

Spring 2013

# vancouver foundation

stories of modern philanthropy

## **BEE THE FUTURE**

What's the buzz in  
Hastings-Sunrise?

## **HIGH-TECH TREASURE HUNT**

Geocaching

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Beethoven, Bob  
and Borealis

## **SIGNS OF PROGRESS**

A Surrey neighbourhood  
learns about Deaf culture

THE  
*transitions*  
ISSUE

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# The First Word . . .

## Taking stock and moving forward

**Knowing where we've come** from is just as important as knowing where we're going. And in this, the 70th year of Vancouver Foundation's existence, we celebrate the foundation of our past, take stock of how far we've come, and look to the future with great hope and optimism. It's a year of transition for Vancouver Foundation and we are excited to share what's ahead, while reflecting on some of the great projects and initiatives we have had the privilege to support in recent months.

This past March, the provincial government provided \$2 million to our Giving in Action Society (GIA), enabling it to continue granting for the remainder of the year. Not only was this a huge vote of confidence in the work GIA is doing, but that infusion of cash will throw a lifeline to at least 60 families in BC who are living with a family member with a disability – families like the Moys whose lives were transformed thanks to the construction of a simple fence (page 22).

By the time you read this, the provincial election will be old news, and a newly elected government will be settling in. No matter which way the wind blows in Victoria, we remain committed to the two priorities we set in the past year: supporting initiatives to increase neighbourhood connections and build bridges between cultures; and our commitment to break the cycle of homelessness for vulnerable youth in government care through our Youth Homelessness Initiative. You'll see examples of these priorities in the grants that supported Kimberly Wood's initiative to connect her neighbours through a workshop on Deaf culture (page 14) and the work of Watari Counselling and Support Services that has impacted the lives of many young people (page 20).

Focusing on our priorities is just one of the ways we're contributing to building Smart and Caring Communities – a national community foundation movement spearheaded by Governor General David Johnston to build a smarter and more caring nation in the lead-up to Canada's 150th birthday. We've announced the creation of a Smart and Caring Communities Fund to specifically support this initiative in the metro Vancouver area. Learn more about our "Case for a Caring Community" on page 8.

This year, we bid a fond farewell to outgoing board members John McLernon and Dr. Vera Frinton, whose guidance and leadership over the last six years have left an indelible mark on Vancouver Foundation. At the same time, we welcome the newest addition to our board: Jason McLean, president and chief executive officer of the McLean Group.

And finally, a physical transition for the Vancouver Foundation team. We've moved! Only a few blocks, but it's a new space, in a new neighbourhood. We're now on the second and third floors of the BC Turf Building at 475 West Georgia (northeast corner of Richards and Georgia). At the risk of a few jokes . . . it's the building with the bull outside.

This issue offers a glimpse into the important and impactful work in the community made possible through the generosity of our donors and partners. May these stories inspire you as they inspire us and continue to be a source of light and hope in our work, even through times of transition.

### Publisher's note:

I, too, am embarking on a significant transition in the coming months. I have decided to retire from Vancouver Foundation to allow for more time with my family, but will continue to work in the non-profit sector on a part-time consulting basis. These past eight years as president and CEO of Vancouver Foundation have been among the most exciting and rewarding years of my career. It has been my privilege to serve our community in this capacity. Thank you to everyone who has been part of my journey.

–Faye Wightman



**Faye Wightman**

President and CEO  
Vancouver Foundation

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## Grants at a Glance

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

### Voices on Main Street

Wolf Mountain Collective, a group of young writers on Vancouver's east side, has a mission: "to make poetry tough again." And, with a little help from **Vancouver Foundation's** Neighbourhood Small Grants program, they've taken their project to the street. With a grant of \$650, the collective created the Wolf Mountain Poetry Trail on Main Street in Vancouver, stencilling their work on the sides of buildings at 11 locations. Everyone is welcome to join in this unique poetry "scavenger hunt" that runs the length of the Mt. Pleasant neighbourhood.



### Nature Kindergarten

Located on the southwest tip of Vancouver Island, Sooke is part of a beautiful temperate rainforest in one of the mildest climates in Canada. But sadly, with playtime often indoors or technology-focused, the number of local children enjoying this natural bounty is in decline.

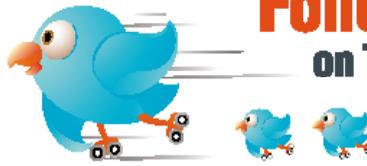
The Sooke School District (No. 62) sought to change this by launching the Nature Kindergarten program last fall, after receiving a \$60,000 grant from **Vancouver Foundation**. Nature

Kindergarten aims to help young children spend more time connecting with nature by providing students with outdoor learning every morning, rain or shine. It increases students' physical activity, and helps them develop connections to nature and aboriginal ways of knowing.

Nature Kindergarten will be taught by both a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator – a unique teaching model

for BC public schools. The Sooke School District is using this program as a pilot to test the concept over the next two years. If successful, it may be replicated in other BC school districts and beyond.





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## Koeye fish weir

The Koeye River is one of the most important salmon streams on BC's central coast. Located in Heiltsuk territory, the river and estuary are home to a large population of grizzly bears, as well as black bears, wolves, deer, cougars, mountain goats, wolverine, river otters and many species of fish including rainbow, cutthroat and steelhead trout, and five species of salmon.

QQS (pronounced "kucks") is a non-profit society in Bella Bella that focuses on cultural and environmental stewardship, with a strong emphasis on mentoring future leaders. QQS is a Heiltsuk word that means "eyes." The society considers it part of its mandate to "open the eyes of our young people to their responsibility as stewards of our environment and culture."

QQS will use a grant of \$30,000 from Vancouver Foundation to build a traditional fish weir at the Koeye conservancy. Fish weirs have been used for thousands of years by First Nations as a means of selectively harvesting salmon in large rivers.

This project will engage Heiltsuk youth in their culture, strengthen community involvement in salmon stewardship, and provide more detailed information about the salmon population in the Koeye. Proper enumeration of salmon using a fish weir would greatly enhance understanding of salmon within the Koeye, and would have broad relevance for understanding salmon populations throughout the region.



## Salmon Arm history re-created

The history of the Lester and Thomson garage in Salmon Arm seems as complicated as a modern motor. Not long after Alex Lester and Cyril Thomson built their garage and gas station in the early 1900s, it became a car dealership. When the duo split, Thomson stayed on to run the garage. He also operated a taxi service out of the facility till 1941. (Thomson would later serve as president of the hospital and, from 1928 to 1942, as Mayor of Salmon Arm.)

Meanwhile, the garage was sold, leased, and sold again. Then in the mid-1950s, George and Eddie Blanc bought it, razed it, and built the Willcox Hall Hardware store (currently Home Hardware).

Thanks to many hours of volunteer labour, private donations of money, materials, and a grant of \$8,285 from Vancouver Foundation, the Shuswap Chapter of the Vintage Car Club of Canada completely restored the garage.

It now sits in Haney Heritage Park, a proud and colourful reminder of North Okanagan history.



# a conversation

## with Vancouver Foundation's president and CEO, Faye Wightman

*After eight years at the helm of Vancouver Foundation, Faye Wightman has announced her retirement in order to spend more time with family. She describes her time at Vancouver Foundation as being “among the most exciting and rewarding years of my career.” We sat down with Wightman to discuss her career, her accomplishments and her plans for the future.*

**Q: What stands out as the biggest change at Vancouver Foundation since you became president and CEO eight years ago?**

**A:** I would say the biggest change is the increased awareness and profile that Vancouver Foundation now has with respect to the work it does and the role it can play in making our communities stronger, healthier places to live and work. We are more frequently invited into discussions about our communities and the issues we face, and to have a voice from the not-for-profit sector at the table in these discussions is very important.

**Q: As you look back on your term, what are some of the accomplishments you're most proud of?**

**A:** An organization is only as strong as the people behind it, and I am lucky and humbled to have had the opportunity to work with some of the very best people. The milestones we've achieved during that time are a direct reflection of the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers who drive the Foundation's programs.

When I look back on what we've achieved during this time, I focus on the inroads we made in specific areas such as tackling homelessness in Vancouver by setting up StreetoHome and the Youth Homelessness Initiative. We focused on the needs of families who have members with disabilities, and we developed the Giving in Action Society to support them. We brought attention to the lack of employment for skilled immigrants, and we started the Immigrant Employment Council of BC.

I also look to the changes in how we work with donors to ensure we can meet their charitable goals. We are extremely flexible and donor focused. And of course, the work we do in making informed granting decisions always makes me proud. We have literally put millions of dollars into this province to make a difference in communities across BC. You can't help but feel proud to have played a small part in making these things happen.

**Q: What's your fondest memory of your time at Vancouver Foundation?**

**A:** Hands down, it was hearing the story of Cora, a 63-year-old Filipino woman, who received a Neighbourhood Small Grant, and the phenomenal impact that grant had on her life and her family.

Cora arrived in Vancouver from the Philippines five years ago and was embarrassed at not being able to speak English. When she went out for walks in her neighbourhood, she rarely spoke to people even in her own language because her son had warned her not to talk to strangers. To put it mildly, she was very lonely and did not feel in any way part of her community or this country.

Several months after her arrival, she ventured into Collingwood Neighbourhood House and signed up for ESL classes. She was the only Filipina in the class. The teacher asked someone to read a passage in English. Tentatively, Cora raised her hand. When she started reading, it was clear she needed to be in a much higher-level English class. She then started helping her Chinese, Iranian and Mexican classmates with their lessons.

It was the beginning of her transformation from a frightened new immigrant living in an ethnic bubble to a woman at the centre of her community. Today, Cora teaches ESL to new immigrants. She recruits seniors from the area to join the weekly walks at the the Collingwood Neighbourhood House. In the last two years, she has organized a neighbourhood block party, an earthquake preparedness workshop, and a Halloween pumpkin carving contest and costume party. She is actively bringing people closer together in her community.

When she told her story to our Board, it really hit me what a difference we can make with even a small amount of money. You literally change people's lives. It makes you want to do more.

**Q: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing community foundations today?**

**A:** People today have an unprecedented number of options available when it comes to giving to charities. In the last decade, we've seen explosive growth in the number of charitable organizations in Canada and around the world. It's estimated there are 20,000 not-for-profit organizations and 9,000 charities in BC alone. And they are all looking for support.

On top of that growth in the charitable sector, media and communication technologies are creating new ways for people to reach



out and connect with organizations, groups and causes. There are new ways to give – micro-financing, micro-donations, crowd sourcing – and new ways to inform. We live in a society of instant information where people expect, even demand, immediate answers to their questions and concerns. This shift heralds a new era of accountability for community foundations and charitable organizations.

So the challenge facing community foundations is to cut through all the clutter, to really pinpoint what is needed in the community and to demonstrate the impact and benefits they are providing at the community level. To be relevant in the 21st century, community foundations must regularly canvass their donors and the community to determine what's important to them and what the foundation can deliver to fulfil their specific needs.

I think the primary challenge for community foundations will be to offer community knowledge to donors and philanthropists, and to share that knowledge to ensure investments are being made wisely.

#### **Q: What opportunities do you see for philanthropy in the future?**

**A:** Charitable giving is no longer the exclusive domain of the wealthy. Anyone can make a difference with the resources they have. I think there's a tremendous opportunity to educate non-donors on how powerful philanthropy is and how it can make a big difference in their own lives and the lives of others. The old adage that "you can't take it with you" rings true. People need to realize what a great feeling it is to give while they are here, so they can see the impact of their generosity.

#### **Q: You've had a very distinguished career in the not-for-profit sector. What advice would you offer someone interested in pursuing a career in this area?**

**A:** Spend some time thinking about what your passion is. There are a lot of different opportunities in the not-for-profit sector. To be successful, you have to be passionate about your work, whether it's in the profit or not-for-profit sector.

I have loved working in philanthropy. I've had the opportunity to meet some amazing people and work with some impressive organizations. I've seen heart-warming donations made by both wealthy and non-wealthy individuals, and have seen the impact those gifts have made on the lives of others. You really can't find a better job to be able to witness the best of mankind.

I know a lot of people feel that the last thing they would ever want to do is ask someone for money, but it is something I have always found relatively easy to do and a challenge to accomplish. The worst that can happen is they just say "no." And if they do, it's an opportunity to explore how to explain your cause better or discuss it further. It's a door opener to more conversation! If you believe in something, then it's not hard to ask others to believe in it too. It's fun, exciting and rewarding.

#### **Q: What are your plans for the future?**

**A:** I want to continue to work in some capacity, probably consulting or doing project work. I am looking forward to having time for my grandchildren, as well as playing a lot more tennis, and golfing and travelling more. But I love working in the not-for-profit sector, so I can't imagine not doing something. Besides, there is still a lot to accomplish! **VF**

# a case for a caring community

## A call to metro Vancouver residents to bring out the best in our community

BY FAYE WIGHTMAN

In this issue of *Vancouver Foundation* magazine, you'll find a recurring theme of transition – whether it is a life transition, a physical move or a change in one's environment. With every transition, we leave a mark in that space of time, signifying a shift – like a landmark on a journey. In reaching any landmark, the natural inclination is to ask ourselves, “Are we where we expected to be?”

This is the position we find ourselves in at Vancouver Foundation. This year, we mark 70 years of existence. And we find ourselves reflecting on our journey – on how far we have come and what's in store for the journey ahead.

It has been 70 years since a woman named Alice MacKay inspired the beginnings of a more caring community here in the Lower Mainland. At the end of her life, MacKay wanted to leave something to support a vulnerable population in Vancouver. Her gift of \$1,000 in her will inspired 10 wealthy businessmen of the time to contribute to the cause as well, and Vancouver Foundation was born.

Alice MacKay's story is the inspiration for our work here at Vancouver Foundation. It reminds us of how a single, simple act of caring can proliferate – in dollars, and in acts of kindness, support and generosity. It also reminds us that the money she designated for the poor was a symbolic gesture of trust and hope that future generations – today's generation – would make things better.

So where do we find ourselves today? We learned from our Connections and Engagement Survey of metro Vancouver residents that there is a growing sense of loneliness and social isolation, an overall civic malaise that is pervading the region. People said they felt disconnected – that they wanted to become more involved in their neighbourhood, but didn't think they had much to offer.

This same research also showed that when people feel connected to others and engaged in the life of their community, there is less crime, depression and suicide, and people are healthier, bouncing back more quickly from setbacks such as illness, job loss and divorce.

When people know and trust each other, it creates shared values

and vision, making them more inclined to tackle larger societal issues, such as poverty and homelessness. At Vancouver Foundation, we know we can't tackle these issues without a caring and involved citizenry. That's why we commissioned a further study of the Connections and Engagement Survey results to understand what we as an organization could do to help build a more connected and engaged community in metro Vancouver. We wanted to get at the heart of what it takes to change people's attitudes and influence their actions.

Based on a “Caring and Involved Residents” scale developed to analyze the data, our research showed that less than 30 per cent of survey respondents scored high in their level of connections and engagement. This group was likely to be most optimistic about their neighbourhood; to feel their neighbours would work together to solve local problems; and to participate in neighbourhood and community projects, attend a neighbourhood or community meeting, or volunteer.

So how do we as a community foundation help move residents from being isolated and disengaged in community life to becoming caring and involved citizens?

These are some of the same questions posed by Canada's Governor General, the Right Honourable David Johnston. In the lead-up to Canada's 150th birthday in 2017, the Governor General is challenging Canada's 180 community foundations to mobilize citizens, organizations and resources to create a smarter, more caring nation. His vision is a Canada where, by 2017, every community is served by a community foundation, engaging citizens to contribute, develop their talents and realize their full potential as Canadians.

Our response to this national movement is a Smart and Caring Communities Initiative for metro Vancouver, supporting connected, engaged and thriving communities across the region. Through this initiative, we will focus our programming and fundraising efforts on: connecting and engaging citizens at the neighbourhood level through an expanded Neighbourhood Small Grants program available to



every metro Vancouver neighbourhood by 2017; support for the most vulnerable of our homeless population – youth aging out of government care – through our Youth Homelessness Initiative, with the end goal of reducing the number of homeless youth in the metro Vancouver area by the year 2017; and supporting Vancouver’s goal to become the greenest city in the world by 2020 through various community initiatives. To support these areas of priority in the region, and to leave a legacy for future generations, we have joined with other Canadian community foundations in this national movement by creating a Smart and Caring Communities Fund.

Despite our name and the region we serve – which encompasses all of British Columbia – we know that our work and the support of our donors transcend regional boundaries. In 2012 alone, Vancouver Foundation and its donors supported charities across the country to the tune of \$46 million. The success of our work in BC communities cannot be in isolation. When communities thrive at the local level, they become a blueprint to be shared with other communities, ultimately contributing to a vision of a smarter, more caring and thriving nation.

We know we can’t do this alone. As always, we rely on connected and engaged citizens to help us realize that vision of connected communities that are smarter by design and caring in character. There are

numerous people who generously donate their time and their money every day to make our communities shine.

We also know there is a growing apathy in our region that needs to be addressed. It is an apathy and sense of isolation that tears at the social fabric of our communities. This indifference can only be overcome by committed, engaged citizens who are prepared to shape a better future for themselves and their children. And it all starts with caring and involved residents in their own neighbourhoods.

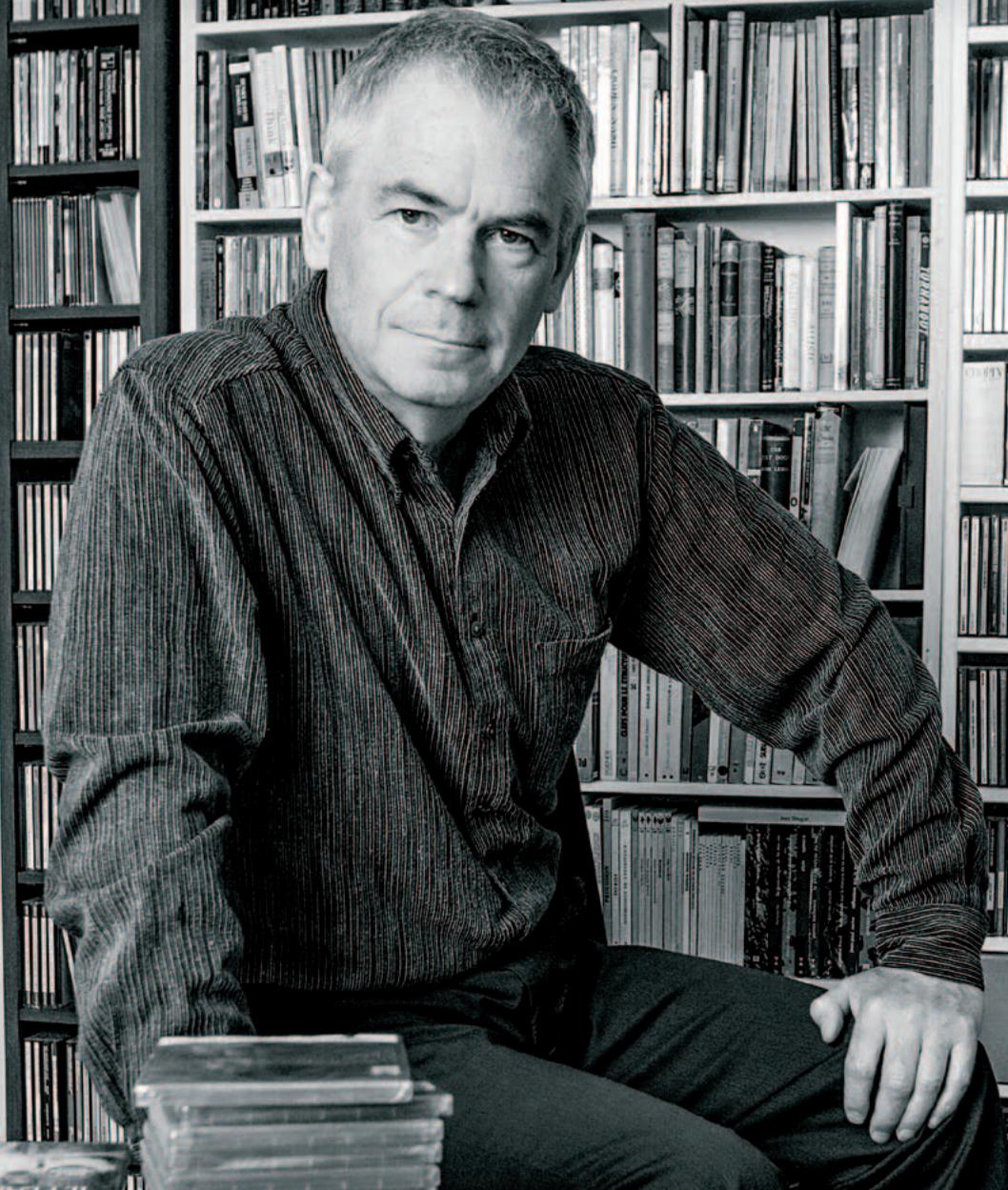
Vancouver Foundation’s Smart and Caring Communities Initiative is a call to metro Vancouver residents to help bring out the best in our community.

It’s about connecting with your neighbours, engaging in the life of your community, and giving of your time and money in support of a bolder vision for Canada by 2017: a nation of smarter and more caring communities.

It’s about people like Alice MacKay who leveraged her moment in time through a simple act of caring and generosity that seeded a 70-year (and counting!) legacy. It’s about doing the small things that inevitably lead to big results in the community, and ultimately benefit everyone.

And it starts with you. **VF**

Beethoven, Bob and Borealis



# Concerts in Care

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“Who hears music, feels his solitude  
peopled at once” – Robert Browning

BY DEBRA MIKAELSEN | PHOTOS TIFFANY COOPER

## David Lemon isn't looking for a pat on the back.

Through his work he has been providing elderly Canadians in care with meaningful moments of joy, but he is far from satisfied. What he desperately wants is to make a bigger difference – more often, and for more people.

His charitable organization, Health Arts Society (HAS), brings professional musicians to often bleak institutions where they give live performances, known as

Concerts in Care, to residents who are no longer mobile. The audiences are mixed. Some are in bathrobes; some are in wheelchairs; many are frail, confused, ill or unhappy. Their individual musical tastes may vary, but the performances invariably inspire feelings of deep pleasure. Once, a 92-year-old woman approached the performers after a concert of opera arias. “I never knew that I would like opera,” she said. “To think that I might have died without hearing any!”



**David Lemon (facing page), Robert Silverman (left), the Borealis String Quartet and Beethoven are working together to bring surprise and delight to seniors in care.**

It's the kind of comment that gives Lemon's work meaning. “The capacity to be surprised and delighted never goes away,” he says. “But when you live in long-term care, I think it's fair to say that surprise and delight aren't often part of life. We bring that to them.” Not, however, as often as he'd like to. “Of course it's delightful and gratifying that people enjoy the programs. It's also maddening that we can't do more.”

Lemon, former owner of The Magic Flute music store, founded Health Arts Society in BC in 2006. Since that time, the concept has spread across Canada. The societies operate independently but share a common purpose, as well as some operating costs and staff. As such, a team of four full-time and two part-time staff have been able to bring a total of 7,500 professional-calibre concerts to people in care, with an average audience of 40 at each performance.

He had the idea while observing friends and family members transition to end-of-life care in residential institutions. What was missing from their experience was the rich cultural environment that previously had been integral to their lives. “These people are rather neglected, and coming to the end of their lives,” he says. “They're not looking forward to a lot of new experiences.” And unlike a film or a play, music speaks on an emotional level that reaches even people with dementia. “It's the most wonderful thing you can do for them.”

Scientific research suggests that music is highly therapeutic for people with dementia. So when HAS first started, some people insisted that it should present its case as therapy, but Lemon insists the program has a more straightforward reason for being. “We know it's therapeutic, but our case is for normalizing the lives of people in care.”

And normal life means access to music not because it's therapeutic, but simply because it's beautiful – because it has an ability to lift our spirits. “It's a shame that to make a case for people in care it has to be such an enormously loud one,” says Lemon. “I wish we could express it more quietly and gently. We tend to think of them as a separate species. And they aren't.”

Each 45-minute concert delivers moments of surprise and delight, with caregivers observing expressions of obvious joy. Patients who had been virtually unresponsive are suddenly moved to dance, sing, conduct or clap their hands. One woman had been seriously depressed, refusing to leave her room for days. When she heard that pianist Robert Silverman was coming to play, she asked to get dressed, and to have her hair fixed and lipstick applied. She went to the concert and talked about it for days afterward.

Silverman himself has played some of the world's most illustrious concert halls, to audiences that included Pierre and Margaret Trudeau and Prince Charles. He has also been involved with HAS since its inception – an experience he finds profoundly satisfying. “I can't tell you the number of times someone in a wheelchair grabs my arm and says, ‘I never thought I'd hear music played like this again in my life,’” he says.

Yuel Yawney, a violinist with the Borealis String Quartet, echoes the sentiment. “The venue isn't Carnegie Hall, but the audience is even more appreciative. Sometimes it's sad for me to go to these places, but it's gratifying that we can do something that makes a difference to their lives.”

Both Lemon and Silverman vividly recall one patient in particular. At Brock Fahrni, a residential care facility in Vancouver, a gentleman in a wheelchair, suffering from Parkinson's and dementia, approached them after the performance. He introduced himself as Frank Doyle, mentioned that he was a composer and indicated the pushcart of musical scores at his feet. Silverman asked to have a look at the songs and immediately discovered a true gem. “It was absolutely delightful,” recalls Lemon.

Shortly after, Lemon commissioned an arrangement of the piece to include other instruments, and had it performed at The Chan Centre as part of a public concert featuring other HAS musicians. He invited Frank Doyle, who was able to see his composition played by an entire ensemble to a standing ovation. It was a memorable event in all of their lives, and an especially bright moment for Doyle, who died three months later.

Vancouver Foundation awarded HAS a \$30,000 grant towards *Beethoven, Bob and Borealis* in BC, a program that has Robert Silverman and the Borealis String Quartet each performing 100 Beethoven-rich concerts this year, reaching a combined audience of approximately 8,000. “Beethoven speaks to our humanity,” says Yawney. “There's a depth to our communication that he elicits from the audiences. And these audiences have amassed the most life experience, so maybe the music speaks to them at an even deeper level.”

The Beethoven program is just a small part of the HAS BC agenda for 2013. In total, they expect to perform some 800 concerts in 100 homes. “I don't want to overstretch how much we're doing,” says David Lemon. “I want to stress how much needs to be done. I'm not satisfied.” **VF**

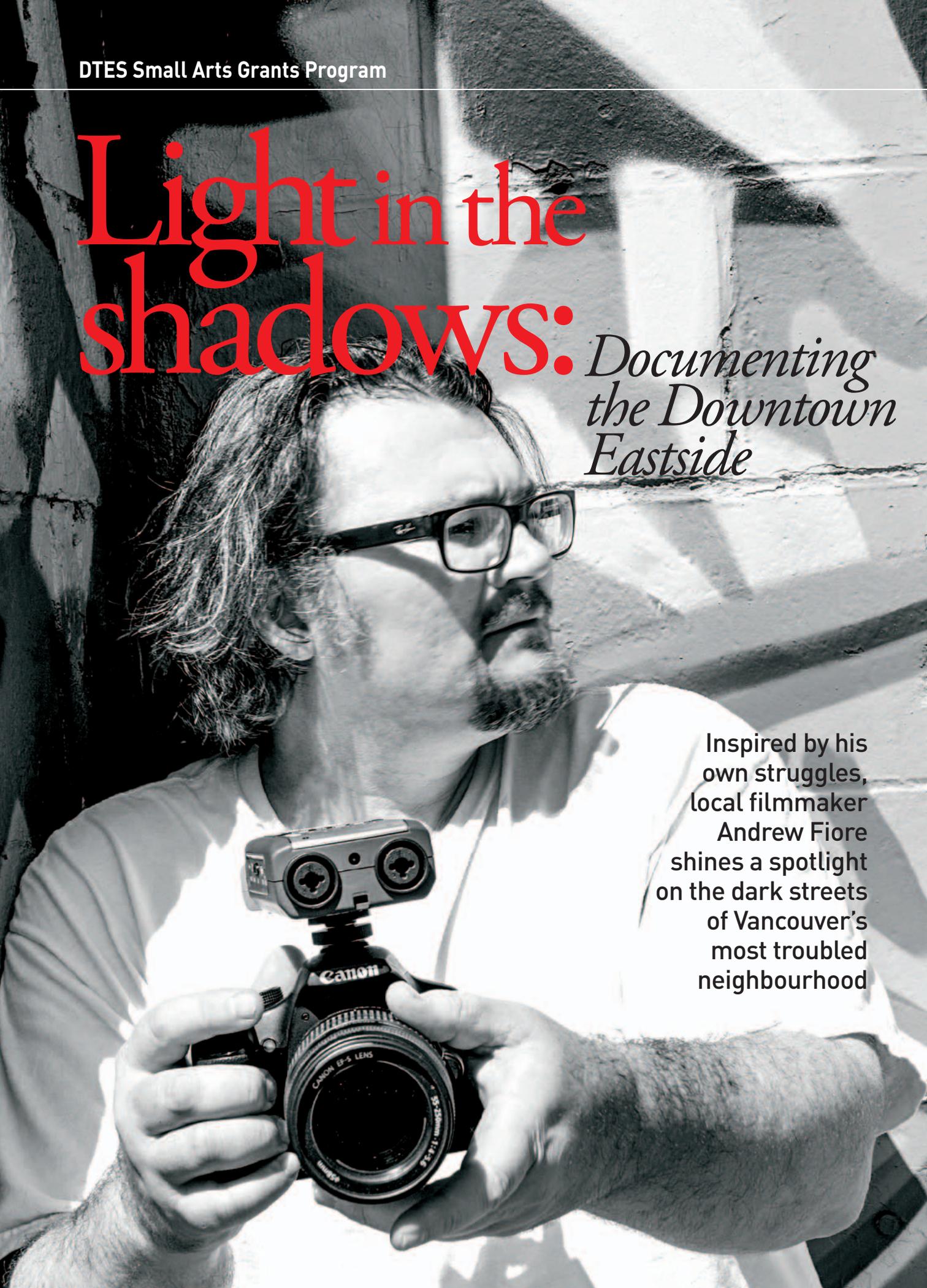
To find out more about Health Arts Society, call 604-230-2732 or email [d.lemon@healtharts.org](mailto:d.lemon@healtharts.org) To support programs like this, call Vancouver Foundation's Development and Donor Services at 604-688-2204.

DTES Small Arts Grants Program

# Light in the shadows:

*Documenting  
the Downtown  
Eastside*

Inspired by his own struggles, local filmmaker Andrew Fiore shines a spotlight on the dark streets of Vancouver's most troubled neighbourhood



**Living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES),** suffering from schizophrenia, battling emotional trauma and dealing with an all-consuming heroin addiction, Andrew Fiore has seen his share of despair, heartbreak and tragedy.

Yet, rather than turn his back on a troubled past following a long road to recovery, Fiore chose to cast some light on the darkest streets of Vancouver by producing a series of documentaries about the numerous challenges facing residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

"I beat the odds and turned my life around," says the 47-year-old filmmaker. "I know other people who made it out as well and feel compelled to tell their stories to break down some of the prejudices people may have about living in what's often called Canada's most dangerous neighbourhood."

Fiore has received three separate grants under the DTES Small Arts Grants program to produce documentaries chronicling the lives of marginalized people in the Downtown Eastside.

The DTES Small Arts Grants (DTES-SAG) program was created in 2009. It's a partnership between Vancouver Foundation and the Carnegie Community Centre Association that helps local artists build a portfolio of original work, learn valuable entrepreneurial skills and engage with the DTES community. Funding is provided by Vancouver Foundation, and grants of \$500 to \$1,000 are administered by Carnegie. The program is designed to help artists take their career to the next level and contribute to a healthier, more inclusive and more engaged community.

"The DTES Small Arts Grants program has helped many artists take significant steps forward in their careers and instil a sense of pride in the Downtown Eastside," says Lidia Kemeny, Vancouver Foundation's director of grants and community initiatives. "Through this program, there's been a lot of support for artists from local businesses. Many artists have gone on to partner with local art galleries."

Since the inception of the DTES-SAG program, Vancouver Foundation has funded approximately \$300,000 in arts projects in the Downtown Eastside ranging from film, painting and photography to writing, fashion design and music.

Fiore received his first DTES Small Arts Grant of \$1,000 in 2010 to produce a 25-minute documentary entitled *Just You, Me & God: Recovery in the downtown east side*. The poignant film chronicles the story of Tammy Tonashiro and Kelly Flanagan, two former sex trade workers who struggle to remain drug-free while still living in a drug-ravaged neighbourhood. The film follows the two women over a six-month period, documenting Kelly's climb out of the DTES to become a paralegal, while Tammy makes her way to a transition house for recovering drug addicts.

"It's an important film because it lets you see all the services in the Downtown Eastside that the women use," says Fiore. "It also gives people, government and organizations a good look at what support services are missing and should be implemented."

With eight documentaries to his credit covering addiction, mental illness and homelessness, in many ways Fiore's own story could easily be one of them.

Born in Italy, Fiore moved to the Bloor and Dufferin area of Toronto with his parents when he was two. He acquired a keen interest in film at an early age – he was eight when he borrowed his father's video camera and started filming his pet hamsters.

In high school, he forged a close relationship with the school's audiovisual technician who encouraged him to pursue his passion for film. And after graduating from Ryerson University's Radio and Television Arts program, Fiore immersed himself in his craft, producing everything from wedding videos to corporate infomercials.

By age 29, however, he fell into a deep depression and decided to take a break from film work. He applied for and was accepted by a Korean school to teach English on a one-year contract.

It was in Korea that his life unravelled. Plagued by paranoid delusions, he suffered a "psychotic episode" that prompted his return to Canada, where he was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Fiore ended up in a single-room-occupancy hotel in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, his life spiralling out of control from a growing addiction to heroin.

He credits the support of his current life partner, Sue, for his recovery, as well as the Carnegie Community Centre Arts Program where he made important contacts in the arts community that reignited his passion for the arts and his film career.

Following the release of *Just You, Me & God*, Fiore produced four more documentaries covering sex trade workers, schizophrenia, the "Occupy Vancouver" movement and an inspiring film about individuals who triumphed over bipolar disorder.

In an effort to gain a wider audience for his work, he sent emails to 50 university librarians, informing them about the availability of his films. Within two months, 38 libraries had ordered DVDs, many following up with praise and encouraging words of support.

Last year, two Surrey schoolteachers contacted Fiore and asked if he would make a presentation to at-risk students following the screening of his film *10 City Blocks: Survival Sex Trade in the Downtown East Side*, a gripping documentary that features candid interviews with sex trade workers who share their struggles with addiction, mental and physical health concerns, and the fear of violent assault.

"This film features real people in Vancouver, so kids get to see exactly how they'd end up on the Downtown Eastside if they continue on their present path," says Fiore, who now regularly presents to students, community groups and not-for-profit organizations on prominent social issues.

His latest film project, for which he also received a DTES Small Arts Grant, is titled *The 100 Block*, a follow-up film to *10 City Blocks* updating his original story on sex trade workers on the DTES living near Main and Hastings streets.

In recognition of his efforts to raise awareness of DTES social issues, Fiore also received a 2013 Courage to Come Back Award in the mental health category, presented by Coast Mental Health. The award honours individuals who have demonstrated inspirational achievements overcoming the challenges of living with a major mental illness, and who have given back to their community.

"To receive any validation for the work I do is encouraging," says Fiore. "It makes me feel like I'm on the right path and making a meaningful contribution." **VF**

To learn more about Fiore's films, visit [www.healthchampion.blogspot.com](http://www.healthchampion.blogspot.com); for more information about Vancouver Foundation's DTES Small Arts Grants program, visit [www.vancouverfoundationsmallarts.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundationsmallarts.ca)



The Wood-Ranger family says “I love you” in sign language.

# Signs of

**The best-known sign in Deaf culture**, the one for “I love you,” was a big hit at a Surrey housing complex during a five-day workshop last summer. Posters and T-shirts were emblazoned with the gesture—one hand with the thumb, index finger and pinky finger pointing up, and the ring and middle fingers down, palm facing out—and the blending of the hand shapes for the letters I, L and Y for “I love you” embodied the attempt by a new family with several deaf members to connect with its hearing neighbours.

The family of Kimberly Wood and Barry Ranger moved into the Bristol Estates housing complex in the Surrey neighbourhood of Whalley in late 2011. Wood and Ranger are both deaf. Their eldest son, Zak, 16, is also deaf. Their middle child, 12-year-old Zimar, can hear, and so can Zeva, his eight-year-old sister, but Zander, 10, has only partial hearing, and uses a hearing aid at school but not at home.

Unfortunately, the family wasn’t welcomed with open arms by the other residents of the small, low-income neighbourhood, who had no experience interacting with deaf people.

“When we first moved in here, everyone was very cold, and not friendly,” says Wood, telling her story in sign language, interpreted by her hearing son, Zimar. “The kids around the complex were mocking and bullying not just Zak, but all of my kids, for being different. It was very hard on us.”

Wood had moved her family to the Vancouver area from Edmonton so that her children could attend the BC Provincial School for the Deaf, located in Burnaby at South Slope Elementary and Burnaby South Secondary.

“For Zak and Zander, it is important for them to be comfortable in a school environment where they can learn and thrive without being scared of ridicule from others.”

# Striving to be accepted by their hearing neighbours, a deaf family reaches out to share their culture – spurring communication and connections among the whole community

## progress

BY DOUG WARD | PHOTO VINCENT L. CHAN

But while her kids were thriving at school, they were not comfortable in their own neighbourhood. Wood knew she had to end the tension between her family and their neighbours. She believed the problem was that the other kids had no idea how to interact with her children.

Wood decided that she and her children would provide the equivalent of Deaf Culture 101, calling their project Hands-On Fun Week. The plan was to show the local kids how to communicate simple phrases in sign language and explain some of the finer points of deaf etiquette. But Wood, who depends on her provincial disability benefit for income, knew she couldn't cover the costs of an extended workshop.

One day, while visiting a farmers market in Surrey, she met Joyce Fan, co-ordinator for the local Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) program. Fan sat at a table with brochures about NSG, which was created in 1999 by Vancouver Foundation to fund small, local projects that would create bonds and a sense of belonging in neighbourhoods.

"I just took it and applied for the grant and it got approved," says Wood, who received \$1,000 from NSG and put her plan into action last August.

Over five days, she and her kids taught the participants many sign language gestures, including those for basic greetings such as "Hi" and "How are you?" They showed the participants how sign language is central to Deaf culture. And they explained how hearing people can become friends with deaf people by mastering a few key signs.

The Wood-Ranger family also told the neighbourhood kids that deaf people do not consider themselves disabled. "We look at ourselves as able bodies who can do anything except hear," says Wood. They explained at the workshop that most deaf people dislike the term "hearing impaired" and prefer being described as "deaf" or "hard of hearing." They told their neighbours that it's not rude to walk between two people who are signing to each other.

Wood showed them how deaf people "listen" to music with their feet, through vibrations in the floor. She told them that there are about 500,000 deaf Canadians. They talked about famous deaf people such as Marlee Matlin, the Academy Award-winning actress, and Helen Keller, who overcame her inability to hear and see to become a world-famous advocate for people with disabilities.

About 30 kids attended the workshop and 100 people showed up at the barbecue on the final day. Friendships were made between the newcomers and the existing residents, and a new sense of community was forged.

"People who didn't know each other before Hands-On Fun Week started becoming friends. It was really cool for the parents and everybody who came," says Zimar.

Wood says, "Before the workshop, this community wasn't very close-knit. But afterwards, it was. A lot more people started talking with Zander and socializing with Zak.

"Before, Zak couldn't have the chance to be involved in any activities that are outside at the park. But not anymore. Now my kids are popular. Other kids are always knocking on my door, wanting to play with my kids."

One of the local youth, Mairi Mackie, 16, helped the Wood-Ranger family organize the workshop. "I learned a lot about the deaf community and what they like and don't like. I got to learn sign language," says Mackie. "Before this happened, none of us would hang out. But now I know Zimar and Zak and we all just started hanging out and talking. We're not all just huddled up inside our homes."

Another participant, Laura Corrigan, 12, similarly said the workshop changed the apartment complex. "Everything has changed. Now everyone comes out and goes to the park together. We go swimming or ice skating. And it all started after the workshop. Just because one family came here and made a difference."

Wood wants to stage another workshop this summer at her housing complex and perhaps take the concept to other communities. "That's my dream – to spread this out and educate more hearing people." **VF**

Find out if there's a Neighbourhood Small Grants program in your area at [www.vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/nsg)  
You can also help support NSG with a donation – visit the website and find out how Vancouver Foundation will double your gift.

## A dedicated volunteer, Brad Joseph found a way to continue his support long after he was gone

| BY DONNA BARKER

**“Brad had personality-plus!** He made friends no matter where he went,” says his mother, Bernice Joseph. “We had a very close relationship. He came on many holidays with us, met his dad and me in Vegas for our 50th anniversary, and surprised his dad by flying home for his 75th birthday.

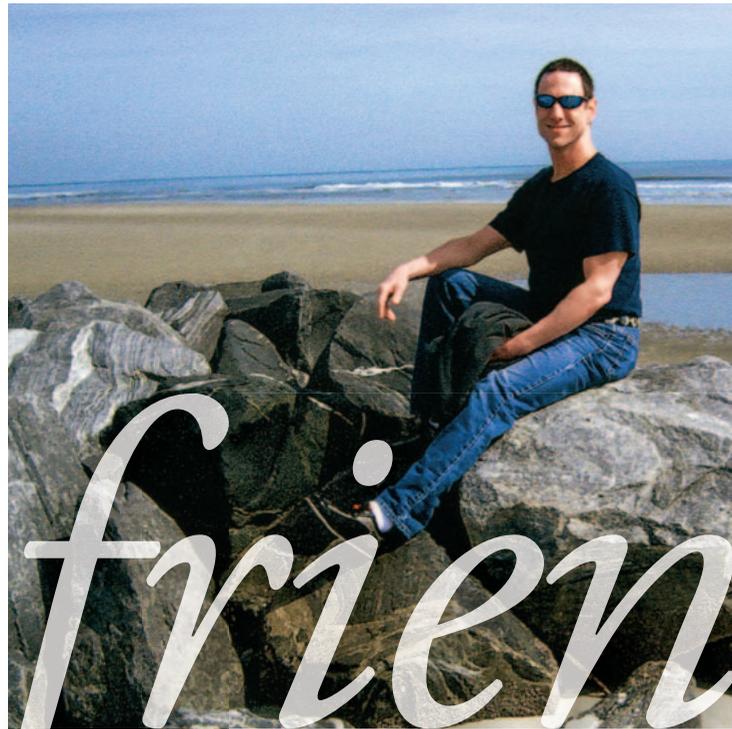
“His death was such a shock to us. I still can’t believe it,” she continues. “Even though he passed on April 20, 2009, it still feels unreal.”

Terry Twentyman laughs, “Brad and I were great friends for over 30 years. He loved to travel, to camp, to volunteer. And he had a crazy sense of humour. We went to Peru together and he wore spandex shorts and tank tops for the entire trip, just for fun.”

And according to longtime friend Kelly Kellogg, “Brad was just open arms all the time. He would help out anyone he could. He was always there, dedicated to backing up his friends. And he was always happy.”

In talking to people who were close to Brad Joseph, an accountant and former Canada Revenue Agency auditor, two things become clear. Joseph was a loving and committed friend, brother and son. And, he was a man who embraced every opportunity and challenge that life threw his way.

When he was diagnosed with HIV, back before the HIV-suppression drug therapies that are available today, he didn’t expect to live 12 months – so he bought an open-ended airline ticket and spent what he thought would be his last year travelling the world.



# friend for Life

“To his great surprise, he ended up having to settle the huge credit card debt he accumulated on his trip,” laughs Twentyman.

According to Twentyman, “the whole HIV thing made Brad angry. Angry that people are HIV positive. He’d do whatever he could to help people in his situation. And not just people with HIV, but anyone who was terminally ill.”

In fact, Joseph’s compassion for people living in their final years started long before he received his own diagnosis.

“Brad was always eager to visit his great-grandmother, who lived out of town. He’d tell us, ‘since I don’t know how long she’ll be here.’ And he could make my mother laugh like nobody else could, calling her ‘his sexy grandma.’ She thought he was the best,” Bernice (Joseph’s mother) says.

After one of his own friends passed away from HIV, Joseph took it upon himself to care for that friend’s 80-year-old mother, Ann.



He would visit Ann often, cook her meals, entertain her, take her out for walks and even do her taxes.

Becoming a dedicated volunteer with Friends For Life didn't surprise anyone who knew Joseph.

The Friends for Life Society began delivering massages and hot meals to people with HIV/AIDS in the 1990s. Today, it is North America's only comprehensive wellness centre providing complimentary services to people living with serious illness. Located in Vancouver's West End, it has provided a warm "home-like" environment and a safe haven to more than 2,800 people.

"Brad loved the (Friends For Life) House and he loved the people there. That's where he met many of his friends," says Kellogg. "For years he was the crew lead for the Monday brunch. He'd go to the House on the weekend, see what food was available to use, pick up a cheque, and ride his

scooter to the Costco in Richmond to buy enough food to feed 40 or more people. He'd fill his backpack and strap boxes between his legs and on the back of the scooter to get the food back to the House!"

"Volunteering with Friends For Life was a big social thing for Brad. He'd put himself in the back seat since he could see it was helping others," says Twentyman.

Michael Smith, the Friends For Life director of fund development, says the brunch program provides much more than just a healthy meal to members. "The social environment of the brunch is wonderful. People get to feed their body and their spirit at the same time. There's so much warmth and positivity in the House on brunch days that you can forget you're a member with a chronic illness; you're just a person having lunch with a friend."

On brunch days, Joseph would arrive at Friends For Life by 8 a.m. and manage a team of four other people to prepare and cook a starter,

a main course and a dessert. The day didn't end until after 3 p.m., once cleanup was done.

Joseph's dedication to the brunch program was so strong that he found a way to continue supporting it even after he was no longer able to volunteer: in his will, Joseph left a legacy gift to Friends For Life through Vancouver Foundation.

His gift means that the brunch program will have core funding in perpetuity. And since just 20 per cent of Friends For Life's funding comes from government, and most of the services are offered for free or a minimal charge (brunch for 60 people twice a week costs \$3 per person), individual gifts like Joseph's are critical to the ongoing operation of the programs.

"Brad really cared about the people and his friends at Friends For Life. And he was an extremely smart man the way he set up his legacy fund with Vancouver Foundation. The way he did it, his legacy will live on forever," says Kellogg.

Bernice Joseph adds, "It means a lot to us that Friends For Life has honoured Brad by naming the day he was the crew lead as the 'Brad Joseph Legacy Brunch' since it really shows everyone the kind of person he was. We were always so proud of him. This is just icing on the cake." **VF**



**Monday brunch at the Friends For Life House lives on thanks to the legacy of Brad Joseph (shown here with his brother).**

#### WHAT IS A LEGACY FUND?

A Legacy Fund is a fund you create in anticipation of leaving a future gift from your estate to support your community.

#### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Your Legacy Fund starts with a gift of \$1,000 or more. This donation is invested in your named, permanent endowment fund. Granting from your Legacy Fund can begin when it reaches \$10,000. These additional donations can be made during your lifetime, or later through your estate.

Vancouver Foundation can help you develop a giving plan that will satisfy your philanthropic goals. You specify which

charities you wish to support, provide a gift to Vancouver Foundation in your will to be added to your Legacy Fund, and we will carry out your wishes. With a Legacy Fund, you can change your future giving plans at any time without the effort and expense of updating your will.

#### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

A Legacy Fund with 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 Helgason at 604.629.5186 or [kristin.helgason@vancouverfoundation.ca](mailto:kristin.helgason@vancouverfoundation.ca)

# Fl Beautiful Flowers

begin with a



## The buzz about beekeeping

BY STEPHANIE THATCHER | PHOTOS TIFFANY COOPER

**When you think about bees**, what comes to mind? Honey? Hives? Yellow and black stripes? Stings? Well, Tanya Otero would like you to think again, and introduce you to BC's native pollinator: the mason bee.

"These are truly West Coast bees," Otero explains. "They're the only bees that work in the rain!"

Found along the west coast of North America, mason bees don't produce honey and only sting if in mortal peril. They are also solitary

bees, so you won't find them in hives. Our local species – the blue orchard mason bee – is small and black, with a bluish tint, meaning you may mistake one for a fly. So how do you spot one? Otero says the big giveaway is that some mason bees have a yellow spot on their back, and males have pale yellow hairs on their abdomen. They are also slow-flying and fuzzier, with three distinct body parts (head, thorax and abdomen).

Otero and her friend Breanna Kato set up the Bee the Future project, which has introduced some 60 people to BC's native bee at workshops designed to teach the community how to support the mason bee population by making gardens and lanes bee friendly, and building bee houses.

"Mason bees are prolific pollinators and benefit gardens across our community – they are an incredible community asset," explains Otero. "When you think that one-third of what we eat is on the table because of bees, you realize how much we need these pollinators. It's important to learn how to support them."

Otero and Kato were awarded a Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grant – a program co-sponsored by Vancouver Foundation and the City of Vancouver to support community-led green projects in Vancouver. The grant enabled them to run workshops at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House in the Hastings-Sunrise community, and provide budding beekeepers with materials to make their own mason bee houses.

Each brightly coloured wooden house provides an ideal habitat for mason bees to lay up to 140 eggs. It may look simple from the outside, but inside it is carefully constructed with 28 narrow tubes at least five inches long. In spring, the bees can lay about five eggs in each tube, separating each one with a layer of mud (hence the name "mason") and ensuring each egg has a supply of nectar and pollen. By fall, the eggs have developed into fully formed bees, but they stay in a cocoon over winter and then hatch the following spring. Otero and Kato showed workshop participants how to give nature a helping hand by carefully removing and storing the cocoons in their fridges over winter and how to release the bees in spring. The houses can be cleaned and reused year after year.

"I'm excited that so many people are as interested in supporting bees as I am," says Otero. "I thought there would be families with curious kids, but there were also many enthusiastic young adults who showed such a spirit of community," she says. And she already has another project in mind – this time, educating her community about honey bees and beeswax production and uses.

Talking of honey bees, Jenny Ma, another Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grant recipient, is working to make beehives a far more common sight across Vancouver. "Honey bees have hit hard times and often aren't recognized for the huge role they have in our lives," she says. "I wanted to spread the word and share the long-time tradition and skill of keeping bees with my community."

To that end, Ma designed her Pollinating Our Communities project and put her grant to good use, building three observation hives and sourcing protective veils and gloves for budding



**Breanna Kato (left) and Tanya Otero have showed some 60 other Vancouverites how to build and care for their own mason bee houses.**

beekeepers. She taught hands-on beekeeping workshops in East Vancouver and also visited an alternative-learning school in Kitsilano to teach children the impact bees have on our everyday foods.

"Honey bees are wonderful teachers," says Ma. "In many ways, a beehive reminds us what it means to be in a community – to share, be and work together."

The projects run by Otero, Kato and Ma are just two examples of many successful community initiatives set up following a resurging interest in bees, according to Danielle Gauld, grant co-ordinator for the East Vancouver communities where both projects took place. In fact, she describes last year as "the year of the bee." "We had many exceptional bee-related projects seeking funding – and it looks like there are more for this year. Projects like those run by Tanya and Breanna and Jenny have proved to be great community builders, as well as providing incredible green benefits," she says.

"We consider bees themselves to be community assets because they pollinate gardens throughout the neighbourhoods they're in, so they're a great fit with our program and we're excited to be funding more this year." **VF**

For more information on Greenest City Neighbourhood Small Grants, visit [www.neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/greenest-city/small-grants](http://www.neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca/greenest-city/small-grants)

# TIP-ing the Scales

Working together to make youth homelessness a thing of the past

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTO BRIAN HAWKES

**One of Alexandra O'Donaghey's first memories** is of her drug-addicted and alcoholic parents splitting up. She was only four, but already smart enough to know she would be staying with her grandmother.

Not long after the split, her father gave up drugs and drink. But the party went on for her mother for another eight years. She drifted in and out of O'Donaghey's life in North Vancouver. Then came an invitation to join her clean and sober mother for a year in Bella Bella – home of the Heiltsuk people on BC's central coast.

O'Donaghey jumped at the chance. Turns out her mother had been clean for almost two years, and O'Donaghey was looking forward to spending time with her. This would be a new start. But less than a year after O'Donaghey arrived, her mother relapsed; the last time she saw her mother was in the emergency room of Bella Bella Hospital, where she passed away. O'Donaghey was 12 years old.

"Things went downhill after that," she says, her dark brown eyes narrowing. "I moved back to North Van to live with my dad, and started drinking. At first, it was coolers, then beer and 'hard bar' . . . It was just fun and games. Then I started smoking pot, doing cocaine and ecstasy.

"I moved a lot in North Van and Vancouver," she says. "I was living with my grandmother, and with my dad. I got kicked out of one school, transferred to another, and then had to transfer again.

"Eventually, it got to the point where I didn't care about having fun or having a good time. I wasn't comfortable in my own skin. I became the type of person that needed a drink. I'd have a drink if I was anxious, if I was mad or sad, or if I felt guilty. My addiction took me to a deep, dark place. I did a lot of things that I regret today."



At 16, O'Donaghey got pregnant and had a son, Sean. At 18, despite a number of interventions by her family, she continued to drink.

O'Donaghey tells her story very matter-of-factly, not shying away from any detail. She looks you straight in the eye as she talks, displaying a confidence and self-knowledge that is obviously hard-won, and rare in a 23-year-old.

Despite the fog of alcohol, many alcoholics can recall, often with stunning clarity, the day they hit bottom. For O'Donaghey, it was January 15, 2011.

"It wasn't an external hitting bottom," she says. "Like losing family or anything. It was an internal thing. I'd been drinking for eight years. I was 21. My addiction hit me so hard I lost all hope. I realized then that I would either die from my addiction, or I would turn it around. It was one way or the other."

On January 17, 2011, after eight years of active addiction, O'Donaghey finally reached out and sought treatment through a



Alexandra O'Donaghey and son Sean often stop to play at Grandview Park on the walk home from school.

First Nations recovery program in Williams Lake. Then, back in Vancouver, she heard about Watari Counselling and Support Services and the Transitioning to Independence Project (TTIP). She applied and was accepted into a pilot program with nine other young people who were homeless and pregnant or parenting, and would receive life-skills training and housing for 18 to 24 months.

The pilot wrapped up in March 2013, and you don't need to ask O'Donaghey how it went – her ear-to-ear smile says it all.

Watari is Japanese for “small bridge” or “in transition.” The first thing you notice about Watari Services is that it's not an easy place to find. The offices, kitchen, meeting rooms and classrooms that comprise this agency are nestled comfortably, and very anonymously, into the 800-block of East Hastings Street in Vancouver.

This part of the Downtown Eastside seems quiet and forgotten. There are no bars on this block. Few dealers venture this far east, and even fewer sex trade workers. It's perfect for people who are

trying to leave that frenetic world and its temptations behind, and turn their lives around. It's also perfect for a non-profit agency that offers drug and alcohol treatment programs, one-to-one and group counselling, education, advocacy for troubled youth, and sometimes just a friendly face and a place to sit down.

“We've been here 17 years,” says Michelle Fortin, Watari's executive director. “Our choice of this place and this area was very intentional. When people come here for counselling, they don't just stumble upon us. They actually have to be looking for the office. They have to make a conscious decision to find us.”

Watari started TTIP to support homeless pregnant or parenting youth with a grant of \$330,000 over three years from Vancouver Foundation.

“Our role is essentially to help them find market housing and then support them for 18 to 24 months while they try to figure out how they're going to live in market housing without that support.”

And the program has been very successful. “Eighty-two per cent of young people who have been through the TTIP program have managed to maintain their housing,” Fortin says proudly. “Many of these young people have been in foster care. They're used to moving frequently, often never really unpacking. Many never hang their pictures on the wall.

“TTIP is one of our success stories. Thanks to the way it was structured, we were able to leverage the Vancouver Foundation grant into even more support later.”

For O'Donaghey, TTIP was transformational. “Once I found a place, it was great,” she says. “They gave me a bus pass, taught me how to budget. I participated in one-to-one counselling, I attended workshops, went to a Christmas party. I learned a lot there. Watari helped me to become the person I want to be.”

O'Donaghey has been sober for two years. She finished high school, and has a good relationship with her dad, her family, her friends, and – she is keen to point out – herself. She can't wait to get into long-term supportive housing where she can stay with her six year-old son Sean. She has goals: she is going to college and will train to be a youth worker.

“I had a rough life. I hurt a lot of people and I made a lot of mistakes. But they helped me to become a better person . . . I wanted change. Now I do my best to be a good mother, a good friend and a good daughter. And I try to give back to the community as well.” O'Donaghey volunteers in the Downtown Eastside, doing family support, and in West Vancouver as an outreach worker for First Nations people. At 23, O'Donaghey has not lost her hope for the future. She has not lost her belief in change. She just has to look in the mirror to know that almost anything is possible. **VF**

## Youth Homelessness Initiative

One of Vancouver Foundation's priorities over the next four years is to break the cycle of youth homelessness among young people aging out of government care. Through our Youth Homelessness Initiative (YHI), we are working to strengthen community services to support vulnerable youth, engage young people to identify transition strategies for individuals aging out of care, and to raise public awareness about the critical need to invest in solutions that help youth leave the streets behind.

## Giving in Action Society

**With Braeden, who is almost three**, seven-year-old Jacob, and their big brother, eight-year-old Matthew, parents Jeanne and Dan Moy don't get much time to sit and relax.

In a perfect world, on a sunny day the Moys could take their three energetic boys out to play in their backyard or to ride their bikes and scooters in the driveway. But until the Giving in Action Society (GIA) helped the family replace their small chain-link fence with a new solid-wood fence, there was no relaxing in the backyard – no matter how sunny the day.

Matthew, who has Down syndrome and autism, loves to run. He also has an uncanny ability to read his parents' body language – to know the exact moment Jeanne and Dan will look away to talk to one of his brothers. Then suddenly the chase is on . . . Matthew somehow gets through the fence, and is sprinting into the street or down the lane.

Matthew has no fear and doesn't understand the dangers of traffic, so allowing him to run outside the backyard was not safe. Both parents had to watch the boys, and one always had to be within arm's reach of Matthew. They didn't get to spend much time playing outside.

Before the new fence, sometimes playtime outdoors would last 30 minutes, sometimes only two. But it always ended the same way: with Matthew trying to bolt. And once that happened, playtime was over and all the boys had to go back inside.

When Jeanne describes life before the new fence, you can feel the tension in her voice. "My husband and I would be constantly saying to each other, 'Do you have him? Do you have him?'" It was hard on Jacob, too. Since he was three or four years old – old enough to tattle – he's shared the responsibility for watching his older brother. If I turned my attention to one of the other boys, Jacob would often scream, 'Mom! Matthew's running away!' Ironically, the boys have much more freedom now that there's no possibility for them to get out of the backyard."

How is life different with the fence that a GIA grant helped build?

"It's actually relaxing. We feel safe. Matthew is able to play more happily since I'm not hovering over him. And knowing that he can't escape, he is actually enjoying the yard better," says Jeanne. "He's learning how to play and discover and concentrate since he's not always plotting about how to escape. He has so much more independence now."

The benefits touch every member of the family. Jacob is happier and has more freedom to play on his own with his brothers and other friends. Jeanne's mother, who used to be too afraid to take the boys into the yard, now plays badminton with them. Everyone is more relaxed.

It might seem odd that a fence could help teach a child the joys of helping with household chores, but it's provided that to Matthew as well.

"Last weekend Jacob and Dan were washing my car," Jeanne says. "Matthew looked out the window and said, 'Help, please. Car.' In previous years it was hard for Matthew to participate in this fun chore since he'd get distracted and dart down the alley. Then he'd get upset that he had to come inside while Jacob continued to help Dad. So many young boys are proud to help their dad wash the car and now Matthew is one of them. It may seem like a little thing to most people, but to our family it's a big deal to see our child happy to help, in a safe place." **VF**

In spring 2013, GIA received \$2 million from the Ministry of Social Development. This funding will enable GIA to continue providing grants to BC families into 2014. For more info, visit [www.givinginaction.ca](http://www.givinginaction.ca)



A young boy with dark hair, wearing a bright blue long-sleeved shirt with a graphic design, is smiling broadly and holding a black sword. He is in a playground setting with a wooden structure and a blue swing seat visible in the background. Other people are blurred in the background.

# Household *Houdini*

Life at the Moy house  
is “boy-busy”!

BY DONNA BARKER | PHOTO CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO



With the combined help of GPS and community support, at-risk youth are finding their way

# High-te





# ch Treasure Hunt

BY SONDI BRUNER | PHOTOS CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO

**Throughout the year**, visitors flock to parks in British Columbia for the fresh air and lush greenery, along with the opportunity to walk, hike, camp, swim and reconnect with nature. But now, our parks are also becoming a popular stomping ground for a growing trend called “geocaching” – a high-tech treasure hunt where participants use GPS devices and smartphones to unearth hidden containers called “geocaches.”

And one Vancouver non-profit is using geocaching to help aboriginal inner-city youth explore the outdoors, maintain an active lifestyle, and learn valuable employment skills that will improve their futures.

In January 2012, Red Fox Healthy Living Society partnered with Metro Vancouver Parks and began a pilot geocaching project to get youth excited about discovering the wide array of recreation resources available to them. It was an instant success.

**Members of Red Fox Healthy Living Society help inner-city youth explore their routes.**

“Once we all tried it, we were hooked,” says Amber Morgan, one of Red Fox’s youth leaders.

Morgan and her Red Fox comrades are in good company. More than four million people around the globe have also discovered the joys of geocaching. It’s a simple game to play: using GPS co-ordinates, participants navigate the outdoors to find hidden geocaches and then log their discoveries online. Geocaches can be anything, from dollar-store trinkets to educational information about the location where the geocache is hidden. The fun is in the hunt, not the find.

Emma Sutherland, executive director of Red Fox, says that geocaching is one of the organization’s many programs



designed to incorporate the aboriginal medicine wheel, a sacred health and healing model. On the medicine wheel, the colour red represents the body and physical health, and each Red Fox activity aims to show youth how to stay active in the face of life's obstacles.

Unfortunately, the challenges that many young Red Fox participants must tackle are numerous, including poverty, lack of food security, unstable housing, substance abuse and depression. Activities like geocaching offer them a reprieve from their burdens at home, teach them new skills and provide them with inspiring, positive role models.



“For a lot of aboriginal youth in Vancouver, their worlds are pretty small,” Sutherland says. “They don’t get out of the city; they don’t have a lot of the experiences that more mainstream suburban families pursue. We’re really trying to increase their awareness of what’s out there.”

Armed with GPS devices and iPads, Red Fox youth leaders guide children and their families throughout metro Vancouver parks, teaching them the ins and outs of geocaching. They’ve led groups at community events around the city, and enjoyed exploring a host of gorgeous spots, from the shores of Burnaby Lake to the snow-capped peaks of Cypress Mountain.

Along the way, youth leaders have learned skills like project planning, public speaking, leadership and communication; gained valuable work experience in the recreation field; and developed bonds of trust with their young charges.

Verdann Evans, a youth leader who has been involved with Red Fox for the last four years, says that leading geocaching programs is a fun way to escape the craziness of urban life and connect with

nature. “What I really like is us going out as kind of like a family, acting really goofy and running around trying to find geocaches,” she says. “It’s just a good time, with lots of laughs. For me, it’s a spiritual thing, too. When I’m out in nature, I feel calm, serene and at peace with myself.”

Evans credits her involvement with Red Fox with helping her find the courage to graduate high school, enrol in college, and participate in aboriginal youth committees in the city. “It gives you positivity, something to look forward to,” she says. “No matter how bad your day has been, you can go geocaching and just feel so much better about yourself. Your situation doesn’t seem so bad; you can have a clear head and think things through a little better. It helps you make healthier decisions.”

Joe Posey’s role as a youth leader has allowed him to gain new technology skills, learn how to instruct others and experience the pride of being a positive role model. “These are skills I never thought I’d learn at all growing up. Being able to teach the kids is an awesome feeling – you see their faces and their expressions when

**“The fun is in the hunt,  
not the find.”**

they’re all excited, and a lot of them know me by name,” he says. “It’s made me want to work harder. We’re not here for ourselves; we’re here for the kids. It’s a really awesome feeling when you’re able to connect with someone.”

A \$10,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation will support Red Fox’s geocaching activities and fund program essentials like transportation, equipment, food and prizes, allowing more youth to explore nature and experience an active lifestyle.

And the best part? Youth are welcome at Red Fox as long as they’d like to participate, a comforting guarantee for young people who want to continue overcoming challenges and thriving in the community.

“We don’t kick anybody out, and youth don’t graduate from Red Fox,” Sutherland says. “They get really invested, they bring their siblings, they bring their friends, and then they take on greater leadership roles. It’s almost like a family setting. If youth are showing commitment and eagerness, we’ll let them continue as long as they want.” **VF**

If you know a young person who is looking for direction and might benefit from this program, call Red Fox Healthy Living Society at 604-319-2571. If you would like to support innovative programs for youth like this one, you can find Vancouver Foundation at N 49° 16.888' W 123° 06.955' or on the web at [www.vancouverfoundation.ca](http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca) Or, call Peter Jackman in Development and Donor Services at 604-629-5357.

# What gives?

## Tax and philanthropy for the multi-jurisdictional donor

| BY KAY GRAY, TAX PARTNER, GRANT THORNTON

**“I’m a Canadian, but my husband is a US citizen. We live in Vancouver and are updating our wills to include a gift to Vancouver Foundation. Do we need to consider any special tax rules?”**

This situation, where one spouse is a dual taxpayer (in your husband’s case, to Canada and the US) and the other spouse a Canadian taxpayer, is quite common in today’s society. Unfortunately, each country’s tax laws are becoming more complex, and the intricacies of tax law are often beyond the layperson.

All persons resident in Canada, regardless of citizenship, are subject to Canadian tax laws. Conversely, all US citizens, regardless of residence, are subject to US tax laws. So, a US citizen living in Canada will be obligated to file annual separate income tax and information returns to both countries. To reduce the impact of double taxation and assist with compliance under each country’s domestic laws, Canada and the US have entered into a tax treaty. Unfortunately, while both the Canadian and US income tax rules are fundamentally similar, the laws are not complementary.

One significant difference is on the taxation of an individual at death. Canada has a capital gains regime that taxes the increase in value of a deceased person’s capital property, whereas the US has an estate tax regime that levies tax based on the total value of a decedent’s wealth.

When it comes to estate planning, both countries have a system that provides donors with tax incentives for gifts to charity – but the similarity ends there. With limited exceptions, only organizations registered with the Canada Revenue Agency are able to issue donation receipts that can be used by the donor for Canadian income tax purposes. In contrast, US income tax law generally recognizes



only US organizations that have been granted tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code subsection 501(c) (3). US estate tax law does recognize certain foreign charities, provided the decedent is a US citizen.

To the question at hand: Assuming your wills properly direct a gift from your estates to a registered Canadian charity, and that you continue to be Canadian residents up to your date of death, the normal Canadian income tax rules should apply to provide a tax credit on your final Canadian tax returns.

Regarding US tax rules, in the year of his death, your husband’s legal representative may be required to file a Canadian income tax return, a US income tax return and a US estate tax return. For US purposes, the charitable donation will be recognized only in his estate tax return. Since he is a US citizen, under US domestic law he will be entitled to a full charitable deduction on his US estate tax return.

Although the outcome under your scenario is potentially favourable, the final answer is driven by the specific facts of your situation. The answer may be very different if the gift is to be made to a US charity or if the gift is made during your lifetime instead of in your will. It also depends on which spouse ultimately makes the gift. It’s even more complex if the gift is property (not cash). If the gift comprises US property, we’re approaching a Gordian Knot of complexity! Further, tax laws on both sides of the border are continuously evolving. Professional advice is strongly encouraged. **VF**

*Kay Gray, CGA, TEP, is a tax partner with Grant Thornton in Vancouver. Kay wishes to thank Ms. Akane Suzuki, a US attorney with Garvey Schubert Barer, for her assistance with reviewing this article.*

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