

Spring 2008

# vancouverfoundation

stories of modern philanthropy

## EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

Refugee kids draw their  
journey to Canada

## NO PLACE LIKE HOME

A couch surfing couple finds  
a home of their own

## BORN TO BE WILD

Rescuing seal pups

## TO BEAN OR NOT TO BEAN?

A tofu titan follows  
a tradition of generosity



# The First Word . . .

**W**elcome to the first issue  
of Vancouver Foundation's  
newsmagazine.



**2008 is an important year for us.** It marks the 65th anniversary of Vancouver Foundation, and there is much to celebrate. While 65 is generally a year in which retirement plans are front and centre, here at the Foundation we are in a period of renewal. We have a new strategic focus and priorities, new funding guidelines, a new logo, and now a new magazine.

We will publish twice a year, in the spring and fall, bringing you stories featuring the people and organizations that are making a difference in communities across British Columbia. We will tell the stories of grants (both large and small) that have had a dramatic impact on people's lives, and we'll profile the donors whose generosity has made these stories possible.

This year, we are looking to the future, and at the same time, honouring the past.

Vancouver Foundation started in 1943 with one person, \$1,000 and a vision. Alice MacKay had saved \$1,000 from her secretarial job and wanted to help homeless women trapped in a cycle of poverty. Inspired by MacKay's generosity, local industrialist W.J. VanDusen added \$10,000 to her endowment and encouraged nine friends to match his own gift. Vancouver Foundation was born. That original \$101,000 investment has since grown into almost \$800 million, and the largest community foundation in Canada.

Community foundations are unique in that we are "of the community, by the community, for the community." Our focus is on the communities we serve; our leaders and advisors are members of the community; and our work does not target a single issue in the community, but rather a broad cross-section of interests.

Community foundations recognize that communities are complex and that many factors go into creating a healthy and vibrant place to live. As a result, we fund a wide variety of programs and projects in areas ranging from arts and culture and education to environment, animal welfare, and children, youth and families. In 2007, Vancouver Foundation distributed almost \$60 million back into B.C. communities.

To accomplish this work, we bring together generous donors (large and small, individuals, organizations and corporations) and link their contributions to important initiatives and charities that address the needs of their communities. We pool the money entrusted to us by our donors, invest it wisely, and then use a portion of the income generated by these investments to support hundreds of innovative projects and programs. The remaining income is reinvested to help the endowments grow each year. In this way, a single gift to a community foundation can go on and on, leaving a legacy for our community that addresses the needs of today and tomorrow.

We extend our thanks to Peter Legge and the staff at Canada Wide Media Limited for their help in producing the magazine you are holding. We hope it honours the spirit and vision of Alice MacKay, W.J. VanDusen and all the others who made a long-term commitment to the communities they loved. And we hope that you will be as excited about these "stories of modern philanthropy" as we are.

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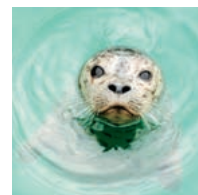


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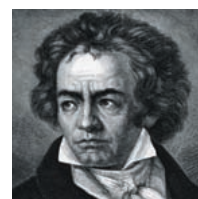
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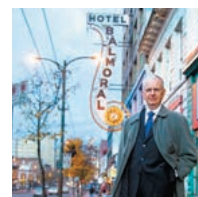
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## Grants at a Glance

Here are a few of the projects  
Vancouver Foundation supported in 2007



**KRAZY! The Delirious World of Anime + Comics + Video Games + Art** runs May 17 to September 7, 2008 at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

This exhibition is the first international survey of its kind – a groundbreaking project that offers unique insight into the world of comics, animated cartoons, anime, manga, graphic novels, computer/video games and contemporary visual art. Spanning a century of art-making, the works in this exhibition reveal an extraordinary history of production, one that is poised to redefine the scope of visual culture in the 21st century.

With outstanding examples of original sketches, notes, concept drawings, final production drawings, animation cells, three-dimensional models and published works, KRAZY! promises a rare insight into the mind and method of some of the finest artists at work today.



Vancouver Foundation  
donated \$100,000  
to make KRAZY! possible.

### In the Land of the Head Hunters

The U'mista Cultural Society in Alert Bay on Vancouver Island organized public screenings of a restored version of Edward Curtis' 1914 film, *In the Land of the Head Hunters*.

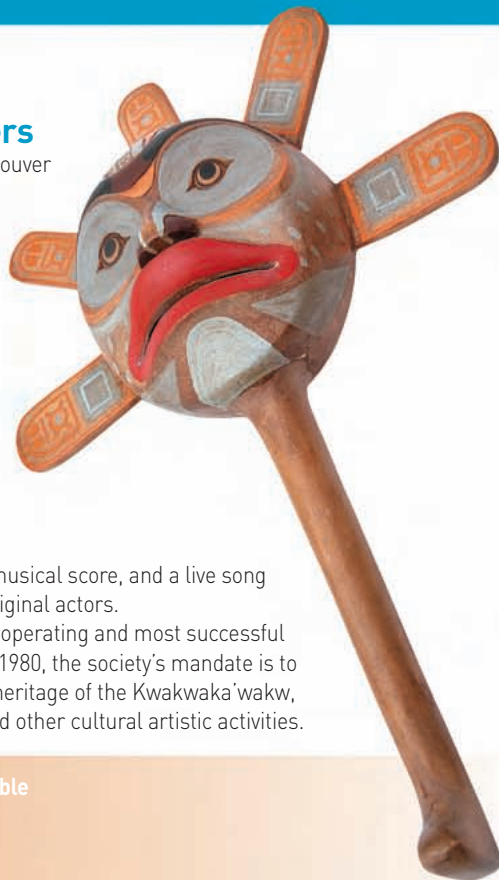
Curtis spent three years with the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples (also known as the Kwakiutl) to meticulously recreate their way of life, pre-contact. The 47-minute film recounts a story of love and revenge, and features shots of magnificent painted war canoes, totem poles, costumes, dancing, and rituals – including a powerful scene of a vision quest.

The screenings were accompanied by a live arrangement of the film's long-lost original musical score, and a live song and dance performance by descendants of the original actors.

U'mista Cultural Centre is one of the longest-operating and most successful First Nations cultural facilities in B.C. Opened in 1980, the society's mandate is to ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Kwakwaka'wakw, and to promote carving, dancing, ceremonials and other cultural artistic activities.



The screenings were made possible  
with a grant of \$20,000 from  
Vancouver Foundation.



### The beat goes on

The Youth to Youth Marimba Program is an expansion of the Britannia World Music Society – a program that teaches students in east Vancouver how to play this percussion instrument. The program uses members of "Kutapira" – its senior ensemble of marimba players – to teach elementary school students through youth-led, after-school programs.

Founded five years ago, Kutapira is now an independent, professional group that has toured internationally. With support from a Vancouver Foundation grant, Britannia was



able to buy more instruments, expand the Marimba Program and create mentoring opportunities for youth.



Vancouver Foundation  
donated \$8,000 to the  
Youth to Youth Marimba Program.

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presents...

**Inspiring stories from our community**

See it on....  
The Express  
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**SHAW**





### DogSense

*DogSense* is a training manual developed by BC SPCA with the help of international experts and a \$30,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation.

It's a comprehensive guide that will help staff and volunteers at animal shelters more accurately assess incoming dogs, so they get the care they need.

By managing the behaviour and emotional well-being of shelter animals, the ultimate goal of the program is to make good, long-term adoption matches for kennelled dogs.



### Factoid

Animals play important roles in our communities.

Animals offer us companionship and affection. Some

assist people with disabilities. Others work in rescue efforts or help locate contraband. And still others roam the wild and help maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Since 1997, Vancouver Foundation and its donors have given almost \$2 million to hundreds of charities in B.C. dedicated to protecting and enhancing the lives of all types of animals.



**Vancouver Foundation sponsored *DogSense* with a \$30,000 grant.**

### Counting the dinosaurs

Sturgeon are the largest freshwater fish in North America – some grow to more than six metres in length and weigh more than 600 kilograms.



The Fraser River is home to the last population of wild white sturgeon in the world.

Often called "living fossils," this freshwater leviathan has changed little in almost 200 million years. Sturgeon are slow-growing and mature late in life. They are vulnerable to exploitation and to other threats, including pollution and habitat fragmentation. Valued for its meat and roe, the sturgeon population was almost wiped out in the late 1800s due to excessive commercial fishing, and has been recovering slowly ever since.

Vancouver Foundation is helping to gather information on this endangered species. In 2007, the Foundation gave a grant of \$60,000 to the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society for a survey of juvenile white sturgeon and their habitat in the Lower Fraser River.

The project works with Fraser First Nations to deliver the baseline sturgeon and habitat information needed for effective stock recovery monitoring and assessment.



**Vancouver Foundation donated \$60,000 to the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society.**

PHOTOS: Topimages.com (dog); BigStockPhoto (sturgeon)

Metro Vancouver's  
**VitalSigns® 2008**

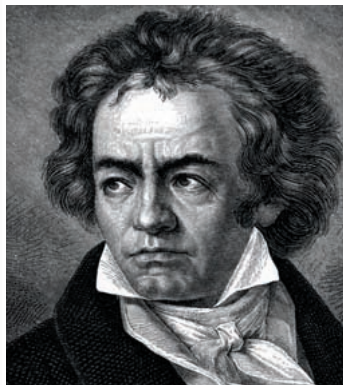
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[www.vancouverfoundationvitalsigns.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundationvitalsigns.ca)

## Grants at a Glance

### Here are a few of the projects Vancouver Foundation supported in 2007



#### Beethoven and the VSO

Ludwig van Beethoven left a remarkable legacy of music for future generations to hear and enjoy.

In the spring of 2008, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Bramwell Tovey, performed all nine Beethoven symphonies in chronological order during six concerts over a two-week period.

Adding to this extraordinary experience was the performance of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto by superstars Lang Lang and Anne-Sophie Mutter. This special event, broadcast on CBC Radio 2, enthralled audiences across Canada.



Vancouver Foundation gave the Vancouver Symphony Society a grant of \$100,000 to assist with the Beethoven Festival.

#### Portable sawmill

Students at Logan Lake Secondary in the Interior will soon learn to mill their own wood. A Vancouver Foundation grant of \$18,900 will help the school purchase a portable sawmill, which will allow students to take small-diameter, beetle-killed lumber (currently a waste product) and mill it into usable lumber. This will provide work experience for students, supply raw materials for woodworking courses and, ideally, will generate income.



Vancouver Foundation  
donated \$18,900  
toward the portable sawmill.

#### Peer support for seniors

The Westside Senior Peer Support Program at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House in Vancouver trained 10 seniors as peer counsellors. These individuals play critical roles in the westside seniors' community as advocates, resource people and leaders who can provide counselling and support to seniors who are experiencing depression, grief or loss.

The project has built a volunteer leadership base within Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, and helps to better connect isolated seniors to services and supports. Vancouver Foundation donated \$15,000 to the project in 2007.



Vancouver Foundation's  
\$15,000 donation supported  
peer counselling for seniors.

#### They say all good things must come to an end.



At Vancouver Foundation, we know that isn't true.

Talk with us about how you can give a gift to your B.C. community - a gift that will keep giving for years to come. Do something good that will last forever.

vancouver  
foundation

www.vancouverfoundation.ca 604.688.2204

#### Super 8

Britannia Secondary School's "Super 8" program is designed to address issues that Grade 8 students experience during the transition from elementary to secondary school. Academic, social and emotional concerns are addressed using a pod system where students receive all their core subjects as a class group from two core teachers. The program is also intended to foster social responsibility and leadership through school and community connections, and give students a sense of belonging at Britannia.

Vancouver Foundation gave the Britannia Support Society a grant of \$33,000 in 2007 to start the Super 8 program. This funding will also support a breakfast program for Grade 8 students, as well as contribute to food for Grade 8 extracurricular events.



Vancouver  
Foundation  
granted \$33,000  
to the Britannia  
Support Society.



## ArtsWay

ArtsWay is a program of the Health Arts Society that brings the work of professional B.C. artists – musicians, actors, dancers, and film and visual artists – into health-care organizations. It could be a concert with a string quartet, jazz musicians, a wind trio or harp, a play reading by professional actors, or even an experience with sculpture.

ArtsWay programs offer patients in hospitals, senior care facilities and hospices the engagement, contemplation and stimulation created by art. The performances promote the healing objectives of health-care organizations, as well as improve the environments of health-care workers and the experience of visitors.

Artists included in the ArtsWay program are a veritable “who’s who” of arts and culture in B.C. Robert Silverman, Bruce Pullan, Sal Ferreras, Jane Coop, Scott Bellis, as well as many members of the VSO are just a few of the more than 150 artists and groups who have performed under the ArtsWay banner.

The program organized more than 650 events in its first two years of operation, and hopes to reach a goal of 4,000 events by 2010. To help with this rapid growth, and its important work, Vancouver Foundation donated \$45,000 to the Health Arts Society in 2007.



**Vancouver Foundation sponsored ArtsWay with a \$45,000 grant.**

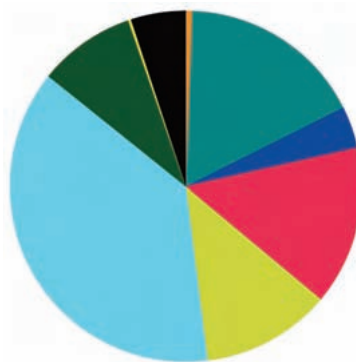
## Year in Review – 2007

They say it is better to give than to receive. At Vancouver Foundation we do both. We received donations to both individual/family and organizational/corporate endowment funds, and we helped those fund holders give out money that supported thousands of innovative community initiatives.

Following is a snapshot of the giving and receiving in 2007:

Size of total endowment	= \$785 million
Number of endowment funds held	= 1,108
Amount donated to VF in 2007	= \$52 million
Amount distributed to organizations by VF in 2007	= \$59 million
Total number of grants given in 2007	= 3,029
Administration/investment costs (as a percentage of total endowment fund)	= <1 per cent

## 2007 Grants and Distributions by Field of Interest (\$59 million)



■ Animal Welfare  
■ Education  
■ Health & Medical Research

■ Arts & Culture  
■ Environment  
■ Youth Philanthropy  
■ Children, Youth & Families

■ Health & Social Development  
■ Other Grants & Distributions

## Vancouver Foundation provides grants in eight fields of interest:

- ▶ animal welfare
- ▶ arts and culture
- ▶ children, youth and families
- ▶ education
- ▶ environment
- ▶ health and medical research
- ▶ health and social development
- ▶ youth philanthropy

## Vancouver Foundation by the numbers:

Vancouver Foundation is Canada’s largest community foundation with almost **\$800 million** in assets.

Number of funds at the end of 2007: 1,108  
Number of donor-advised funds: 310  
Number of agency funds: 485

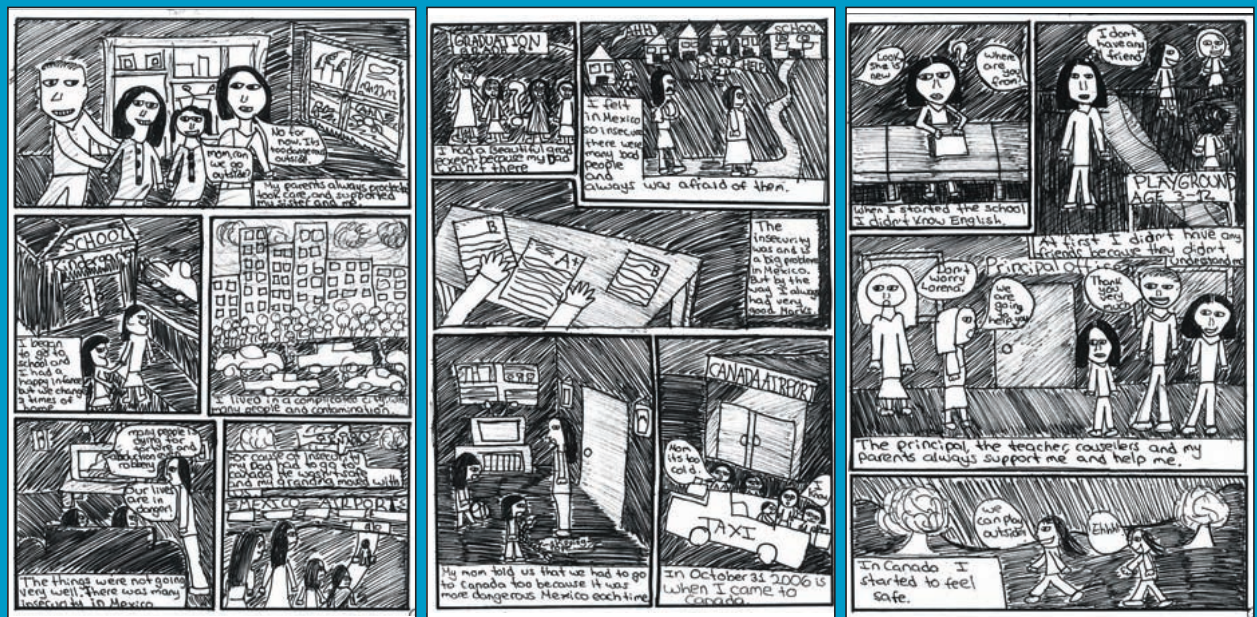
To see a detailed financial statement, visit our website at [www.vancouverfoundation.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca).



# Every picture tells a story

By PAUL HERATY

PHOTOS: TIFFANY BROWN COOPER



**Everyone has a story to tell. Some are more dramatic than others. Some tell their story easily. Others, you have to draw it out of them.**

A pilot project for immigrant youth on Vancouver's east side is doing just that. "Illustrated Journey" is teaching 20 immigrant and refugee youth how to draw comic book art. Once a week for eight months, participants gather at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House and learn the finer points of composition, line, storyboards and character. Ostensibly, the goal is that each participant will create an illustrated story of how he or she came to Canada and, at the end of the project, these will all be combined into a booklet of stories. The reality is that, at the end of the project, these young people will come away with much more than just a series of pen and ink drawings.

Pascaline Nsekera is the driving force behind this unique project. Nsekera works

for La Boussole – a francophone immigrant-serving agency in Vancouver. A refugee herself (Nsekera is from Burundi in Africa), she knows the struggles new immigrants, especially young immigrants, face.

She has been working with refugees for years, and remembers four orphans from Burundi who had been having a hard time adjusting to life here in Canada.

"The family had fled from Burundi to Rwanda, to escape the civil war in their home country. But they got caught up in the Rwandan genocide, and the parents died. The kids ended up on the street, and were sent to a refugee camp. Eventually they came to Canada and were put in a foster home.

"These kids were having a terrible time. They were going through so much . . . adjusting to immigration, to a different school system, trying to learn the language (they spoke only French), still dealing with the trauma that

brought them here . . . and on top of all this, being teenagers – a time of change anyway . . . it was very difficult for them and the foster parents . . . and this was not an unusual case.

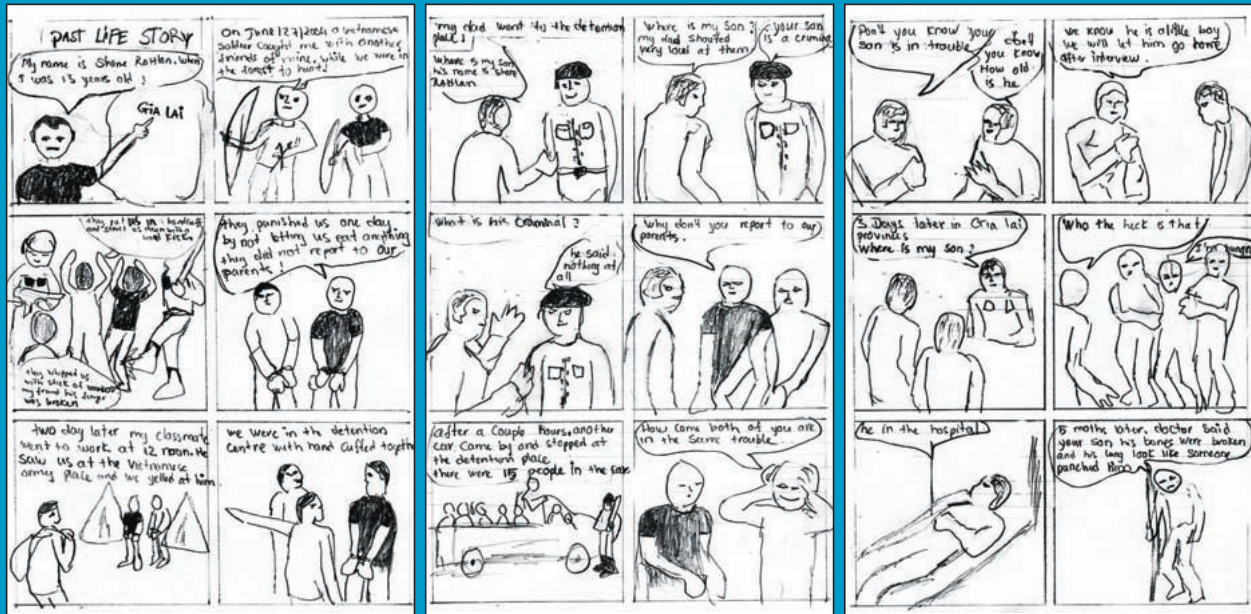
"We wanted to engage young people in an activity that would help them heal," says Nsekera. "I love storytelling, and I was interested in exploring it as both recreative and therapeutic." Perhaps being able to tell their story and share it with others could be healing for youth. Nsekera organized a one-day session, which was very successful. When a UBC colleague, a comic book aficionado, suggested visual storytelling, the concept for Illustrated Journey was born. "It became so obvious," says Nsekera. "This would remove the language barriers."

Nsekera wrote a proposal and submitted it to Vancouver Foundation in March 2007. The Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council approved a grant of \$25,000 for the project

One generation plants the tree . . . Another gets the shade. – Chinese proverb



Lorena's drawings (left) convey the fear and insecurity of her life in Mexico, while Shane's comics (below and next page) illustrate the violence and imprisonment he experienced at the hands of soldiers in Vietnam.



because of its innovative approach. The remainder of the program's budget of \$42,000 came from the CKNW Orphans' Fund (which is managed by Vancouver Foundation).

The program started in October 2007. "We advertised for participants in local schools and youth centres," says Nsekera, "and looked for artists/instructors by word of mouth and through art schools like Emily Carr."

They ended up with a diverse group 14 to 24 years of age, all speaking different languages – Spanish, Vietnamese, Jarai, Chinese and French – all with varying degrees of English, and with widely varying experiences as immigrants. Some kids spent years in refugee camps, some are the byproduct of wars. But all share a common need to understand the culture and language of their new country. All share the usual experiences of teenagers – growing bodies, changing roles within the family, growing up, parental pressure – combined with the

problems of many immigrants – feelings of isolation, language barriers, even racism.

In the first phase of the project, the youth were introduced to comics. Over three Saturdays a month, they learned the basics of visual storytelling and how to create their own stories. In the second phase, they have 30 minutes of lessons, and the rest of the time they write and draw their comics with the support of seven of Vancouver's top comic book artists/illustrators.

### Each story is unique

"Feliz cumpleaños a ti... Feliz cumpleaños a ti... Happy birthday to you..."

It's Lorena's birthday today – she's 14 years old, and the students and instructors in the multipurpose room at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House sing happy birthday in various languages. There's a cake and candles. Lorena smiles self-consciously, blows »



Lorena and Shane

## Illustrated Journey

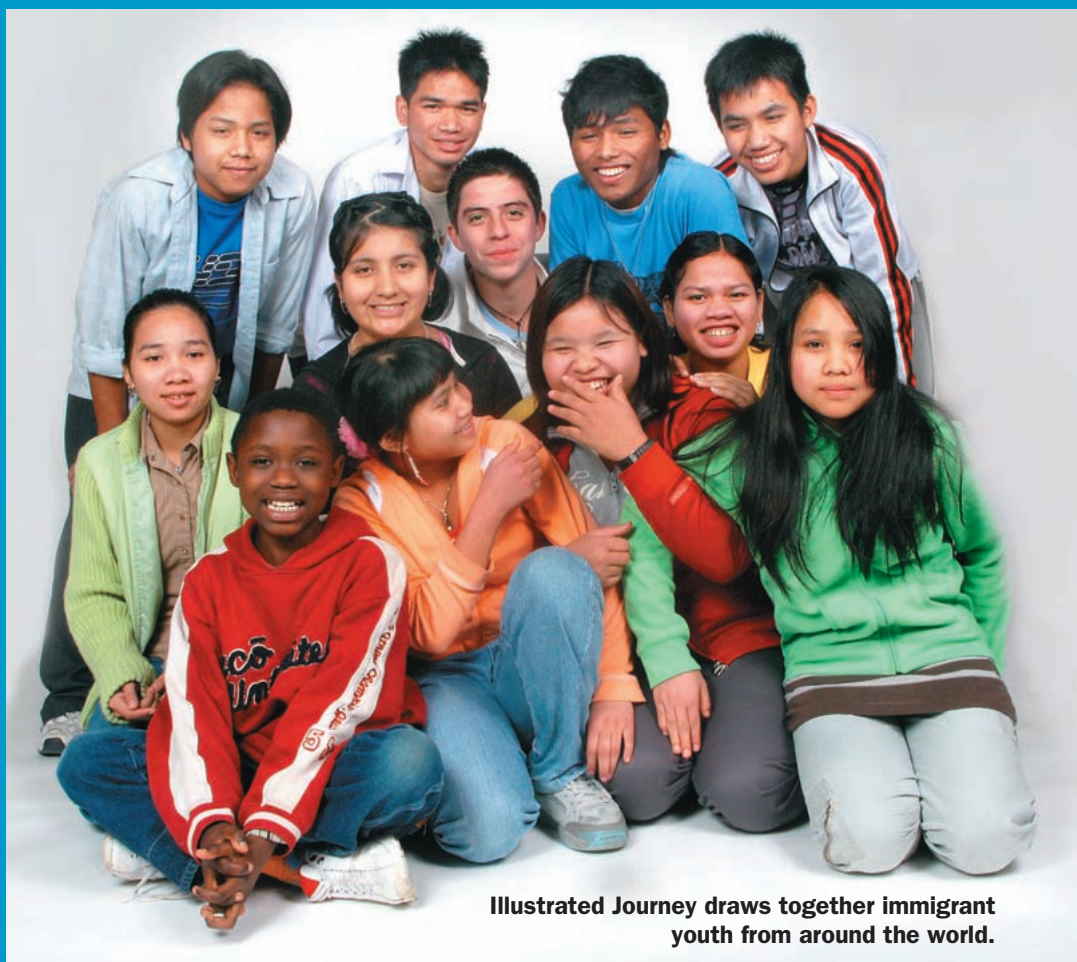


out the candles and waves her hand, wafting the smoke from her face. Everyone leaves their drawings for a moment for a piece of cake.

Lorena is from Mexico City. She has been in Canada for only a year. Her English is surprisingly good after such a short time. She's shy and soft-spoken. But that shy exterior conceals a formidable talent. Her drawings, after only a few months of practice, are strong, self-assured, and brimming with energy.

Shane is another immigrant youth who is taking the Illustrated Journey. He's Montagnard, from the central highlands of Vietnam. Overflowing with energy, he is quick to smile, and talks fast. Whether it's rapid-fire English or the bubbling, glottal tones of Vietnamese or Jarai (the language of the Montagnard people), the words spill out as if there's no time to get his point across. He also has a maturity beyond his 17 years. Being imprisoned and then spending two and a half years in a Cambodian refugee camp may have something to do with it.

For more details of Lorena and Shane's stories, visit [www.vancouverfoundation.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca).



**Illustrated Journey draws together immigrant youth from around the world.**

### Coming together

Almost every weekend, the multipurpose room at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House becomes the UN in miniature – there are kids from Vietnam, from south Asia, from Africa, from Central America . . . instructors from Ireland, the U.S. and Canada. And the air is filled with English, French, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Illustrated Journey is an exciting collaboration between immigrant-serving agencies (La

Boussole), educational organizations (UBC School of Social Work), funding agencies (Vancouver Foundation and CKNW Orphans' Fund) and local artists. It's a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual, multidisciplinary experience.

It's no coincidence that "boussole" is French for "compass." These 20 youth may not know exactly where they're going on this Illustrated Journey. But Pascaline Nsekera and a group of local artists are giving them a sense of direction. **VF**



# A winning smile

The Vancouver Sun Children's Fund puts hundreds of smiles on little faces

BY BEVERLY FARYNA

PHOTO: TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

**It's the end of another day at camp, and little Evan Ma is smiling like there's no tomorrow.**

He's learned how to do a karate chop, paint, cook and play games. He's done martial arts exercises and science experiments. Yesterday, he had a chance to meet a firefighter, and tomorrow there's a field trip.

The activities not only engage him, they help Evan feel like he belongs.

Evan is one of 20 children with physical and developmental disabilities who, each summer, attend a very special day camp put on by the Richmond Committee on Disability.

The six-week program, which is open to families of any income level, works to build the confidence and skills of kids who are often ostracized in the community.

"It's all about helping children break out of their shell – to feel a sense of belonging and accomplishment," says Ella Huang, executive director for the Richmond Committee on Disability when asked what the secret to the camp's success is.

"Usually during the first week they're timid and reluctant to participate. But it doesn't take long before they're fully engaged in all the activities. Parents are amazed at how much fun their kids are having."

The summer camp is a recent development – it first opened in 2001 with startup money from the Vancouver Sun Children's Fund. The Children's Fund itself has been around much longer.

In 1981, Clark Davey, then publisher of the *Vancouver Sun*, had a simple but effective idea: use the resources at hand – a talented staff and a daily newspaper – to tell people about the needs of disadvantaged children and raise money to help those children live better lives. That's how it started, and the response from the public has been overwhelming. The Children's Fund has given out grants totalling \$6 million to more than 800 children's charities throughout British Columbia.

*Vancouver Sun* readers are the backbone of the Children's Fund, contributing \$9.5 million since its inception. Most donations are sent in during an annual Christmas fundraising campaign. However, people also leave money to the Fund in their estates.

"Every single penny goes to the kids," *Vancouver Sun* columnist and current chair of the Fund, Shelley Fralic, explains. "All the costs involved have been covered by the publisher."

As the Fund has grown over time, administrators realized they needed to take a more formal approach in managing it. In 2003, a partnership was formed between the Children's Fund and Vancouver



Foundation. Vancouver Foundation took over the administrative and granting functions of the Fund and the *Sun* was able to take advantage of the expertise of Vancouver Foundation's Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee. The volunteers who sit on this committee have in-depth knowledge of community issues and help develop and strengthen the Children's Fund to its maximum potential.

Jamie Pitblado, vice-president of promotions and community investment for the Pacific Newspaper Group, is delighted with this union. "The partnership has been a very successful one for us," he says. "Vancouver Foundation is a well-respected organization and one that we feel very proud to be part of."

In December 2007, the *Vancouver Sun* launched a \$500,000 legacy fund that will be given out in one lump sum in 2008 – not unlike Canuck Place and KidSafe, two projects that the Children's Fund initiated with similar funding. Pitblado recognizes the importance of spearheading projects like this.

"We play a leadership role in this community," he says. "With that comes a responsibility to try and build a better community."

The positive impact of this unique summer camp is measured not in dollars but in smiles. Evan's ear-to-ear grin and the smiles of all the other kids tell you something special is happening here. Something you can't put a price on. That's the premise, and the promise, of the Vancouver Sun Children's Fund.

For more information about the Vancouver Sun Children's Fund, visit [www.canada.com/vancouversun/info/childrensfund/index.html](http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/info/childrensfund/index.html). **VF**



# No Place Like Home

BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI  
PHOTO: JASON LANG

**“The baby was two weeks old, and we were staying with one friend, then another, at my grandma’s place, all over. Nick couldn’t stay with the baby and me; he had to stay somewhere else. Our stuff was all over too, stored at different people’s places . . .**

“The baby was waking up every few hours, because at that age they don’t sleep very long. The whole thing was really hard. It was really hard on the baby, too. That’s when I told Nick, ‘We really need a place of our own.’”

Joana was 16 years old and living with her mom when she got pregnant. Joana’s mom told her once the baby came, Joana and her partner Nick would have to get their own place. But that was easier said than done. Finding affordable housing in Vancouver isn’t easy for anyone, but Joana and Nick had extra challenges.

“People don’t want to rent to people our age. And they especially don’t want to rent to you if you have a baby, because people don’t like to hear babies crying,” explains Nick, who was 17 when Izrael, now a smiley 10-month-old, was born.

So when the young couple had the opportunity to move into a two-bedroom apartment through a housing support program, they didn’t hesitate. Besides helping them secure a place to live, the program, run through the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, helps with the rent, teaches life skills such as budgeting and housekeeping, and acts as an intermediary between tenant and landlord. “The program made everything a lot easier,” says Nick.

Now that their home life is stable, Joana and Nick have been able to focus on finishing high school; Izrael goes to an on-site daycare at Joana’s school. In the future, Joana dreams of working in dance – “I’d love to be a professional dance instructor,” she says, flashing an excited, hopeful smile – but thinks a career as a hair stylist is more likely; the school she goes to offers a hair stylist apprenticeship program. Nick, meanwhile, has his sights set on a career in film, working as a cameraman.

Whatever the future holds, the couple is proud of what they’ve already accomplished. “Since I got pregnant I’ve learned more than I learned in any other time in my life

– about being a mom, how to take care of a home,” says Joana. “And I feel like I’m a really good mom, and Nick’s a really good dad. We’re doing really good.”

Couch surfing with a newborn isn’t what most people think of when they imagine “homelessness.” But many of the people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of experiencing homelessness, defy common stereotypes.

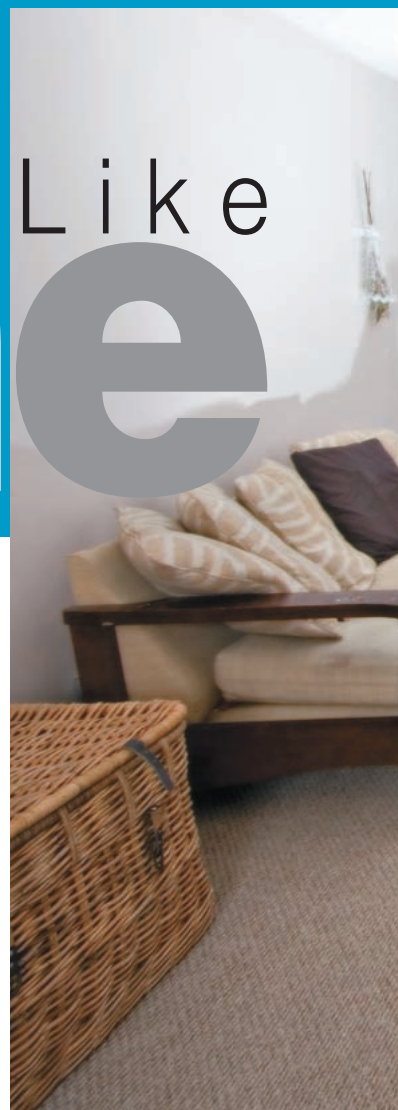
“There are single moms who, with their kids, live in their cars in the summer to save on rent,” notes Catharine Hume, who heads Vancouver Foundation’s Homelessness Initiative. “As well, quite a few people experiencing homelessness have had brain injuries, which compromise their ability to function. The reality of homelessness is often much more complex than many people realize.”

“Many people think homelessness happens to ‘someone else’ – people unlike them,” says Jake Kerr, chair of Vancouver Foundation and president of Lignum Investments. “But the reality is that, at any time, any one of us can face the reality of homelessness. One accident, one financial misstep, one misfortune

in life . . . and any one of us could be in that situation.”

Unfortunately, more and more people are finding themselves in exactly that situation. A 2008 count of people experiencing homelessness in the Metro Vancouver area showed an increase of 19 per cent since 2005, and communities across B.C. are facing similar increases. Vancouver Foundation recently asked British Columbians what was important to them. Not surprisingly, communities across B.C. identified homelessness as a major concern. So Vancouver Foundation decided to step up to the plate.

“Homelessness is a difficult social problem, but it’s not unsolvable: Joana and Nick are proof that



**Tell me and I’ll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I’ll understand.** – Anonymous

Nick, Joana and  
10-month-old Izrael  
at home.



with the right support, people can find good homes and thrive. It's an issue that really matters to British Columbians, and it's an area in which we at the Foundation feel we can really make a difference," explains Kerr. "That's why the Foundation is now making addressing homelessness a long-term priority."

Vancouver Foundation has a strong history of supporting organizations, such as the Urban Native Youth Association and the Portland Hotel Society, that provide services, supports and housing to people experiencing homelessness. Now Vancouver Foundation wants to become more strategic and purposeful in its efforts, and

take action to accelerate progress on reducing homelessness.

As part of this new focus, the Foundation is directing resources towards assisting a particularly neglected homeless population: youth like Joana and Nick.

Every day in Vancouver, an estimated 400 to 600 people between the ages of 16 and 24 experience homelessness, or are at risk of being homeless. Local experts say this group has particular needs that aren't currently adequately addressed.

"Youth fall through the cracks in the system," notes Hume. "They generally haven't had the support needed to transition successfully to adulthood – but often they're

no longer eligible for the supports available to children."

Hume explains that youth who are dealing with or are at risk of homelessness need specialized help to continue with schooling, learn to manage a household, find work and develop effective employment skills. Often, these youth are also dealing with mental health and addiction issues that they themselves may not recognize.

The Foundation believes that if these youth can get help early on, preferably before experiencing homelessness or at an earlier stage, young people who might otherwise face escalating – and increasingly intractable – problems over the long term can stabilize their

lives and move forward.

"Helping young people is intrinsically the right thing to do," says Hume. "And it also really benefits our communities as a whole when young people have safe, secure and affordable housing and supports in order to fully participate in their communities."

Joana and Nick are proof that, with the right supports, people dealing with homelessness can not only find housing, they can thrive. By bringing additional focus and resources to tackling this complex issue, Vancouver Foundation aims to help more British Columbians experience the solid life foundation provided by a home of their own. **VF**

# Born to be *Wild*

BY PAUL HERATY

PHOTOS: JAIME KOWAL

**August 13, 2007. Afternoon, a beach near Victoria, hot sun, clear blue sky. The rhythmic plash of small waves on sand. The sea is flat, the horizon a knife edge in the distance. The only interruption to this summer day on the B.C. coast is a faint mewling sound – but not a kitten in sight – and near the water’s edge, a lump. Like a ball of seaweed.**

The lump moves ever so slightly, cries and tries to raise its head. It’s a baby seal pup, only a few days old, abandoned by its mother. Weighing only eight kilograms, weak with hunger and severely dehydrated, the pup will be dead within hours.

Two months later . . .

“Creevey” is long-whiskered, his coat shiny, eyes bright and curious. He now weighs almost 29 kilograms and is plump as pudding. The transformation is remarkable.

Creevey is one of the lucky seal pups rescued by the Vancouver Aquarium’s Marine Mammal Rescue (MMR) program. Abandoned, injured or orphaned, each pup has been taken in, fed, treated and cared for by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers at the MMR facility on Vancouver’s waterfront. Now healthy and rested, Creevey and six other pups will be released back into the wild.

In 2007, MMR staff rescued 151 animals – most of them young seal pups – from all parts of the B.C. coastline. “Occasionally we do get other mammals like sea otters, porpoises, dolphins, sea lions – we even get calls about killer whales,” says Sheryl Barber, rehabilitation co-ordinator with the MMR program, “but 99 per cent of what we see is newborn harbour seal pups.”

Most harbour seal pups are born in July and August, but the phone calls to MMR start in May or June – usually from a member of the public or another animal rescue organization who has seen an abandoned seal pup on a beach. MMR staff will first assess the situation and the animal to make sure it’s actually in distress. If it needs help, the animal will be treated on-site or transported to MMR’s rehabilitation facility in Vancouver harbour (many local airlines transport distressed animals like Creevey to MMR for free).

Depending on their injuries and condition, pups will spend two to four months recovering. It’s an intensive process. First, they’re cleaned and have their wounds treated, and then are given IVs or X-rays and are rehydrated if needed. Then they’re fed five times a day. It takes four to six weeks to transition them from formula to eating fish on their own. When they are healthy, they are moved to two large outdoor pools where they can be socialized with eight to 10 other pups. Eventually they are released back into the wild.



Injured and orphaned seal pups (right) are rehabilitated through the Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue program. Creevey (below), a successful graduate, has already been returned to the wild.



Barber is passionate about her job. She's been with the MMR program since 1993. "In many cases," she says, "these animals are in trouble because of the actions of humans, be it pollution, fishing, separating pups from parents, dogs on beaches, or just our increasing use of the coastline. We feel a moral obligation to help out . . . At the same time, we try very hard not to form any bonds to the animals. But it's hard to do after taking care of them for a few months."

It costs a lot to maintain the MMR – between \$100,000 and \$200,000 per year. All of this money comes from private donations. Thus, each year, MMR does a fundraising seal release party, where families can "adopt" a seal pup and take part in its release (the 2007 release party raised almost \$5,200).

Vancouver Foundation is one of the organizations that recognized the importance of MMR's work. The MMR program fits perfectly with the mandate of the Foundation's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, which is to support initiatives that improve the lives of wild, domestic and farm animals in British Columbia.

In 2005, the Foundation gave

MMR a grant of \$15,000 to help buy much-needed triage equipment. A new centrifuge, electronic thermometer and various other pieces of medical equipment enable the team to do initial on-site blood analysis. It's used with every animal that goes through the facility and has improved the speed of care dramatically.

**October 11, 2007.** Creevey and six other pups are transported to Smuggler's Cove on the Sunshine Coast for release. When their carrier is opened at the water's edge, some are reluctant to leave and have to be coaxed out. They cautiously slide on their bellies down to the water, sniffing, not quite sure what to make of it. They look back, then slip into open water for the first time.

Others are not so tentative. They launch themselves out of the carrier and frantically head for the water – without a single look back. A few splashes and they're gone. Some linger in the bay, their sleek heads popping up occasionally. Noses sniff the air; heads turn this way and that, curious, looking for something. Soon they, too, disappear beneath the blue rippled sea. They are home again. **VF**

To find out more about the Vancouver Aquarium's Marine Mammal Rescue (MMR) program, visit the website at [www.vanaqua.org/mmrr](http://www.vanaqua.org/mmrr). To donate to the Vancouver Aquarium's endowment fund held at Vancouver Foundation, visit the website at [www.vancouverfoundation.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca).

# Re-searching Freedom

**A prison research project transforms lives**

By BEVERLY FARYNA  
PHOTO: JAIME KOWAL

**Kelly Murphy has had a difficult and challenging life: full of highs and lows, stops and starts.**

The talkative and energetic Murphy grew up in a family plagued by problems. By seven, she was experimenting with drugs and alcohol. By 17, she was an IV drug-user, leading a nomadic life and moving “from man to man, country to country, city to city, drug to drug.”

Murphy’s addiction was an on-again/off-again battle that she’s struggled with ever since.

She managed to stay clean from 1998 to 2003 and, during that time, graduated from high school with honours, earned scholarships to Douglas College and Vancouver Community College, and obtained a diploma in public relations. She worked as a drug and alcohol counsellor while she studied to become an English teacher. Then she relapsed in 2003.

By 2005, Murphy found herself in the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women (ACCW). That’s where she also found Dr. Ruth Martin and a program that would turn her life around.

At that time, Dr. Martin – a UBC family physician and a part-time prison doctor – was introducing the ACCW Health Research Project to the female inmates. This participatory action-research project invited inmates to take part in the project as co-researchers, in collaboration with a team of UBC medical and education researchers, in order to improve their health and education.

At first Murphy resisted participating. She knew that taking part in the project meant a commitment to staying clean and, with an addict boyfriend waiting for her on the outside, she wasn’t ready to commit. However, when



Dr. Ruth Martin (left) and Kelly Murphy conducted a health research project that made a difference in the lives of many female inmates.

she found herself back inside ACCW again in early 2007, she knew she had to do something to change.

That change was Dr. Martin’s research project.

Although she had been working in prisons since 1994, Dr. Martin knew something wasn’t working. The narrow view of health care for female inmates was too limiting. She recognized the need to take a more holistic approach to addressing the health-care issues of these women.

So she came up with the idea of a participatory health research project and asked the inmates who were interested in taking part to help her write a grant proposal. Although that initial funding application was turned down, she eventually did receive a \$50,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation in 2006, which allowed the project to proceed. (She also later received another grant, the Community-Based Clinician Investigator award funded through Vancouver Foundation and UBC’s Department of Family Practice. This grant enables practising family physicians to take time out of their medical practice to conduct research on health issues they are facing in their practice.)

Dr. Martin’s project had each female inmate who participated select an area of health research that was of interest to her. Some chose to study drug addiction while others opted to research topics like diabetes and Crohn’s disease.

Besides researching and learning to thoroughly understand their field of study, the women also had to write papers and present

their findings. Forums were held inside the prison where they presented their work to their peers and invited professionals and interested community groups. The women were also asked to speak at the local high school; some even presented at UBC conferences.

The effect on the women who participated was transformative. They were learning new skills (research, writing, how to use PowerPoint); they were building confidence and capacity; they were feeling engaged and included; and they started to create support networks that would last even after they were released.

Today, Murphy stands as an example of this transformation. She is clean, self-aware, and a mentor to countless numbers of women who look to her for support. She works on Dr. Martin’s research team on the outside now. She helps with research surveys and ethical research submissions, and is the alumni co-ordinator of the ACCW research group. An aspiring writer, she also documents the events of the group on a blog.

As for her future goals, Murphy says, “One day I want to be a lawyer. Then another day I want to be a researcher, so I’m not really sure what that’s going to look like . . . but I don’t feel limited at all in anything I do.”

She has even recently re-established a relationship with her estranged 17-year-old daughter whom she describes as “a level-headed girl who has her own values and morals – something that I didn’t have at her age.”

To Murphy, all these changes are just part of the journey. “I don’t see myself as victorious,” she says. “I just see myself as actually living my life.” **VF**



# "I am an athlete"

BY PAUL HERATY

PHOTOS: TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

**Ken McLean doesn't mince words. He gets right to the point, with a sincerity that's unnerving and refreshing at the same time.**

McLean is 44. He has a job that he likes. He has a girlfriend (Annabelle) who he really likes, and an apartment on Main Street. He likes to cross-country ski . . . fast . . . really fast. "But not so fast that you get too tired before the finish line. You have to pace yourself."

He's tall, muscular and carries himself with an easy grace. "I weigh 220 pounds and I've lost 50 pounds since I started cross-country skiing."

He wears a crisp, white T-shirt, blue track pants and a ball cap, which he doffs to reveal sandy hair.

"I work as a shipper/receiver three days a week . . . I enjoy my job; it gives me independence, in earning money. That feels really good to be a taxpayer in a sense. Not that I want to pay taxes, but that's what everyone else feels. So I can feel the same way."

McLean's shy at first. But when he speaks, the honesty smacks you in the face.

"I was born in Kamloops in 1963 . . . I was given up for adoption in 1966 because my parents were told that they have a retarded son, which is myself . . . Throughout the years I didn't understand at all. It was just so foreign to me . . . I lived in various group homes and foster homes."

"I used to have a lot of self-esteem issues. I was very passive. I was very inactive. I used to sit on the couch and eat junk food."

That was before McLean was introduced to Special Olympics. An international organization dedicated to helping people with intellectual

disabilities, Special Olympics celebrates the personal achievements of its athletes, and develops confidence and social skills through sport.

McLean joined Special Olympics BC (SOBC) in the fall of 2000, and started skiing that winter. As his skills developed, he started winning races, first at a local level, then provincial. He now competes at the national level. In fact, in the 2008 Special Olympic Canada Winter Games held in »



**Ken McLean is proud of the gold and silver medals he won in cross-country skiing at the 2008 Special Olympic Canada Winter Games.**



## Special Olympics BC

Quebec City, McLean took gold in the 2.5-kilometre race and silver in the five-kilometre. These results mean that he may qualify for the Special Olympics World Winter Games to be held in Boise, Idaho in 2009.

McLean is one of 3,500 athletes supported by SOBC. The organization has 2,600 volunteers in 55 communities across the province and offers instruction in 18 sports – from curling, figure skating and skiing in the winter, to aquatics, powerlifting, gymnastics, soccer, and track and field in the summer.

Dan Howe, president and CEO of SOBC, says, “Our goal is to provide individuals with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to enhance their life through sport. And that means we provide them with opportunities to improve their health, their fitness, their social interaction, and opportunities to be involved in their community. In doing all this, they become better athletes, and they have greater opportunities to achieve their personal goals in the sporting arena, as well as in their personal arena. We like to say it allows them to win at sport and at life.”

SOBC holds two funds with Vancouver Foundation. Both have the same goals – to allow this registered charity to deal with ongoing, day-to-day needs, and prepare for the future with consistent resourcing. According to Howe, “It’s been a great relationship. It started because we didn’t want to (and didn’t have the skills to) manage our money in the way it should be managed . . . we went to Vancouver Foundation because of the expertise we found there. And because of the way they could manage our money.”

It takes a lot of money to support SOBC programs – \$1.9 million actually. The majority of this money comes from private, corporate or foundation donors, and special events. Ken McLean often volunteers to speak at fundraising events. He always thanks the many sponsors and volunteers that make Special Olympics possible. He speaks deliberately and eloquently about the changes in his life wrought by skiing and by participating in Special Olympics. He’s proud that his race times have dropped consistently over the years, as has his weight. But the most dramatic changes in McLean’s life are those you can’t measure.

“Since joining Special Olympics, I’ve learned about who I am. I’ve learned to make better choices. I’ve learned to accept defeat (like when I came in last in swimming). I’ve learned to be a good sportsman . . . I feel like I’m a leader. I can show new skiers how to ski . . . I’ve gotten to know who Ken McLean is.”

If you would like to donate to either of the Special Olympics BC funds managed by Vancouver Foundation, visit [www.vancouverfoundation.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca). **VF**



People want their lives to have made a difference. Philanthropic giving is a means to that end. – Sheree Parris Nudd

## Evergreen Invasive Species Initiative

# KEEPING IT GREEN

### Community action is key in urban naturalization

BY MARILOTTE BLOEMEN

PHOTO: EVERGREEN

Throughout the Lower Mainland, municipalities are discovering that invasive species are becoming a threat to urban parks, watercourses and natural areas. Invasive plants have been taking root throughout our urban landscape for some time, but recent rapid urban growth has created conditions along trails and other pathways that encourage the expansion of invasive species. For example, residents on the edge of forested areas can become sources of invasives as gardeners plant English ivy or Scotch broom, which then either escape through expanded growth, or by way of garden clippings dumped in the neighbouring natural area. Nurseries and garden centres also continue to import and market invasive plants, again with little understanding of the impact that these plants have on local ecosystems or how selling such plants to gardeners results in problems for nearby natural areas.

Invasive species are bad news. Some refer to them as “aliens” that threaten to “take over.” Not only do they threaten the often little remaining biodiversity and native habitat in urban areas, they also cause tens of thousands of dollars worth of damage each year from increased erosion, extra costs associated with removal and control (which often include potentially dangerous chemical herbicides), the replacement of services from once-functioning natural systems, and research required for alternative management strategies outside of chemical applications. The impact of invasive plants is felt by not only land managers, but also by local taxpayers, and by community groups concerned with the health of local ecosystems.

The best ways to avoid the spread of invasive species are to never plant them in the first place and, once in the ground, to remove them, roots and all, by hand.

Evergreen, a national not-for-profit organization that makes cities more livable, has been actively working with community groups in the removal of invasive species in cities across Canada. In 2006 and 2007, with the support of a \$40,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation, Evergreen launched its Invasive Species Initiative – a comprehensive outreach and education project designed to get the right information into the right hands to prevent the spread of urban invasive plants, encourage land use decision-makers to take the steps necessary for early detection, and support low-risk community engagement in containment activities.

Through this initiative, Evergreen worked with 414 volunteers removing more than 100 cubic metres of invasive plants (equivalent to almost seven dump truck loads) in eight urban green spaces in Vancouver's Lower Mainland. Work was done at Mahon Park, North Vancouver; Jericho Beach Park, Vancouver; Burnaby Lake Regional Park, Burnaby; Campbell Valley Regional Park, Langley; Derby Reach Regional Park, Langley; Ladner Harbour Park, Delta; Central Valley Greenway, New Westminster; and Renfrew Ravine, Vancouver.

In addition to the hands-on removal of truckloads of invasive species, the Evergreen Invasive Species Initiative also successfully focused on public outreach and education to ensure long-term change. Presentations on the issue were conducted to garden centre staff, municipal staff, garden clubs and other relevant trade professionals such as the Squamish Garden Club and the Pinegrove Garden Club in Abbotsford.

Evergreen continues to teach people how they can prevent introductions, help detect the spread of invasive plants early before small



**Volunteers remove invasive English ivy and bindweed from North Vancouver's Mahon Park.**

patches become large infestations, and how citizens can become directly involved in management (control and containment) strategies.

Invasive plants are becoming a leading topic of environmental concern for community groups, land managers and garden businesses. The goal is to help people better understand the top 10 invasive plants in B.C.'s Lower Mainland, and make more informed growing and purchasing choices.

Evergreen has produced information materials that are available on the web. For more information about how you can get involved in urban naturalization projects with Evergreen or how to get your organization involved, visit the Common Grounds Resources section of Evergreen's website at [www.evergreen.ca](http://www.evergreen.ca). **VF**

### What are invasive species?

Invasive species are aggressive non-native plants introduced into environments where they did not evolve. Invasive species spread rapidly, often displacing native species and disrupting natural ecosystems by changing the composition, structure and function of natural plant communities. Examples of invasive plants in Canada are purple loosestrife, Canada thistle and Japanese knotweed. **VF**



# Fire Trial by

BY CATHERINE CLEMENT  
PHOTO: JAIME KOWAL

**Floyd Murphy's gentle face, white hair and folksy demeanour belie a man who has had his share of hard times. He has been homeless. He has been out of work. He has been forced to live in skid row hotels. He has endured family tragedy.**

"You never know how lucky you are until you've been unlucky," philosophizes the 59-year-old Vancouver businessman as he recounts the day when, as a 13-year-old, his home burned to the ground in rural Cape Breton.

"Our family had no insurance and so we truly lost everything in that fire."

Losing everything meant accepting anything. The five children, as well as Murphy's parents, were forced to stay wherever they could find a bed. For two years it meant a lot of moves and often bunking in the home of strangers while their parents stayed in some other location.

"It took me a while to get accustomed to having nothing and having my past life completely wiped out," Murphy recalls. "For about two to three years after I would recall a toy or a book that I had once owned and would want to go looking for it. Then I would remember it did not exist anymore: it had been lost in the fire."

The local, rural community was critical in helping the Murphy family survive such a devastating loss. However, what struck Murphy, even at that tender age, was how people could react so differently to someone else's tragedy. How some people would do nothing, while others would automatically ask, "How can I help?"

Murphy describes how neighbours responded as the fire swept through the 150-year-old house. "Some people just froze when they saw the house on fire, and others managed to do heroic deeds."

One couple ran into the blazing house and managed to leave the deep-freeze through a window.

"When it came out the other side, a group of men could barely move it because it was so heavy. But somehow this couple had managed to lift it and push it through the window on their own."

After two years of being homeless, the family did eventually save enough to rebuild their house. Then tragedy struck again. Murphy's father became ill and was forced to stop doing any work on the farm for an entire year.

"We don't know if he had a breakdown that caused a heart attack or a stroke, but for one whole year he had to cease doing any farm work."

For the teenaged Murphy, the eldest child, it meant taking over the farm work while also going to school and studying.

After graduation, he went on to study chemical engineering but didn't like it and eventually made his way west.

It was in Vancouver, during a period between odd jobs, that Murphy found himself with nearly empty pockets and forced to move to a single room occupancy hotel (SRO) in the rough part of town.

"I rented a little room and the washroom was down the hall, which I shared with everyone else on the floor," recalls Murphy.

It was there that Murphy rubbed shoulders with people and problems that he had never before encountered: alcoholics, drug addicts, sex trade workers, the unemployed and criminals all mingled with Murphy in this new world.

"After a while it started to seem normal to have all this chaos around me," says Murphy. "You start to accept things that at one time seemed disagreeable."

After several months, Murphy came to the conclusion that if he didn't get out of the situation, he might never leave.

After spending some time in Alberta, he met the love of his life, Gloria.

Together they now own Murrick Insurance Services, which offers insurance and financial services and operates in seven locations in the Lower Mainland. They are also proud de facto parents to their nephew Stephen, whom they raised after another family tragedy.

Today, Murphy's life seems a million miles away from the ups and downs of his early years.

But the influence of those difficult experiences is evident in dozens of ways.

It is clear Murphy feels a tremendous debt to community.

The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it. – William James, philosopher and psychologist



**“Until you have been homeless or until you have lived in these difficult environments you don’t really know what it is like to struggle out of it.”**

**– Floyd Murphy**

He knows first-hand the power that community has to help people during the bleakest of times. And so today Murphy volunteers countless hours to various charities and community projects.

He is on the board of Vancouver Foundation (representing the insurance industry), chairs the Foundation’s Animal Welfare committee, and recently established his own endowment fund with the Foundation to help ensure he can still make a contribution to the community long after he is gone.

More than anything, Murphy has a particular soft spot for those who have had to begin life behind the starting line, so 10 years ago he joined the board of Special Olympics BC.

Murphy’s memories of being homeless and his experience of being forced to live in an SRO means he has some strong opinions on what needs to be done to address the issues surrounding addiction and homelessness.

“Until you have been homeless or until you have lived in these difficult environments you don’t really know what it is like to struggle out of it,” Murphy states.

He believes that when people want to break the cycle of addiction, they need to be offered a new environment. And that means having opportunities to find housing in other neighbourhoods – away from all the temptations.

“Otherwise,” he explains, “it is like trying to help someone quit smoking but then putting them into a room with other smokers and leaving a pack of cigarettes on the table.

“I especially believe that young people need to be offered a way out, before living on the streets or staying in shelters becomes a way of life . . . the new normal . . . for them,” Murphy adds.

As he approaches his 60th year, it doesn’t look like Murphy has any plans to slow down. If anything, he seems to be even more engaged in the issues facing the community.

Murphy continues to ask himself “What can I do?” and “How can I help?”

Some would say that with all he has overcome, all that he has accomplished and all he has given, Murphy is really a very lucky man. And we, in turn, are one lucky community to have him. **VF**



# West Coast MOZART

BY PAUL HERATY

PHOTOS: TIM MATHESON (COURTESY VANCOUVER OPERA)

**1791 in Vienna . . . Mozart pens his last and one of his most popular operas – *The Magic Flute*.**

At the same time, halfway around the world, Spanish captain José Narváez “discovers” the mouth of the Fraser River. Meanwhile, Britain’s Captain George Vancouver explores the west coast of B.C. He trades with First Nations people, people who have lived in the area for more than 10,000 years and developed complex societies, intricate art forms and a cultural and artistic heritage as rich and varied as any civilization on Earth.

Two hundred and sixteen years later, on the stage of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Vancouver Opera and a team that included First Nations artists and cultural experts brought these two disparate worlds together in the premiere of a new production of *The Magic Flute*—an adaptation of Mozart’s classic that combined traditional European opera with West Coast First Nations concepts, art, imagery, costumes, symbols and language.

It was a bold move, and a big risk. But that’s part of the job for Vancouver Opera general director James Wright.

“It’s a much riskier proposition to do new contemporary work because the audiences aren’t familiar with it, and so they’re smaller. It’s a real challenge for the whole opera field—to balance the great favourite works that bring in the audiences, while also developing new work, and keeping the art form healthy and alive.”

When Wright first thought about adapting Mozart’s classic in 2004, he knew it wasn’t going to be easy.

“I wanted to do something reflective of this place, something large-scale . . . Because it’s an allegory—a fantasy—*Magic Flute* lends itself to different settings.

“We decided from the very beginning that we did not want to ‘stick a feather on Mozart’ . . . we didn’t just decorate the piece with First Nations symbols. We really wanted it to be authentic, to feel authentic. That takes time and that takes discussion, and a lot of respect and trust.



**We think of a philanthropist as someone who donates big sums of money, yet the word literally means “love of humankind.” All of us are capable of being philanthropists. – Edward Lindsey**



"It was a very rewarding process," he recalls. "Not an easy process but very rewarding."

Cathi Charles Wherry, arts program co-ordinator with the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, which consulted extensively on the project, echoes those sentiments.

"Most First Nations have longstanding traditions of performative storytelling, so the concept of opera is not really that foreign to our artists . . . When you do something really public like this, there's a lot of expectations and a lot of hope. And I think it was really successful on a number of levels. The artists who said 'yes' and were involved felt very positive about the outcome."

"Our priority for being involved was that the project provide meaningful First Nations content and opportunities for First Nations artists." With the leadership of executive director Tracey Herbert, Charles Wherry and other staff from First Peoples advised Vancouver Opera and liaised with First Nations artists on most aspects of the production. She saw the opera three times.

"I was quite moved. Visually it was beautiful . . . it was amazing to see a First Nations sense of beauty on the stage on that scale."

It took three years of careful planning and consultation, and a record \$1.4 million to bring this production to the stage in January 2007. Critical reaction was almost uniformly positive, and audiences raved.

According to Wright, one of the key factors in the project's success was involving First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council and getting their involvement and their advice. "I can't imagine having done it without them," he says.

Wright is also effusive in his praise of Vancouver Foundation, which gave a \$30,000 grant to VO in 2006 specifically for this production.

"I'm a big fan of the Foundation. To have people and institutions who are willing to take a risk and work a little outside the box . . . When we first proposed this to the Foundation, nobody knew whether this was a really good idea or a really dumb idea . . . For the Foundation to believe in it was really important. And their support helped us leverage support from other people and organizations."

If you missed it the first time, don't worry – *The Magic Flute* will be back. The production has become part of Vancouver Opera's repertoire, and will return to the stage in five or six years. And the lobby of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre will once again reverberate with the sounds of drumming and the trills of Tamino's magic flute. **VF**

**Colourful costumes designed by Christine Reimer and John Powell help bring to life the characters of Tamino and the Three Ladies.**



**Opera, for some, is the quintessential art form –**

a glorious amalgam of music, singing, theatre, dance, costumes and scenery. It requires the talents of innumerable professionals in each discipline, and someone to orchestrate their efforts.

In this dramatic photo (left) of Vancouver Opera's 2007 production of *The Magic Flute*, Korean Canadian soprano Hwang Sin Nyung wears one of the 80 costumes co-designed by Christine Reimer and Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation artist John Powell. VO's Parvin Mirhady and her team of cutters, sewers and painters brought it to life in metal, leather, silk and plastic over three weeks. She is framed by a set designed by Kevin McAllister and assisted by Carey Newman of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation. To the music of Mozart, she and the cast sang in English and often spoke in Halq'emeylem (the language of the Musqueam people). **VF**



# To bean

**That was the question for 25-year-old Rita Cheng when her then-husband Percy asked if she would leave her computer programming job and join his parents' growing manufacturing business that turned soybeans into tofu.**

Cheng certainly had the knowledge to do the job: she had come from two generations of Chinese tofu makers. Both her grandparents and her parents had run a tofu manufacturing business in Vancouver.

"I saw that making tofu was hard, back-breaking work. Both my grandparents and my parents had to get up at three o'clock in the morning. They did that every single day of their lives until they retired," Cheng recalls.

"So when I was a teenager, had you asked me if I would go into the tofu business, I would have said 'absolutely not.' I had no interest in doing that kind of work."

However, in the end, Cheng was persuaded to leave behind her flourishing career and join the family business. Today she is president of Superior Tofu, and although she is no longer married to Percy, they continue to run the business together.

Superior Tofu has come a long way: it now has sales in the millions and is still growing in size and reputation. The company makes

everything from tofu blocks to specialized, creamy tofu desserts and lots of products in between.

They are negotiating to expand into China where tofu from Canada is thought to be of better quality. "They believe our water is more pure and pristine," notes Cheng. "The Chinese are particularly impressed that our tofu is manufactured to such high standards that our products have a comparatively long shelf life. In China, you usually have to use up your tofu the same day, otherwise it starts to go bad."

It's obvious when speaking with Cheng that she is proud of the work she's doing to bring healthy food to the market.

With the growing interest in and research on the benefits of soy in one's diet, Cheng foresees a strong future for the company. However, this dynamic and energetic vegetarian has not forgotten her humble beginnings.

Cheng enjoys describing how her grandfather would handcraft blocks of tofu, and then delicately place the tubs of tofu into his little red kid's wagon. Every day he would shuffle around Chinatown, water spilling over the sides of the tubs as he negotiated the sidewalks and curbs, and would deliver his product directly to stores and restaurants. Today, Cheng still uses that little red wagon in her marketing materials for Superior Tofu.

# or not to bean?

▶ **By CATHERINE CLEMENT**  
**PHOTOS: JAIME KOWAL**



As well, her company's website proudly displays sepia-toned pictures of her grandparents, and black-and-white photos showing her relatives manufacturing tofu the old-fashioned way, even using cinder blocks to squeeze the excess water out of the tofu.

Although her love of the past is appealing, what strikes you most about Cheng – apart from her youthful looks and business savvy – is her genuine warmth and generosity.

Cheng has made a point of sharing her success with her community. Over the years, Superior Tofu has not only sponsored several community events, but has also donated money to many local organizations such as SUCCESS, Richmond Hospital, Red Cross (for tsunami relief) and United Way, to name just a few. »

**Rita Cheng (top right) was surprised to find herself following in the tofu-making footsteps of her grandparents (top left).**



As well, she donates a significant amount of tofu to local schools for their lunch programs.

"I inherited my business sense from my father and I got my heart from my mother. My mother was an incredibly generous person. She would give you the shirt off her back."

Cheng grows sentimental when talking about her mother, Nancy, who died several years ago.

She describes how Nancy experienced incredible poverty when her father (Rita's other grandfather) died in China, leaving his wife with three children to raise.

Eventually the widow headed for Canada, but left her three children, including Nancy, with their grandmother. The poverty was so great that eventually it became impossible to feed everyone.

As a teenager, Nancy was forced to become a servant to another family, but later escaped and made her way to Canada.

Cheng wells up when reminiscing about her mother. "Despite all my mother had gone through, she remained the most generous and caring person I've ever known. She was always doing something for somebody: finding them a job, giving away clothes, money or food."

Perhaps because of her mother's influence and because her own retirement is now in the back of her mind, Cheng recently made a serious commitment to ensure that she and her company will continue to give back to the community for many years to come.

In 2007, Cheng's company established the Superior Tofu Community Fund with Vancouver Foundation. The Fund is like a savings account that will grow, and each year a portion of the income generated

will be used by the company to offer grants to non-profit groups of their choosing.

**"We're all here as part of the bigger community of humankind. My goal is to work to improve people's lives – whatever that may be or whatever they may need – whether that is music lessons, a place to live, or whatever."**

*– Rita Cheng*

"I wanted to give back on a permanent basis. So I did all the research myself and selected Vancouver Foundation," notes Cheng. A community foundation focuses on addressing all kinds of needs in the local community as well as building legacies in those communities. A community foundation can offer advice to its donors on emerging community needs, innovative projects and opportunities to make a real impact.

Although Cheng admits to having a soft spot for issues that impact new immigrants, she is open to any projects and charities that need her support.

"We're all here as part of the bigger community of humankind. My goal is to work to improve people's lives – whatever that may be or whatever they may need – whether that is music lessons, a place to live, or whatever."

It is clear that Cheng is well on her way to making that goal a reality. **VF**

# Hands-on Philanthropy

## My Philanthropy

Vancouver Foundation's new secure, online service where you can:

- see what projects the Foundation is funding
- research a charity
- review the status of your Fund including your previous grants
- recommend a grant.

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



# Giving 101

## Community foundations explained

**A.J. had done fairly well for himself and his family. Now in his 50s, he was comfortable, in good health, his house was paid off, the kids were finished university and starting their careers, and there was enough money in the bank for retirement.**

A.J. had reached that stage of life where he wanted to find a way to give back to the community where he had earned this prosperity, where he'd made his home and raised his kids. He'd been thinking about it for a few years, but wasn't sure how best to do it.

It was his financial advisor who first suggested Vancouver Foundation. For a minimum of \$10,000, Vancouver Foundation would set up an endowment fund for A.J. that could be dedicated to the charities of his choice. It could be a grant for underprivileged youth one year, or help seniors go on recreational trips the next. There were thousands of possibilities.

His fund would grow, and each year a portion of the interest earned would be dedicated to charities of his choice. The remainder would be invested back into the fund so that the base

amount would continue to increase. That way, the endowment fund would keep giving year after year.

There were other factors that appealed as well . . .

There was always the tax deduction. But more importantly, because Vancouver Foundation is Canada's largest community foundation, A.J. could do all his charitable giving through one source.

There was flexibility – from year to year, he could change which charities and which projects he supported. Or he could decide to always give to the same organizations. And at any time, he or his children could add more to the fund.

If he wasn't sure where to give in any one year, A.J. could pool his money with other donors and have the Foundation's expert advisory committees screen and select projects from hundreds of innovative applications received each year.

Vancouver Foundation has advisory committees in eight areas: animal welfare; arts and culture; children, youth and families; education;

environment; health and social development; health and medical research; and youth philanthropy. These committees comprise experts in their fields – practitioners, leaders, executives, and academics – who volunteer their time to the Foundation. They know the needs and emerging issues in their fields; they know which projects would have the most impact, and are familiar with the capacity and reputation of the organizations requesting grants. With this kind of oversight, A.J. could be assured his money would be used effectively. He could even build the fund gradually, giving money every year until it reached the \$10,000 mark.

Choosing Vancouver Foundation wasn't difficult. The organization has the knowledge, the flexibility, the connections to the community, and 65 years of experience in philanthropy.

Far more difficult was deciding which charities and projects to support – each member of the family has his or her own favourite. The debate will go on around the dinner table for some time about who will benefit from the family's fund. **VF**



# Money can buy happiness

Every year hundreds of cats are abandoned and left to fend for themselves on our cold, damp streets. A Vancouver Foundation grant to Critter Care has helped cats like the lovable “Ginger” find a warm and caring home.



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