dollar, by Vancouver Foundation. Now, both partners oversee the synergistic work happening right now that will help Vancouver become the greenest city by 2020.

The reason the program works, says Johnston, is that the goal is supported by ideas generated and implemented in the community through three areas: youth-led projects, projects created by Vancouver residents to benefit their own neighbourhoods, and projects led by community-based charitable organizations. These projects target a range of areas including climate leadership, green buildings and transportation, zero waste, access to nature, clean air and water, local food and green economy. And the program's breadth is amazing, says Johnston.

“The actual involvement of those most impacted . . . thousands of students and seniors and residents are directly involved; hundreds of thousands are peripherally involved, and they benefit by seeing or eating, or they have no idea of the program’s objectives but they still benefit.”



The Choi Project is one example with such reach. The project engages people, especially youth, through education in a movement toward stocking Chinatown grocery stores with locally grown ethnic Chinese food – specifically choy, or leafy Chinese vegetables – rather than produce flown in from China. Locally grown produce is fresher, healthier and better for the environment than imported produce, which can lose much of its nutritional content and consume considerable resources by spending between five and 10 days in transport.

“We are inspiring people in our own community to balance tradition with sustainable value,” says Kevin Huang, co-director and co-founder of the Choi Project, recipient of a \$25,000 grant. “We’re able to build a bridge intergenerationally between the technical skill and knowledge of our elders and the broader community’s great interest in Chinese food in general and in local food.”

**Initiatives to protect bee habitat, promote locally grown produce and encourage restaurants to use sustainable seafood are among those funded by Greenest City Community Grants.**



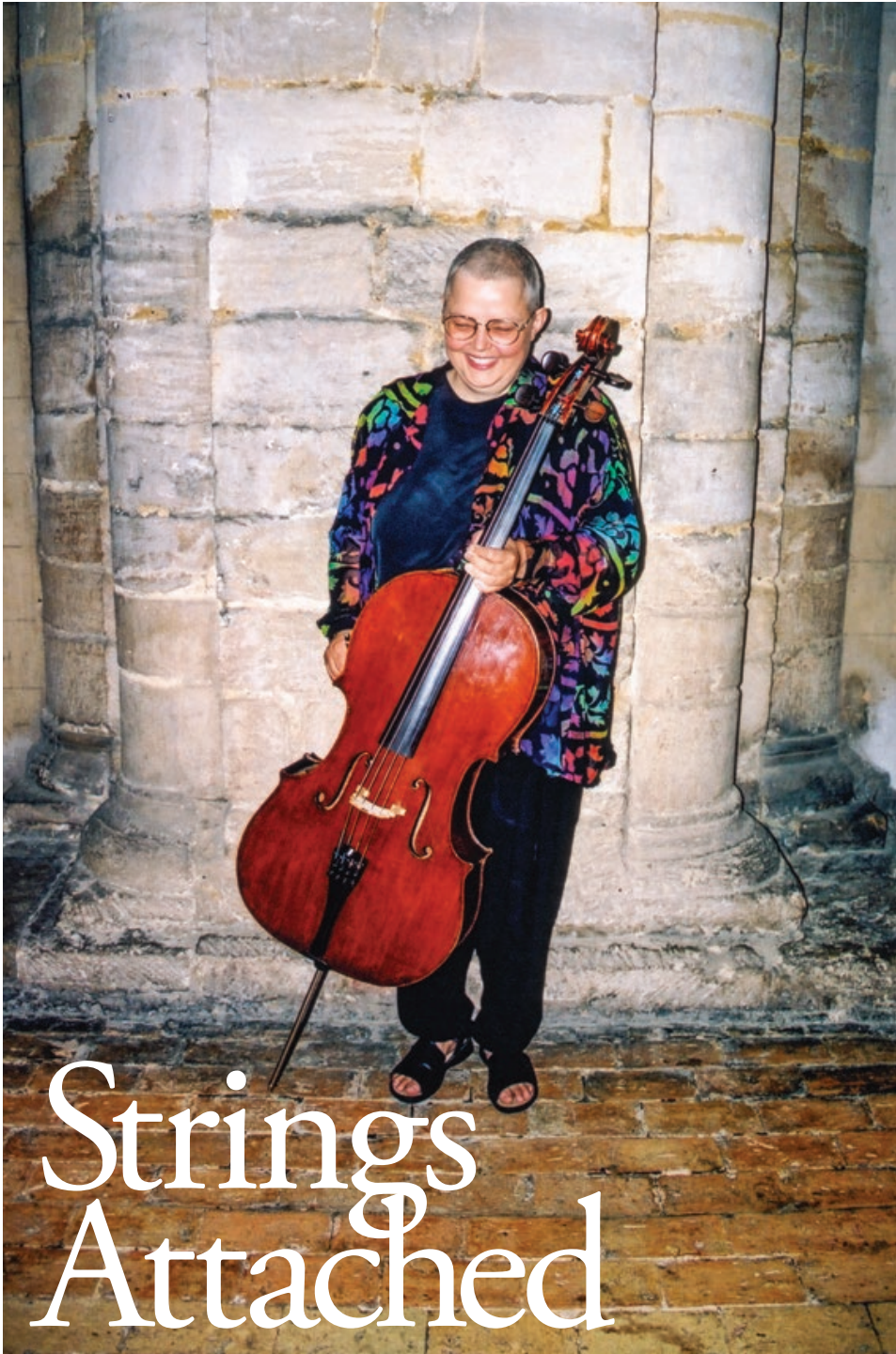
People like being part of something this big, says Vancouver Foundation’s Trina Prior, Greenest City Community Grants manager. “When those closest to the issue help solve it, it’s very powerful.”

For example, the Vancouver Aquarium, creator of the well-known Ocean Wise conservation program for sustainable seafood, received a \$50,000 grant to launch the Make Vancouver a Model of Locally Sourced and Accessible Seafood project. The project aims to provide Vancouver residents with greater access to sustainable seafood by engaging a wider swath of local restaurants in the Ocean Wise program, including restaurants of all price ranges, many restaurants outside the downtown core and a greater number of ethnic restaurants.

“Chefs are in a strategic position to help influence consumer demand by making information about the great work they are doing with local, sustainable seafood available to their customers,” says Katy Muentzer, Ocean Wise co-ordinator. “Working with new chef partners throughout Vancouver has greatly expanded the reach of the Ocean Wise program and allowed us to connect with even more Vancouver residents.”

And that’s ultimately what the Greenest City Community Grants program is all about – connecting Vancouver residents with knowledge and opportunity so they can each become personally connected to the goal of making their city the greenest city imaginable. ∞

To learn more about the Greenest City Grants initiative, visit [vancouverfoundation.ca](http://vancouverfoundation.ca).



Friends continue a cello teacher's dream of giving everyone a chance to play

By WENDY GOLDSMITH

**Carolyn Finlay remembers** her son Eric's first cello lesson vividly. His teacher, Catherine Carmack, offered to show the five-year-old a new way to slice an apple. She bisected the fruit sideways through its equator, and held up one white-fleshed half with a five-seeded star clearly visible at its centre. "She said, 'There's a star inside all of us. That's what you do when you play the cello; you're learning how to find your star,'" recalls Finlay.

Carmack had captivated not only her young son, but his mother as well. An accomplished pianist herself, Finlay had never heard a teacher explain so explicitly how to play from the heart. "It was remarkable. No one had ever taught me music like that before," says Finlay. "There's a star in you and you can express it!"

Over the next 10 years, Finlay took over piano accompaniment for all of Carmack's students' recitals and exams. She would



**(opposite page) Catherine Carmack takes her bows following a performance at Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, England, in 2003; (this page) proudly posing with her students at Hycroft Manor in Vancouver (top) and at her studio (bottom) in 2001.**



tuition while she studied music at UBC. Two decades later, says Finlay, she was still paying these off.

As soon as she graduated, she began teaching music full time in the North Vancouver school system, at the Waldorf School and at the Vancouver Academy of Music, as well as from her home, an airless basement rental suite. Just before young Eric had gone for his first lesson, Carmack had returned from a year abroad at Cambridge University studying music's effect on the brain. Her thesis was approved for review, but as Carmack could not afford to return to England to defend it before a panel, she never earned her master's degree. But rather than ask anyone for money, she kept it a secret, recalls Finlay.

At the memorial service, friends discovered that each had been the recipient of some personal kindness on Carmack's part. Distressed to think that no more aspiring musicians would benefit from Carmack's selflessness, Finlay decided to set up a scholarship fund in her friend's name.

She approached Vancouver Foundation and found it surprisingly simple to set up the Catherine M. Carmack Memorial Cello Scholarship Fund. To produce enough for a yearly payout without reducing the principal, Finlay learned that the fund needed only \$10,000.

Since the fund must grant to a registered charity, Finlay suggested the organization "closest to Catherine's heart." The Vancouver Cello Club was a natural choice because it exists to promote and share a mutual love of the cello between students, teachers and master players – ideals that Carmack had held dear since her own student days.

Once the fund was in place, Finlay spread the word to all of Carmack's students and friends. After several fundraising recitals and many generous private donations, the fund had double the minimum. In 2005, the Club began awarding \$1,000 in scholarships to promising students unable to afford intensive music summer camps.

It's fitting, believes Finlay, that the scholarships will help young people find expression through music. Carmack had a special affinity for children, teens and anyone suffering in a way they could not fully articulate. She taught them how to speak with their cellos, and how to listen.

"She was there to give a musical voice to ordinary people, for their own richness of being. If they thought they could express themselves through a cello, she was there to help." ∞

eventually become Carmack's performance partner, playing duets with her friend around the Lower Mainland as well as at music festivals in England. As the "pianist in the room," says Finlay, she witnessed more than anyone Carmack's heartfelt teaching style. She would ask students what they were thinking about when they played, remembers Finlay, and they would confide the worries or memories that were affecting the resonance of their sound that day. "She believed you had to be able to open up yourself in order to open up the inner meaning of the music."

In 2003, Carmack suffered a relapse of cancer from an illness seven years earlier. A performance tour she was arranging for eight senior students had to be postponed while she embarked on a course of chemotherapy. Unfortunately, the chemotherapy weakened her immune system over several months, so that when she developed a blood infection later that year, Carmack died within hours. She was 46.

It was a shock to everyone who knew her. Not only had her students lost a beloved teacher, many felt they had lost a confidante and mentor. And because of Carmack's generosity, some had even lost a benefactor. Carmack had believed so strongly in affording everyone a voice through an instrument that she had given free lessons to students who couldn't afford to pay and funded scholarships for music camps, junior symphony tuition and performance tours.

But Carmack's largesse did not stem from personal wealth, for she had never experienced the luxury of silver spoons or free rides. Her father left the family when she was 15, and her mother returned to England and remarried when Carmack was in her late teens. Carmack obtained loans to cover living expenses and

A Memorial Fund with Vancouver Foundation is an excellent way to honour a loved one and support your favourite charities at the same time. For more information, call Kristin in **Donor Services** at 604.629.5186 or visit [vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give).



# Grassroots Economics

The Groundswell training network is working to recreate the economy based on values of community and social impact

By MATT COTÉ | PHOTOS CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO

As steam unspools from fresh cups of coffee on a polished wood countertop, dozens of young minds fumble in the background to find seats for both their ideas and their posteriors. The air is electric, and the warm glow of string lights reflecting off vintage brick walls is homey and inviting.

“Every revolution needs a café,” jokes Gilad Babchuk, laughing as he discusses the motivation behind the latest addition to the amenities at Groundswell, an organization that uses a 3,000-square-foot tract of Downtown Eastside real estate to train its participants in the disciplines of grassroots social entrepreneurship. “To understand Groundswell,” explains the exuberantly cheerful Israeli expat, “you first have to understand the space.”





(far left) Former student and current instructor Chris Nichols joins co-founder Gilad Babchuk at the reclaimed-wood bar Nichols built for the Groundswell Café; (this page) Nichols is the architect behind Wood Shop, a custom-furniture co-op born from his participation in the Groundswell program.



But what Babchuk refers to here isn't just physical, it's the gravity of ideas housed under this one roof. There's a clear industrial heritage to the room, in turn encouraging industriousness from the patrons of the café, who are encouraged to use the area as a working space, and the students formally enrolled in Groundswell's educational programs. The result is an atmosphere one imagines is akin to the salons of Europe during the Enlightenment.

Groundswell bustles with cerebral musings all week long, but two days a week the café is closed to regular business and the space instead becomes one giant classroom. Lectures, panels, boot camps, mentoring and exchanges of creative visions serve to guide participants into personal trajectories of meaningful self-employment in what the organization calls "social-impact ventures."

One of the recent projects to emerge from this space is called Wood Shop, a custom-furniture-manufacturing business that builds exclusively from reclaimed wood diverted from landfills. Wood Shop is unique among other businesses doing the same in that it also uses pallets—a major source of waste wood not often considered salvageable. It's a process known as "upcycling"—repurposing material for a higher calling than its original use.

The business is the brainchild of Chris Nichols, a 32-year-old Groundswell graduate who, incidentally, built the bar at the café as his first project. Though Nichols has a master's in sociology, he first worked in carpentry to pay for school. At the outset of starting his PhD, he had second thoughts.

"I was getting increasingly dissatisfied with theorization and different critiques of the world without feeling empowered to actually effect change," he remembers. "I realized working with my hands was what I really wanted to do. Then coming across Groundswell was a perfect scenario where I'd get to take some of these critiques and put them into practice."

Nichols finished the program just a year ago, and yet he and his two partners, Ben Huff and Andrew Hewins, are already so busy they recently opened a new space in the False Creek Flats industrial area to keep up with demand, and hired an employee. If all goes well, that employee will eventually become a partner, as Wood Shop is in fact a worker-owned co-op.

"We're pretty committed, and have it written into our bylaws," says Nichols, "to work on consensus and to not organize ourselves hierarchically. Which maybe doesn't make such a big difference when you're only three people, but it certainly mandates how we would grow and incorporate new members. As soon as there's a fourth member, that person will have a 25 per cent say."

As it turns out, this is something that actually works well in the marketplace. Nichols has found a good niche among "people with whom the ethics of being a co-op or being environmentally conscious resonate." Part of this, he says, is due to a growing progressive consciousness in Vancouver, as shown by the city's mandate to be the greenest city in the world by 2020.

That progressive movement is also what Babchuk wants to capitalize on. Back in Israel, he was on the board of an international company and consulted on education in Europe. He was also involved in the establishment of more than 10 alternative schools. But when he came to Vancouver, he felt isolated working by himself. “What I’ve learned in my life is if you want to feel like you belong, you need to give,” he says.

In that spirit, he found two partners with a similar vision, Jim Barker and Matt Hern. Together, the three men invested their own money and a great deal of sweat equity into Groundswell before any other capital was on the table. Their big break came when Vancouver Foundation became the first major funder to pitch into the vision with a \$70,000 seed grant in 2012 that made a pilot year possible.



“We got the first grant,” says Babchuk, “they saw the results, then we got three years.”

That second injection, in 2014, was worth \$200,000, and was critical. Babchuk explains that the funding wasn’t necessarily enough on its own, but Vancouver Foundation’s endorsement gave Groundswell the credibility to secure other funds, making the whole thing work. “We wanted it to be totally accessible to everyone,” he says. “And the idea of students paying \$8,000 to \$10,000 meant it wasn’t going to be Groundswell the way we wanted it.”

As such, the funding Groundswell receives not only pays for rent and faculty, it also subsidizes the real cost of the program for students. “If we went after privileged kids, we could be independent in a year,” Babchuk explains. “But that’s not the point. We reduced the tuition so money is never a barrier for anyone who wants to take the program.”

That’s made a huge difference to participants like Nichols, his partners and the 60 other young people who’ve made their way through the six-month core program at a cost of only \$2,400. Babchuk beams as he explains that the results speak for themselves.

“Almost everyone’s gone on to be self-employed, and in ways where they don’t have to compromise their values in order to make their livelihoods. It’s the impact we need to see in the economy . . . We want to create a community of socially and environmentally focused businesses, non-profits and co-ops.”

(left) Co-founders Jim Barker and Gilad Babchuk and managing director Paola Qualizza believe strongly in Groundswell’s mission statement to create social and economic change; (below) Barker and Babchuk talking shop at the Groundswell Café.



For Nichols, it’s something that comes full circle. He now also teaches a course on ethics in contemporary capitalism through the Groundswell program. For him, it’s important to “show we can appropriate a positive ethic in mobilizing our critiques in trying to build a better future.”

As for Groundswell, there continues to be an expanding roster of programs and micro-businesses emerging almost monthly – the speed and success of which is no doubt due to a rich economy of ideas, ever-blooming, right at their feet. As Babchuk says, it’s all about making the space. ∞

For more information about Groundswell visit [groundswellcommunity.ca](http://groundswellcommunity.ca). To support innovative community projects like this, call Kristin in Donor Services at 604.629.5186 or visit [vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give).

# Insure Your Impact

## Gifting insurance can increase the impact of your charitable dollars

By **ROSS YOUNG** | PARTNER, SECURE CAPITAL MANAGEMENT LTD.



An easy but relatively unknown way to support your favourite charity and make a difference in your community is to use life insurance to maximize the impact of your charitable contributions. The following examples are for illustrative purposes only, but demonstrate that life insurance can leave a legacy that is far greater than you could have imagined.

Susan had some trouble in her youth and had to turn to a local shelter for support. Now, at age 35, Susan has gained stability in her life and feels that it's important to repay the favour she received. She established a fund at Vancouver Foundation in support of the youth shelter that helped her, and made Vancouver Foundation the beneficiary of a \$100,000 life insurance policy that she holds. The policy costs her \$129 per month, and she only has to make the payments for 10 years. She takes pride in knowing that the \$100,000 donation to her fund on her death will make a huge difference for many kids who need help.

Bill and Shannon, both 55, have lived in Vancouver all of their lives. They own a successful real estate development company and plan to retire in five years. Now that their children are grown and have launched careers of their own, Bill and Shannon would like to give back to the community that has been a large part of their success. In a conversation with their financial planner, they learned that a gift of life insurance can be a great way to increase the effectiveness of their charitable intentions.

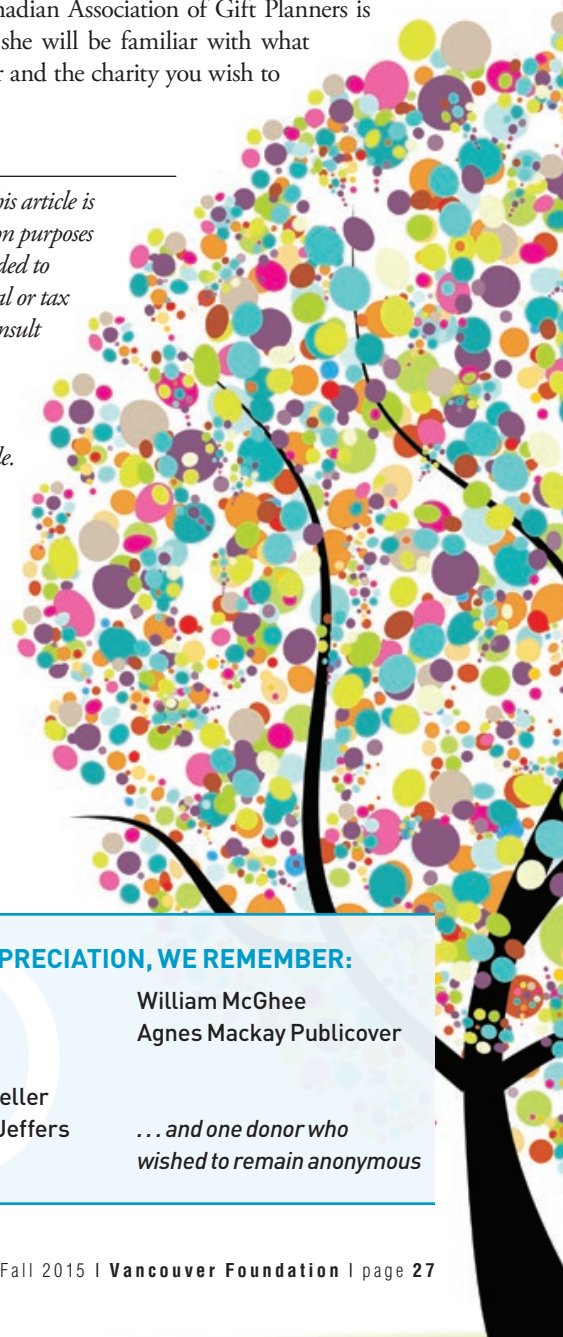
They established a joint \$1-million life insurance policy where they could guarantee, with provisions contained in the contract, that the policy would be paid up in five years with no additional premiums being necessary. In making Vancouver Foundation the owner and beneficiary of the policy, Bill and Shannon are eligible to receive a charitable tax receipt for their ongoing policy premium payments. During the first five years of the policy, while their incomes are high, they'll make accelerated premium payments of \$50,000 annually. With the benefit of a charitable tax receipt, their net annual cost for the premiums

will be approximately \$28,000. They are very pleased that, in just five years, their approximate \$140,000 net cost will have provided for a \$1-million gift to charity on their deaths.

These are just two examples of ways that insurance can increase the impact of your charitable gift. If you are thinking of making a gift of insurance, it is important to ensure that the premiums and gift amount are guaranteed. Talking with an advisor who is a member of the Canadian Association of Gift Planners is advisable, as he or she will be familiar with what both you as a donor and the charity you wish to support require. ∞

---

*The information in this article is for general information purposes only, and is not intended to provide financial, legal or tax advice. You should consult with your financial advisor before acting on any information presented in this article.*



### LASTING LEGACIES

We are honoured to acknowledge donors who include Vancouver Foundation as a beneficiary of their estate, RRIF, RRSP or life insurance policy. In 2014, these individuals left a lasting legacy for the community through Vancouver Foundation.

### WITH GREAT APPRECIATION, WE REMEMBER:

Cloe Beauchesne  
Dorothy Burgess  
Eleanor Campbell  
Paul and Edwina Heller  
Margaret Patricia Jeffers  
Arthur Kelm

William McGhee  
Agnes Mackay Publicover

... and one donor who wished to remain anonymous



**Plant your legacy today.  
Be forever.**

Find out how at  
[vancouverfoundation.ca/give](http://vancouverfoundation.ca/give)  
or call Kristin at 604.629.5186

vancouver  
foundation

  vancouverfdn