

vancouver**foundation**

Fall 2009

stories of modern philanthropy

HAVING A BALL

Philanthropy at play

A BRUSH WITH THE PAST

South Van seniors get creative

SAFEGUARDING THE DELTA

Preserving farms and fowl

THE KING OF SWING

A legend nurtures new talent



The First Word . . .

The fall is a wonderful time of year. Typically it's a time of harvest, and of preparation for the coming winter. It's also a time when we look back over the year that was and forward to the new year that's coming.



As 2009 starts to draw to a close, we can all agree this has been an unprecedented 12 months, with many lows, a lot of bad news and tremendous energy expended – by individuals, families, businesses, non-profits and governments alike – on simply trying to survive.

We've had our own struggles at Vancouver Foundation. Although we are the largest community foundation in Canada, and we've been working with donors to create strong communities since 1943, this past year was a challenge financially. But at the same time, this difficult period has been instructive and even inspiring.

It has given us a chance to live our values. It has challenged us to find creative ways to “keep our eyes on the prize.” At Vancouver Foundation, we believe philanthropy is a strategic investment tool. As much as possible, we work with our donors to provide grants to projects that help improve or solve an issue in our communities. We focus our efforts less on short-term, Band-Aid solutions and more on projects that will have a lasting positive impact.

That's why we supported the projects you can read about in the following pages. Sometimes a small grant can have a huge impact. That's why we helped to buy soccer balls and basketballs for kids living in a low-income neighbourhood. Read “Having a Ball” (p. 7) to see how a good idea, a dedicated volunteer and an incredibly small investment combine to help keep kids out of trouble, bring them joy and help them stay in shape.

“Safeguarding the Delta” (p. 21) demonstrates our interest in long-term benefits, and shows why we work with Delta Wildlife Trust, which helps to preserve precious farmland for food production and wildlife.

We have funded programs to keep seniors active and creative. “A Brush With the Past” (p. 14) is a charming story that proves the benefits of artistic expression are not limited by age.

These are the reasons we continue to advocate on behalf of the hundreds of worthwhile charities and non-profits in this province that still need your support.

We would like to thank the many people who make this magazine possible. First of all, our generous donors. Without them, none of these stories would happen. We also wish to thank Canada Wide Media for helping us produce this magazine and the *Vancouver Sun* for assisting us with distribution. And to our growing number of readers: thank you for your ongoing interest and enthusiasm about these positive stories.

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Chair, Vancouver Foundation
Board of Directors

Faye Wightman
CEO, Vancouver Foundation

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VANCOUVER FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE

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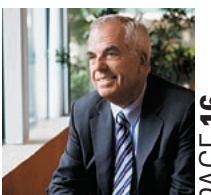
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A LIFE ON THE BENCH

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

Raining cats and... cats

In July 2009, more than 100 cats and kittens were discovered in the barn of a Richmond farm. They were suffering from a variety of ailments, including upper-respiratory infections and ear mites. All of the cats required immediate veterinary attention.

Vancouver Foundation approved an emergency grant of \$7,500 to the Richmond Cat Sanctuary to help cope with the sudden influx of farm felines.

The money was used to quarantine and treat the cats. They were checked for diseases, vaccinated, spayed or neutered and then put up for adoption. The Cat Sanctuary, which is part of the Richmond Animal Shelter, is home to hundreds of cats, many of which are available for adoption.



That's how New Hazelton rolls

After years of hard work, kids in the small community of New Hazelton are really rollin' – at a 3,000-square-foot skate and bike park that offers an elaborate course designed to entertain and challenge.

In New Hazelton, the nearest recreational facility is 66 kilometres away and most kids don't participate in organized activities. But a small group of committed young people, supported by city councillors, managed to engage citizens and raise an astounding \$50,000 for the park through raffles and dances, not to mention selling a lot of chili con carne. Additional funding from **Vancouver Foundation** donors (\$20,000) and other community supporters helped bring the project to completion.

The new skate and bike park has become an enormous source of pride for residents. On an average day more than 50 kids use the park. And there are a few unexpected bonuses – the users self-regulate, which has kept the park safe and graffiti-free. Experienced users mentor beginners, helping ensure safe, proper use of the park and a sense of community.



Adventures in learning on Haida Gwaii

Mount Moresby Adventure Camp Society works with School District #50, and communities throughout Haida Gwaii, to provide young people with opportunities to connect classroom learning with the outdoors.

Founded in 2000 by community members from Sandspit, the society is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide quality outdoor education programming through day and overnight adventure camps, wilderness travel programs, skills workshops, instruction and wilderness retreats.

The society promotes outdoor education and recreation for young people and adults in a safe, comfortable and affordable environment on Haida Gwaii. Participants learn self-sufficiency, confidence and co-operation in a wilderness setting and develop a lasting connection to the land and sea.



Vancouver Foundation donors provided a grant of \$25,000 to help with facility upgrades, including a new shower house, a radiant heating system, flooring and a septic system, as well as outdoor gear purchases such as tents, tarps, stoves and sleeping bags.

Art in Canada's poorest neighbourhood

The Downtown Eastside (DTES) is a hotbed of artistic activity, but this fall it's even busier as Vancouver Foundation, working with the Carnegie Community Centre, awarded grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 to help take practising artists to the next level in their careers.

The DTES Small Arts Grants Program is a pilot initiative intended for artists who demonstrate a history of original art

practice, and show a vital engagement with the DTES community. Thirty-one DTES artists were awarded a total of almost \$30,000 in the first round for projects that represent a broad spectrum of work, including visual art, video, a traffic installation, a website, a graphic novel and performance art. The work must be presented publicly by November 30, 2009.

Vancouver Foundation donors provided a total grant of \$100,000 for this yearlong program.



Spawning knowledge

The doors to the Quatse Salmon Stewardship Centre, a new salmon research and education facility in Port Hardy, opened this September. The centre features a full salmon hatchery with aeration towers and rearing tanks, as well as an interpretive gallery, laboratories, classrooms and administrative space.

The centre will be a hub for ongoing salmon stewardship activities in Port Hardy. This includes habitat restoration, watershed planning, educational programs, tours, events to raise awareness about the importance of salmonids and general enhancement initiatives.

Vancouver Foundation donors provided a grant of \$10,000 to the project, which paid for educational resources and displays for the new research facility. This support will help the centre meet its public outreach and engagement mandate.

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



Bee condo market abuzzin'

Charming starter hive. Solid, all-wood construction. Cozy home for 36. Panoramic views, close to fields and flowers – a pollinator's paradise. Won't be empty long. Buzz over and check it out. No mites please.

Hartley Rosen of the Environmental Youth Alliance hasn't placed any classified ads like this yet, but he's hoping the new bee "condos" his group built and placed all over Vancouver will fill up fast. Rosen is working with local apiarists to create bee-friendly habitats and reverse a recent crash in North American bee populations.

Partnering with the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Park Board, EYA launched the Pollinators Paradise Project to

build high-end bee condos in backyards and public spaces, such as Stanley Park's Rose Garden, Everett Crowley Park and Jericho Park.

The decrease in wild bee and honeybee populations is a serious concern. Thirty per cent of our food system is dependent on bee pollination, which creates the fruit and vegetables we enjoy. One busy bee in search of nectar can pollinate up to 1,000 flowers a day. The pollen clings to its hind legs, transferring to every flower it lands on. The bottom line is: no bees, no apples. The Pollinators Paradise Project is increasing awareness of bees' importance, and preserving their habitat and our ecosystem at the same time. **Vancouver Foundation** donors provided a grant of \$15,000 to the project.

Words on wheels

The Words on Wheels (WOW) bus is a retrofitted school bus that visits neighbourhoods around Dawson Creek promoting family literacy.



The bus is designed for children age five and under, and their parents or caregivers. There's a toy sign-out, a book exchange, songs, stories, rhymes, healthy snacks and coffee – even take-home stuffed animals – all free for families.

The goals of the WOW bus are to encourage literacy, early learning and readiness to learn; reduce isolation and anxiety; develop social networks; provide parenting skills, tools and support; and empower parents in their role as the primary caregivers and educators of their children.

Vancouver Foundation donors provided a grant of \$25,000 to the WOW bus.



The great ball giveaway: (from left) Jennifer, Christopher, Makeisha and Talon with brand-new balls at Ray-Cam Community Centre.

Having a ball

A small grant makes a big bounce

BY PAUL HERATY

PHOTOS: TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

It starts with one ball – dropping onto the hard gym floor at Ray-Cam Community Centre in East Vancouver. The basketball hits the floor with the distinctive "thunk" of rubber on laminated wood and bounces high, back into an excited pair of nine-year-old hands.

Then another ball hits the floor, and another. Thunk, thunk. Thunk. Soon there are 32 basketballs and soccer balls bouncing all over the Ray-Cam gym. The space is filled with the sound of balls being kicked, bounced off walls and dribbled; baskets being sunk; and the screech of running shoes as young Michael Jordans and

Christine Sinclairs yell and punch the air. It's the raucous, cacophonous sound of joy; the noise of barely contained pandemonium, and it makes Lisa Binkley smile. It's the sound of philanthropy.

Binkley and her partner, Lisa Robison, have just given away 32 balls to a bunch of neighbourhood kids. "That went well," says Binkley, a broad grin on her flush-red face.

Such a simple thing, a ball. The universal plaything. A toy that draws kids and adults alike; a round bag of air that exerts a strange magnetic pull, and a common response the world over: "Can I play?" »

Going with the flow on Galiano

The Galiano Conservancy Association is a community-based charity founded in 1989, and dedicated to protecting the natural and human environment of Galiano Island, B.C.

Through its From the Forest to the Sea Environmental Education and Restoration Program, the association offers a range of thought-provoking educational programs for school-age youth and family groups. Activities are designed to engage participants of all ages and range

from hands-on, science-based exploration and games to storytelling and puppet shows. The association recently expanded its educational outreach efforts to link young people from Vancouver Island.

Led by experienced educators and naturalists, From the Forest to the Sea explores interconnections in the environment by tracing the flow of water from forest to wetland to stream to ocean. **Vancouver Foundation** donors provided a grant of \$15,000 to the program. **VF**



Binkley has heard more than her share of such plaintive requests over the last two years. Whenever she would walk over to shoot a few hoops at Stamps Landing – East Vancouver’s version of “the projects” – kids would appear out of nowhere, drawn to the sound of a bouncing ball like bees to nectar. At first they would stand around and watch. Eventually the bravest one would be pushed forward to ask, “Can we play?” Binkley would nod and throw the ball in their direction. “There’s lots of social problems at Stamps,” she says. “It’s a tough place to live. There’s drug dealing; prostitution. And not a lot for kids to do down here except hang out.

“Driving around, I’d see them. Kids playing with nothing. I mean they had nothing. They’d be kicking around a stick, or this pathetic little tennis ball. I just found it tragic that these kids didn’t have things to play with, basic things like a ball.”

So she decided to do something about it. “I heard about a small grants program funded by Vancouver Foundation,” she says. “I applied with a really simple, basic concept – just buy a few balls and give them away – and got a grant of \$400.

“So I phoned around to get the best prices. It’s funny ... I thought I’d get about 100 balls for that. But good soccer balls and basketballs – ones that last – aren’t cheap.”

Binkley also wanted to buy from a local business. When someone suggested Abbies Sports Shop on Main, she called them up.

“Christophe [Collins] at Abbies was great,” she says. “He said he often gets involved with these kind of projects. He gave us a really good deal. We got 32 high-quality basketballs and soccer balls.”

Collins liked the idea because, as he puts it, “one ball can keep 20 kids off the street.”

“I remember as a kid being given a ball,” says Binkley. “I played with that ball for hours. It’s a kind of freedom. You’re away from the family, away from the stresses at school. These kids in particular ... anything to help these kids with their life and make it a bit more fun. It’s also an incentive to be healthy, and be outside.”

Robison was deeply touched by the ball giveaway.

“This little girl was holding onto a soccer ball for dear life. And the smile on her face ... that smile was almost as big as the ball,” she says. Robison’s eyes tear up and her voice chokes a little. “And her little face, she was so cute ... and then she yells at the top of her lungs, ‘Thanks ball ladies!’ and runs out of the gym clutching her ball. That just made my day.”

Both Lisas say they can’t wait until next year, when they hope to do it all again. **VF**

For more information on the Neighbourhood Small Grants program, visit Vancouver Foundation’s website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca or call 604-688-2204.

Giving in Action

On the road again



BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI
PHOTO: TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

“We call it his gangsta van,” Julia Lattimer laughs.

The Lattimer family recently bought a new wheelchair-accessible van for Julia’s son, Kurt, with help from an organization called Giving in Action. The organization, run by Vancouver Foundation and funded by the Province, is committed to helping people with disabilities and their families.

The Lattimers upgraded the van with tinted windows and a snazzy sound system that make Kurt feel like a star rapper. But what really rocks is the freedom the van has given him.

Kurt is 20 years old, with dark hair and an enthusiastic, crooked grin. He also has progressive motor neuron disease, and is totally dependant upon caregivers. The Lattimers’ previous vehicle couldn’t handle Kurt’s 450-pound power wheelchair, but the new van has multiplied the possibilities for Kurt and his family.

“Kurt gets endless pleasure from the van. With it, he can take his power chair to the mall, Stanley Park, the air show in Delta ... It makes it possible for him to do so many more things, and to have friends outside of a very small community that he had access to before. He really loves it,” says Julia.

In addition to hot new wheels and an upgraded social life, Giving in Action contributed to the construction of an independent living area for Kurt adjacent to the family home.

“Should Kurt live long enough, we’ll arrange staffing so he can live on his own there,” Julia says. “But right now it’s giving all of us some breathing room. Kurt’s an adult, and he really needed to be able to separate a bit. He needed his own space. Kurt works on a communication device and he needs to really focus. Plus he’s kind of a peace-loving, quiet sort anyway, and our house is always really busy.”

Kurt’s new pad has high ceilings, and a wall of windows with a view to tall trees. “He loves spending time in his room. It’s spacious, it’s beautiful, it’s his own place,” says Julia. “Kurt was never supposed to live this long, so we’re very fortunate to have him. And he does a lot of work to keep himself going. He has to do a lot of breathing exercises and he never complains. He’s very disciplined, and that’s all great. But when you don’t have a lot of options, it’s really about making the most of what you do have. It’s about quality. And this grant has really improved his quality of life; our quality of life. It’s made an enormous difference.” **VF**

Giving in Action is made possible by grants from B.C.’s Ministry of Housing and Social Development and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. These grants will run out in 2010. To find out more, visit the Giving in Action website at www.givinginaction.ca or call 604-683-3157.

Fuelling the future

Urban teens gain new skills restoring a piece of the past

BY PAUL HERATY
PHOTOS: JASON LANG

“We brought a perfectly good car in here,” says Mark McKim. “And then we cut it up.”

He points to a hulking piece of dark blue metal. It’s a car all right – a 1965 Impala SS. But only just. The rear end is propped in the air and there are large pieces missing; the gas tank has been cut out and the interior stripped bare. The front end – motorless – sags into the floor and a questionable rear axle lies out in front of the once-proud chrome grille. The frame sits 10 metres away, waiting.

We’re in a nondescript warehouse near Hastings and Commercial on Vancouver’s east side, home to Customs for Urban Teens (CUT), the brainchild of McKim and fellow car

enthusiasts Chiho Chan and Adam Clark. The four-month pilot program gives at-risk urban youth hands-on experience with auto restoration and customization.

Cameron, Gordon, Jack, James, Mark and Matthew – the program participants – meet here every Monday and Wednesday from 3 to 8 p.m. They start with a meal and then get to work, learning to rebuild a car from scratch under the watchful eyes of McKim, Chan and Clark.

And it doesn’t get much more “scratch” than this. It’s hard to think of this sad array of parts and rusting metal as a classic North American car – a model that was, and still is, the highest-selling full-size car in automobile history, a shiny blue-and-chrome chariot that could fetch \$20,000 when they raffle it off in a few months.

Clark, McKim and Chan have rebuilt almost 40 cars between them, but it’s the young people doing all the work here.

“Look at Gordon here,” says McKim. “He’s a natural. He’s got a real feel for it.”

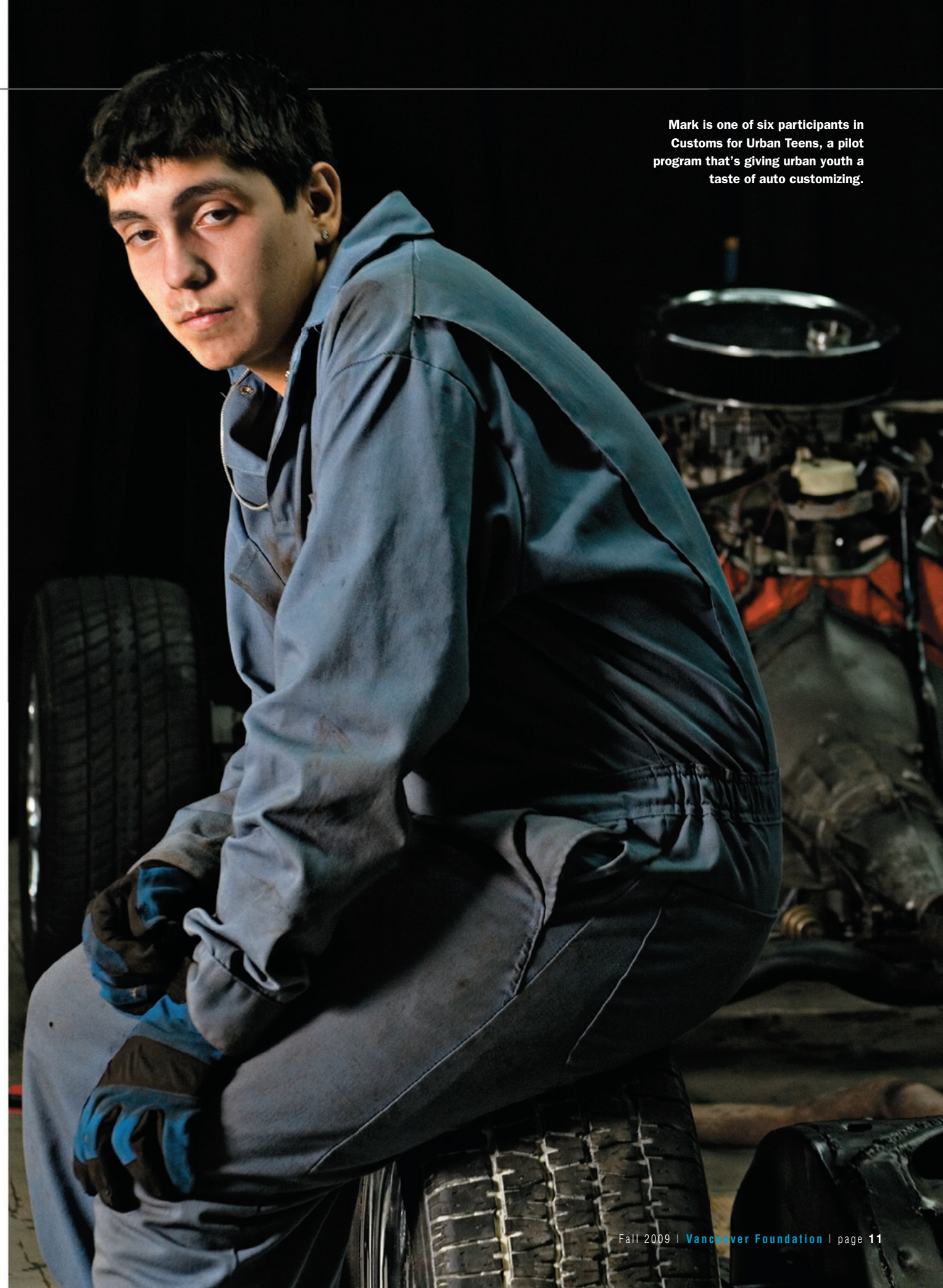
Gordon, 18, is grinding away at a quarter panel, cutting out pieces of rust. The grinder fills the air with a hail of incandescent sparks and the angry whine of metal on metal. A member of the Coast Salish First Nation, Gordon got into the CUT program when someone else dropped out.

“You actually need to commit to it,” he says. “It’s pretty interesting, and you learn a lot. I was a bit nervous grinding on the frame. I thought I was going to mess up, but I actually did pretty good.”

McKim agrees. “Gordon’s just started, but he’s doing a good job. He’s got a talent for it ... more than some people who’ve been doing this for years.”

None of the six has ever worked on a car before, but the CUT project is becoming a focal point in their lives. »

Mark is one of six participants in Customs for Urban Teens, a pilot program that’s giving urban youth a taste of auto customizing.





Early days of the rebuild: transforming this '65 Impala into a classic muscle car will require hundreds of hours, patience, imagination and a lot of TLC. Matthew (left) is one of six CUT program participants making it happen.

"Most of my family would say it stops me from getting into trouble," says Gordon. "I come in here and I'm pretty busy. ... It's fun ... a lot of work to do, and I get to learn a lot of new things. And I'm too tired to go back out when I get home."

Cameron, 23, is working on the frame, adjusting the air suspension, which they installed just last week. He proudly shows off his handiwork as the frame rises, like magic, with a hiss of air.

"I'm doing a lot of the framework," he says. "I took out the gas tank and the dashboard. But I'm not much on the bodywork. I'm more of a nuts-and-bolts dude. I'm sticking to the frame."

"We're going to trick it out with air ride, disc brakes, a really absurd sound and alarm system and some remote controls; maybe touchscreen," says McKim. "It's going to be awesome. And these guys are gonna do it."

CUT's goals go beyond just teaching the skills of welding, bodywork and putting together an engine. With every piece of sheet metal the participants weld onto the frame and hammer into shape, with every nut that threads smoothly into place, they develop confidence. As they build the car, they're also building self-esteem. The Impala is literally the vehicle for that transformation.

"It's difficult," says Chan, who is also a youth worker, "because, after 18, there's a real drop-off in youth programming. A program like this can keep kids out of trouble. They get to know all the parts of a car. They get the benefit of working with some very experienced rebuilders and they get a taste for the industry."

"I'd be ecstatic if some of these kids ended up in the trades," he says.

First they have to finish the car, though. They hope to raffle it off to make enough money to fund another rebuild.

The whole CUT program runs on little more than enthusiasm and goodwill. A local aboriginal urban youth organization – Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association – donated the space in exchange for half the seats in the workshop. Britannia Centre gets the other half. McKim, Clark and Chan volunteer their time. They also bring in their own large tools. And they've called in a lot of favours. Hundreds of dollars in parts and tools have been donated or sold at cost by local suppliers. Some donors have committed money; another is paying for food.

But when Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council sent a cheque for \$5,000, it was enough to jump-start the program. "Yeah, we basically started the day we cashed the

Foundation cheque," says Chan laughing. "And we'll finish sometime this fall."

Gordon, for one, can't wait to see the finished product.

"Hopefully we get this done soon so we can actually see it up and running," he says.

Ironically, even though he and the other participants will each spend more than 150 hours rebuilding the car, they won't get to drive it, since none of them has a driver's licence. But riding on a cushion of air in a classic muscle car you've put together with your own hands, the deep-throated rumble of a V8 in your ears – that will bring a smile to your face and a sense of satisfaction. No licence needed. **VF**

To learn more about the CUT program, or donate to it, visit the website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca or call Chiho Chan at 604-789-9391.

A brush with the past

BY CATHERINE CLEMENT
PHOTOS: JAIME KOWAL



Master artist Siu Chang Wong poses with some of his work. Chang is teaching a course in traditional Chinese painting to seniors in South Vancouver.

The lined faces in the elderly crowd watch in awe as master artist Siu Chang Wong gently glides his fine, horsehair brush over delicate rice paper. With a few fluid strokes, a beautiful image is born.

The audience is impressed. But they're also watching carefully, because soon it will be their turn to take up brushes.

"The black ink is the most important part," the soft-spoken Wong says, a perpetual smile in his eyes. "Coloured paint is just used to complement the black ink. It is the ink that allows you to create shade and depth."

The seniors – some Chinese, others South Asian and Caucasian – are gathered at Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House in South Vancouver for lessons in traditional Chinese brush painting and calligraphy. Each is expected to try his or her hand at painting and producing works of art.

The free course has been organized by a diminutive dynamo named Mabel Leung. A senior citizen herself, fast-talking Leung is the ultimate volunteer and organizer. She can fire off a list of her volunteer projects at such a rate you can't write them down fast enough.

It was Leung's background in the arts (she got a Fine Arts degree in Hong Kong) and a love of giving back to the community that sparked her idea of bringing traditional Chinese brush painting to Canadians.

She says she wanted to introduce the beauty of the ancient art form to people in her adopted country, hoping to show that anyone could learn to paint if they were willing to observe and open to expressing themselves. In particular, she wanted to reach out to senior citizens, many of whom live in isolation, have little money and enjoy few creative outlets.

"I met a woman who, in her 90s, started learning how to do Chinese brush painting," Leung recalls. "Even though she had never painted before, she turned into an amazing artist.... She did the best bamboo painting I have ever seen."

Leung turned to Master Wong to help fulfil her dream. Wong is a well-known traditional Chinese brush-painting artist who immigrated to Canada in 1969. His humble demeanour belies a man with

extraordinary talents. His paintings have been published and also featured in exhibits across Canada, and several of his works hang in private collections. His watercolours span a range of subjects, although he's partial to painting birds and insects.

"Mr. Wong is very generous," says Leung. "He has donated many of his paintings to raise money for charity."

So it wasn't a stretch for Wong when Leung asked him to volunteer as instructor for the seniors course.



Leung applied for and received a small grant of \$500 from Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grants program. To ensure the course would be free, she had the classroom space donated by Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House, and decided all paints and inks would be shared. That way no one would have to buy supplies.

"At first, some of the seniors were hesitant. They spent the first workshop just watching how it was done," Wong says.

"Traditional Chinese brush painting is very different from painting with oils or acrylics. You need to learn how to hold the brush."

Before they knew it, the little classroom was overflowing with a cross-cultural group of eager seniors, clamouring to make their own art pieces. One such student was Joseph Ho, a former civil servant from Hong Kong. Ho had learned Chinese calligraphy at the age of 17. Now retired, and with more time on his hands, he was eager to learn more about Chinese art forms.

"I took a contemporary Chinese painting course, but also wanted to learn the more traditional techniques," the youngish-looking Ho says. "The big difference between contemporary and traditional Chinese painting, which are both done with watercolours, is that the traditional style doesn't use any backgrounds."

After only 10 months of study and practice, Ho has developed into an accomplished painter, and says he plans to take more of the workshops. It's more than just learning to paint that attracts him to the course; it's fellowship with other retirees.

Some seniors have benefited in unexpected ways. One woman, who struggled for several years looking after her ill husband, says she has found refuge in painting, and feels a sense of peace whenever she gets a chance to create. Chinese brush painting offered a chance to escape the stresses and strains of her daily life.

These are the riches and benefits Leung wanted to share with others. And she's grateful for the small grant that helped make it possible.

"We are very thankful to Vancouver Foundation," she says with a slight bow of her head.

And dozens of Vancouver seniors are grateful to Leung for bringing the past into the present; for bridging diverse cultures and rekindling artistic ability in those who may have long forgotten what it's like to be creative. **VF**

For more information on the NSG program, visit Vancouver Foundation's website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca or call 604-688-2204.

A life on the bench

Retired chief justice reflects on his time in the air and a career grounded in law

BY CATHERINE CLEMENT

PHOTOS: JAIME KOWAL

THERE'S A SAYING IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION: "LAW IS THE ONLY GAME WHERE THE BEST PLAYERS GET TO SIT ON THE BENCH."

Few would argue that Donald Brenner – retired chief justice of the B.C. Supreme Court, who stepped down in September after nine years in the top job – was one of the best to sit on B.C.'s judicial bench in recent memory.

Brenner, an attractive 64-year-old who exudes a quiet confidence, has a legal mind and rationality that commands respect, but a relaxed grace and style that sets you at ease. If you didn't know what he did for a living, you might mistake him for a diplomat.

He was born in Toronto – the first child of a family brought together by the Second World War. Brenner's Canadian father was a torpedo bomber pilot who flew sorties over Europe, but "has never spoken about those experiences." His mother, who hailed from Edinburgh, was a war bride who gave birth to Brenner soon after arriving in her new country.

The family moved to British Columbia when Brenner was only four. For part of his early years, he lived on a ranch and dreamed of becoming a geologist. But when his father started an aviation company, Brenner turned his attention from the ground to the skies, earning his fixed-wing pilot's licence at the tender age of 17, then his helicopter licence.

"It's hard to say why flying is so attractive," muses Brenner. "It's something about moving in three dimensions: leaving the earth; needing to use all your senses, to be very present."

While still in his teens, Brenner spent several summers earning money by flying helicopters in B.C., Saskatchewan and Central and South America – transporting men and equipment

in and out of remote areas. "I worked dawn to dusk, seven days a week," he recalls.

There was seldom a dull moment. "There's an expression that flying a plane is hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror," Brenner laughs. "But flying a helicopter is said to be hours of sheer terror with only occasional moments of boredom."

The danger inherent in this work hit home one summer when Brenner lost a fellow helicopter pilot whose machine became entangled in hydro wires and plunged into Seton Lake, near Lillooet. Brenner was nearby at the time – he heard the other chopper lift off normally but then suddenly go silent.

"I looked and saw the bottom of the helicopter in the water with its two floats sticking up," Brenner says with a change of tone in his voice. "I jumped in my machine with another worker and we flew straight over to the lake. We got a line on the helicopter, but of course it had filled with water. I tried to lift it, but I couldn't. . . . We never did find his body."

Despite this sad experience, Brenner continued to fly during the summers while going to university. He went on to become one of the youngest commercial pilots at now-defunct CP Air, eventually becoming a Boeing 737 captain.

He could have continued his journey in the clouds, but Brenner was drawn back down to the earth by another interest he had developed while in his teens – law.

"I loved my first year of law school," Brenner recalls. "I was reading about real people with real problems and real cases that happened sometimes 200 to 300 years ago. I liked how the law helped them in solving their problems and resolving their disputes." »



After graduating, he ran his own private law practice for many years. But in the early '90s Brenner was approached to become a judge for the B.C. Supreme Court. It would mean a cut in pay, and closing down a law practice he enjoyed.

"I loved the issues, the clients. And the salary was good too. But my mother always emphasized the importance of giving back to our community. She always said: to those to whom much is given, much is expected," says Brenner. "That's why I accepted the post to the Supreme Court. It wasn't something I aspired to do."

In 2000 he found himself appointed to the post of chief justice. It hasn't been an easy job. Sometimes judges make controversial decisions and the resulting media furor can negatively affect public opinion of the "justice" of the justice system.

"It's a bit like the airline industry. Every day thousands of planes take off and land successfully, but you only hear about the ones where something seems to have gone awry," Brenner says.

"Judges must make decisions based on all the evidence and the law. Even the media, who report on these cases, don't have all the evidence in front of them that is available to the judge," Brenner says. "So a decision may not be popular, but it is based on all the evidence and on law."

When asked about his most difficult case while on the bench, without hesitation he replies, "The Blackwater Versus Plint case." One of the first cases of its kind in Canada, the trial centred on a group of former residents of the Alberni Indian Residential School who were seeking damages for abuse and wrongdoing.

The events in question took place between the 1940s and 1960s. The hearing before Brenner began in 1998 and did not conclude until 2001. "The case involved 132 trial days, and 32 plaintiffs when we started," says Brenner. Two of the plaintiffs died during the trial, one by suicide.

Brenner found the testimony emotionally draining. "I listened to evidence of physical and sexual abuse that went back many, many years but which involved people who were children at the time.... Basically these people were telling their stories – trying to describe what it was like as a six-, or seven- or eight-year-old to be forcibly taken from your family."

Besides being subjected to repeated physical and sexual abuse, former residents were not allowed contact with their siblings at the same school, and they were beaten for speaking their native language. Several were far from home and could not afford to return to their communities during holidays. The school became their prison.

"It was difficult hearing these plaintiffs tell their stories," says Brenner, who is a father of two and couldn't get out of his head that these horrible incidents had happened to young children. "But my difficulty was nothing compared to what they had to go through. My job was to listen, hear the evidence and make a decision. But they are the ones who had to live it, to go through it."

"Listening to them tell their stories was very important. That was a large part of the process. They wanted to tell their story and be heard because in their view nobody heard them for a long, long time. No one listened."



In a precedent-making decision, Brenner ruled in favour of the plaintiffs and awarded damages. His decision was ultimately upheld after various appeals that went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Much of Brenner's career involved listening to stories involving conflict. However, one of his duties as chief justice gave him the opportunity to hear about positive stories: his work with Vancouver Foundation.

A little known fact is that every chief justice of the B.C. Supreme Court is by statute also a member of the board of Canada's largest community foundation. Besides being a director of the organization for almost 10 years, Brenner also served on various committees, including heading the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee. Brenner believed in the work so much that he and his wife Robin set up their own endowment fund, enabling them to support projects now, while also leaving a lasting legacy to the community.

So although Brenner is stepping down from the bench, and stepping off the board of Vancouver Foundation, he isn't walking away from his community. In fact, he recently signed on to practise dispute resolution with Farris Vaughan Wills & Murphy LLP, a firm he spent a summer with as a law student in 1968.

Whether he's soaring through the skies or keeping his feet planted firmly on legal ground, one thing is certain – his family's endowment fund will be one of many legacies to our community. **VF**

Community Impact Fund

Tradition in the making and breaking

By KIMBERLEY FEHR
PHOTOS: KENJI NAGAI



Bill Reid's bronze *Bear Head* was created in 1981 as a prototype for a doorknob.

The smooth voice of legendary Haida artist Bill Reid echoes under the high ceilings of the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art. His larger-than-life image moves ghost-like across a movie screen. His presence is infused in the walls, in the art (look closely at the totem pole in the Audain Great Hall and Reid's face will look back at you) and in his unearthly work that embodies the essence of mystery and culture.

Martine Reid, impossibly elegant in a mauve suit that complements her flowing blonde hair, was married to the artist for

17 years before he passed away. Today she is guiding me on a tour of the Bill Reid Gallery, tucked away at 639 Hornby Street in front of a beautiful green square in downtown Vancouver.

"We want it to be as if Bill were taking you by the hand and saying, 'I'm giving you a tour of my jewellery box,'" says Martine in her gregarious French accent. Martine is an anthropologist and consulting curator with the gallery. It was her gift of the Bill Reid Collection, worth \$3.4 million, and the support of the federal government, that led to the gallery's creation. »



Above: A mask by Philip Gray.
Right: Shawn Hunt's *Trickster*.

The result is the same hushed feeling you get in Paris in the Rodin Museum, or Amsterdam at the Van Gogh Museum: as though you are in the presence of greatness. Home to the largest public collection of his works in the world, the gallery includes Reid's eight-and-a-half-metre-long bronze frieze *Mythic Messengers*, and a full-scale totem pole carved by Reid's apprentice James Hart of Haida Gwaii. The gallery takes you on the journey of Reid's life from his time as a 28-year-old CBC radio announcer to him becoming one of the great artists of our time – a journey back to his Haida roots and beyond.

Opened in May 2008, the Bill Reid Gallery received philanthropic support from many, including a \$20,000 grant from Vancouver Foundation donors to help display the permanent collection.

"Our goal is not to create a shrine to Bill Reid," says Martine. "What Bill did was bring back the magic; the power of the work; the well-made object by adding new skills and technologies and crossing

boundaries. Many of the techniques Bill used did not exist among the Haida at all."

Reid led a renaissance of canoe carving among the Haida, creating a 50-foot craft, the Lootas, for Expo '86 in Vancouver. He chose to carve the Lootas in Skidegate on Haida Gwaii, with the help of several assistants. "He did it there because he wanted to train his assistants with new skills for their well-being," Martine says.

When Expo was over, the Haida paddled the canoe back home in a weeklong journey. In 1989, the Lootas went to Paris and travelled the Seine, before being displayed at the Museum of Man. When Reid died in 1998, the canoe was used to transport his ashes to Tanu, his grandmother's ancestral home. Now villages up and down the coast are carving their own canoes, says Martine.

Reid also took jewellery-making skills learned in London, England in 1968-69 and applied them to Haida bracelets to make the pieces more three-dimensional. Some were even based on tattoo designs. The work he did was not traditional, says Martine, but it has become traditional now.

"Tradition is a lie," she says. "Tradition is not something fixed. Things have always been borrowed since the beginning of time; ideas as well as things – tangible and intangible things. This is how a culture remains alive."

The Bill Reid Gallery's latest show, appropriately called *Continuum*, commissioned 23 up-and-coming Aboriginal artists to turn tradition upside down with new works of art.

Two of the artists played off Reid's famous work at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, *Raven and the First Men*. Heiltsuk artist Shawn Hunt's *Trickster* painting depicts Raven on top of a tin of Campbell's Soup, with the trickster smiling out from his body.

Tlingit artist Nicholas Galanin displays a roughshod rendition of Reid's masterpiece, in contrast with the smooth, sleek carving usually seen in Northwest Coast art.



Titled *Raven and the First Immigrants*, Galanin outsourced the carving of this work to a chain-saw artist in Oregon.

"Nicolas is a very fine jewellery artist and we were expecting a piece of jewellery, and this is what we got," says Martine. "But it says a lot about cultural appropriation."

Kelly Cannell goes beyond traditional Coast Salish style by putting

horses and hoofprints on an elegant rendition of a Coast Salish paddle in yellow cedar, while Heiltsuk artist Ian Reid (no relation) takes traditional Chilkat blanket designs and transposes them in black and yellow onto a raven's beak on a mask, which has never been done before.

And then there's Sonny Assu, a 34-year-old Kwakwaka'wakw artist.

"I see Bill Reid as one of my mentors. I never met him. But I studied his work extensively," says Assu.

Martine gestures to Assu's acrylic painting *iPotlatch v2 10,000 Ancestors in Your Pocket*, which curves and undulates in pinks and reds, faintly reminiscent of Aboriginal motifs. "This doesn't look like First Nations art, does it? It's an indigenous iPod," she says.

This is the idea behind *Continuum*. "They explore the traditions and rituals, but there are new ways of expressing things," says Martine. "We don't want to be boxed in the past. This work shows that the gallery is alive." VF

The Bill Reid Gallery received support from the Vancouver Foundation Community Impact Fund. For information, call 604-688-2204. Contact the Bill Reid Gallery at 604-682-3455 or www.billreidgallery.ca. *Continuum* runs until January 31, 2010.

Safeguarding the Delta

Trust preserves a way of life for farmers and birds

By Kimberley Fehr



The short-eared owl is a vulnerable species that relies on Delta farmland for habitat.

Thick clouds hang overhead as David Bradbeer walks softly and silently across an unused farm field in Delta, orchard grass, red clover and creeping red fescue underfoot. Suddenly several short-eared owls burst from the grass in erratic moth-like flight, a flurry of mottled tawny feathers and flashes of yellow-orange eyes. Bradbeer, who is the program coordinator for the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, says he has never seen so many in one place before. The seven owls circle in the sky, waiting for him to pass so they can return to roost in the field, at least for now.

The trust's bird surveys found that this type of field, of all the fields in Delta, is the choice of the short-eared owl, a vulnerable

bird whose national population fell 27 per cent over 10 years, and is on the B.C. government's Blue List, which inventories species of "special concern."

What makes this particular field special is that it's on the third year of a four-year vacation from production, thanks to the trust, which pays farmers to enhance their land for wildlife. They plant a proven recipe of grasses and clovers, which allows the owls' favourite food, the Townsend's vole, to proliferate madly, making the field a virtual smorgasbord.

The trust runs this and other programs with the goal of improving the quality of Delta farmland – which degrades with constant vegetable production – while enhancing habitat for wildlife.



David Bradbeer, Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust program coordinator, makes a site visit to one of several farms currently lying fallow to generate habitat for birds and wildlife.

“We live in a world where we’ve lost a lot of natural areas; we’ve lost a lot of life and we will continue to lose it as development pressures affect what remains,” says Bradbeer.

Long before Delta was a city, the only map it was on was an imaginary map of birds. An estimated five million birds pass through the area each year via the Pacific Flyway, a highway in the sky for migrating birds such as the snow goose, which travels some 4,000 kilometres to summer at Wrangel Island in Siberia, and the rough-legged hawk, which breeds anywhere from here to the Arctic – as well as vulnerable species like the American Bittern and the fannini subspecies of the Great Blue Heron. And the short-eared owl.

The trust received \$2.25 million in 1993 from the Vancouver Airport Authority Habitat Conservation Program to compensate wildlife like the short-eared owl for habitat lost due to airport expansion. The money was used to establish a fund at Vancouver Foundation, which has “provided a steady stream of income for our work over the last

15 years,” according to Bradbeer. Vancouver Foundation donors have also granted \$75,000 over the years to fund various agricultural schemes for farmers.

Over 40 Delta farmers participate in the trust’s programs, including Jack Zellweger, who has partaken of every farm improvement scheme the trust offers. On this rainy day in May, Zellweger has the weight of water on his mind as he gazes at the thick, grey sky looming over his Westham Island farm, a slight furrow in his brow.

“One big rain is like 100 tonnes of water that comes out of the sky,” says Zellweger, 53, who has been a farmer all his life. “Think of how much that weight affects the soil. It makes a layer that doesn’t drain properly. It lies there and smothers everything. It leaches nutrients from the soil. It makes our land less capable of supporting things – ducks and everything.”

Zellweger received support from the trust for laser-levelling, which helps ease his water worries by evening out the land and preventing stagnant pools from gathering,

as well as for liming, which improves the soil’s pH balance.

“Development pressures mean more farmers can’t afford to own the land,” says Bradbeer. “It might not be worth their while to invest in expensive liming and laser-levelling if they don’t know if they’re going to have the land in five years.”

Much like the short-eared owls, farmers are feeling the pressures of change. Right now Zellweger is in a quandary. The food processing companies that bought his peas, beans and corn shut down their local operations, so all he has left is seed potatoes. Now he has to figure out what else to grow and how to sell it.

“I don’t know if there’s going to be any processing crops next year at all,” he says as he looks out over his fields. A nearby farm sold for \$100,000 an acre, and the buyer put radio towers on it. “They’ll never grow a vegetable on that land again,” he says.

Current farming statistics are hard to come by. Metro Vancouver’s Census of Agriculture report shows the number of farms in the region fell 24 per cent from 1996 to 2006. As of 2006, nearly half of Metro Vancouver farmers earned less than \$10,000. And they’re getting older: the number under 35 years old decreased by 66 per cent. Half rely on paid work off the farm.

“It’s still difficult to make the connection between the farmers producing the food out here in Delta and the city right next to it,” says Bradbeer. “It’s cheaper to buy food halfway around the world and ship it here, on a per-cost basis.”

In Delta, the report shows the size of greenhouse operations surged 300 per cent from 1996 to 2006, which means less farmland, and less habitat for birds.

“If we lose these farmers, we lose the capability to produce nutritious food close to our city,” says Bradbeer. “As time goes on, this may become an issue. At the same time, because of [our] location on the Pacific Flyway, farms here provide crucial habitat for a slew of migratory birds. And if we lose the farmers, we lose that too.” **VF**

To support the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, call Kristin Helgason at Vancouver Foundation at 604-688-2204. To learn more, visit the organization’s website: www.deltafarmland.ca.

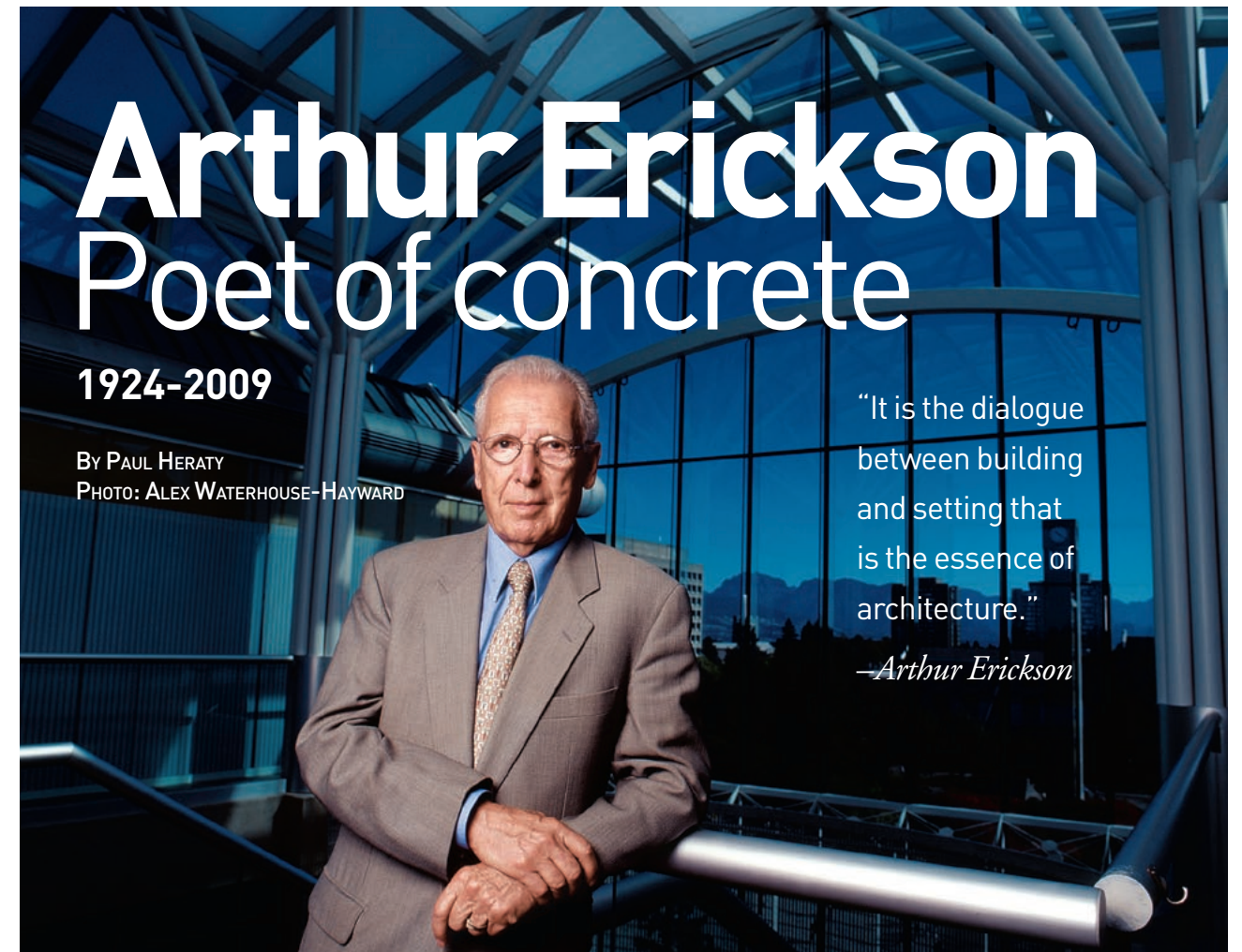
Photo: Kimberley Fehr

Arthur Erickson

Poet of concrete

1924-2009

By PAUL HERATY
Photo: ALEX WATERHOUSE-HAYWARD



“It is the dialogue between building and setting that is the essence of architecture.”

—Arthur Erickson

There is no more fitting place to celebrate the achievements of Arthur Erickson than Simon Fraser University.

And some would say there is no other place where the dialogue between building and setting can be heard as loud – on top of a mountain, at a university that is itself a bold experiment in built form, defined by concrete and glass, full of light and fresh air and redolent with possibility.

The fact that Erickson designed this space – where hundreds have come June 14 to honour him and his memory – to be a place of gathering and discourse; that this project, which was his first major commission, would catapult him onto the international stage in 1963; and that this very day would have been his 85th birthday, is all achingly appropriate.

Erickson was born in Vancouver on June 14, 1924, and he died here on May 20, 2009. Between these dates he travelled and studied widely, and created buildings that were (and still are) controversial. He won awards, went bankrupt, kept working, made a comeback and changed the landscape of Canadian architecture forever.

His work is known around the world and includes Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Kunlun Apartment Hotel in Beijing and the Kuwait Oil Complex in Kuwait City.

But we know him best for his projects in southwestern British Columbia: Simon Fraser University, the UBC Museum of Anthropology, Robson Square, the Koerner Library, the Waterfall Building and numerous private homes.

At the June celebration, the late Abraham Rogatnick spoke movingly of his friend and fellow architect.

“Arthur was eloquent with words. But he became most renowned as an architect whose life and whose work can be seen as a long and lyrical – but silent – poem, a song without words,” he said. “We still walk the many poetic paths that he created. Alas the poet is gone, but the poem of his long life journey lives on.”

To commemorate Erikson’s work, and to help future students of architecture, Erikson’s family created the Arthur Erickson Foundation for Excellence in Architecture at Vancouver Foundation.

“Arthur was always a student of the arts. He never stopped questioning and learning, and challenging assumptions,” says his nephew Christopher Erickson. “He brought the same intellectual rigour and passion to architecture. We thought the best way we could honour his spirit and his legacy was by creating a permanent fund in his memory.”

The Arthur Erickson Foundation for Excellence in Architecture can receive donations at any time and in any amount. Income from the endowment fund will be used to support deserving students of architecture in B.C. **VF**

For more information about the Arthur Erickson Foundation for Excellence in Architecture, or to donate to the fund, visit the Foundation website at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/arthurerickson or contact Peter Jackman at peterj@vancouverfoundation.ca or 604-629-5357.

The King of Swing

BY PAUL HERATY
PHOTO: ALEX WATERHOUSE-HAYWARD

Dal Richards,
still swinging at 91.

It's 9 a.m. on Tuesday morning, and I'm waiting my turn to interview Dal Richards – famed band leader, sax player, Freeman of the City, philanthropist and nonagenarian.

Richards is being interviewed by a local TV station. This is just the first in a long series of events today, as we are informed by Muriel Honey, his wife of nine years and Keeper of the Schedule.

She hands him a binder, and he flips through to see what's happening today. It's packed full. After more than 70 years of playing music professionally, Richards is still busy.

He picks up a saxophone and obliges the cameraman with a few riffs, closing his eyes, lost in the sweet notes that fill the room.

One of the first things you notice about Richards is that no matter what the time of day – and right now it's early for a musician – he's always sharply dressed. Today, it's a jacket and tie that would do Harry Rosen proud, with a matching pocket square.

And he has a wicked sense of humour, which he wears effortlessly, like the trademark tux and bow tie. A wry insouciance with a touch of self-deprecation; sarcastic, yet surprisingly not world-weary.

Richards was named after Dr. Dallas Perry, the doctor who delivered him at Vancouver General Hospital on January 5, 1918.

"You know, I've run into three other males in my life who were named Dallas," says Richards, "all delivered by the same doctor... he must've had quite a bedside manner."

Two doctors have played important roles in Richards' life. One was his namesake. The other was the reason he got into music.

At the age of nine, Richards put out his left eye when he tripped and fell on a slingshot while playing in the woods of Marpole. During his recovery he was confined to a darkened room for almost six months. He grew despondent. The family doctor suggested music as something to keep him occupied. His parents bought him a clarinet, and the rest, as they say, is big band history.

While he was still in high school at Magee Secondary, Richards started a small band. "We played at the golf clubs – Point Grey, Shaughnessy and Marine Drive – for \$10 a weekend, a lot of money in those days," he says. He rode the rising tide of swing all the way to Hotel Vancouver.

The Panorama Roof at Hotel Vancouver was the premiere venue for big bands. "Dal Richards and his Orchestra" played the Roof for the first time on April 26, 1940 when Richards was 22 years old. The gig ended up lasting 25 years and made him famous as Canada's King of Swing.

But by the mid-1960s, fashion and musical tastes had changed dramatically. Big bands were no longer in style, and bookings started to dry up. At 50, Richards went back to school, earning a diploma in hotel management at BCIT. For two years, it was courses during the day and then, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. each night, playing with his combo at the Holiday Inn on Howe Street.

After a dozen years in hotel sales, the pendulum swung back to swing in the 1980s, and Richards was ready. He picked up the baton again, regrouped his band, and started playing for a whole new generation of fans. Dal Richards and his Orchestra haven't stopped since. At 91, Richards plays clarinet, alto sax and tenor sax, and conducts the band through more than a hundred gigs a year.

He premiered his latest CD, *Dal Richards and Friends, One More Time*, at the Vancouver International Jazz Festival last July. With a schedule that would exhaust people half his age, Richards hosts a regular half-hour show on CISL radio, and he's an active volunteer with the Variety Club, the B.C. Entertainment Hall of Fame and Vancouver AM Tourism Association. He was also chosen as one of 12,000 people who will carry the Olympic flame in the Torch Relay for the 2010 Winter Games.

Richards has an eye for finding new talent. One of the people he discovered in his early years was a teenage singer whose only previous performing experience was the Kitsilano Showboat. Juliette Sysak took the stage at the Orpheum Theatre in front of Richards' band in June 1940. She was soon singing regularly with the band and went on to host one of the most popular television variety shows in Canada, *The Juliette Show*.

Twelve years ago, Richards was one of the judges at a PNE talent contest, when his ears perked up at the stylings of one particular contestant – Michael Bublé. Bublé won the contest and was soon singing with Dal Richards and his Orchestra, and was featured in a show called *Stars of the New Millennium*. Richards has eased the way for many musicians, including jazz pianist Michael Kaeshammer and trumpet player/vocalist Bria Skonberg. "She's going to be a star," says Richards with conviction.

Richards has always championed and nurtured new talent, usually by giving them a chance to play or sing with the band. But he started to think about another way to give back to the musical community – setting up a fund to help future generations of musicians.

The perfect opportunity came along in January 2008 when close friends, family members and fans of all ages gathered to celebrate Richards' 90th birthday at a gala dinner dance at Hotel Vancouver January 5, and a celebratory concert at the Orpheum January 6.

The concert was an unforgettable night, with many local musicians and singers taking part. For the finale, Jim Pattison came on stage with his trumpet and led the crowd in a spirited rendition of Happy Birthday, and then presented Dal with a cheque for \$100,000. "Nearly knocked me off the stage," says Richards. "And that was the start of the Dal Richards Foundation at Vancouver Foundation."

Richards used the proceeds from his 90th birthday celebrations to set up a fund at Vancouver Foundation to support music programs for kids and young adults across B.C., and to provide talented young musicians with scholarships. His goal is to promote musical education, and relieve the financial pressures most young musicians face.

Everyone recognizes the contribution Richards has made over the years to the community. Now we can recognize the contribution he'll continue to make through his endowment fund. Long live the King of Swing. **VF**

Vancouver Foundation is honoured to assist Dal Richards in helping B.C. musicians do what they love – play music. For more information about the Dal Richards Foundation, or to donate, visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca or call 604-688-0244.

Yes you can... can!

Preserving your own food is in, and one B.C. community is on top of the trend

By ANDREA MAJORKI
PHOTOS: TIFFANY BROWN COOPER

Martha Bayer is preserving more than peaches; she's passing on valuable skills to future generations.

Susan Faehndrich-Findlay is a grassroots community leader in South Vancouver, a mother of four and, until recently, a wannabe canner. Living sustainably is important to her. And so is the health of her family. These factors, combined with her knowledge about preservatives and dangerous chemicals such as bisphenol A in the liners of tin cans, got her thinking about ways to preserve and store local produce.

"Canning is a simple way to practise sustainable agriculture in our backyard," says Findlay. "If we want to support local farmers and have local options, we have to buy their goods. Since the season for fresh produce in B.C. is short, canning is a way I can enjoy summer's great bounty all year."

Canning was first used in the early 1800s as a way to preserve food for armies during the Napoleonic Wars in France. It became common in the 1930s, and a way of life for many families in

the following decades. But the skill of food preservation faded as consumers turned to the convenience of ready-to-eat and easy-to-prepare foods. Today, canning is once again emerging as a useful skill, due to concerns over food safety, buying local and doing what's best for the environment.

In the summer of 2009, Findlay had a plan to can – and the timing was just right. Farmers' fields were budding with the best of the season; strawberries were being picked, branches were bending under the weight of succulent peaches and heirloom tomatoes were starting to sprout on the vines. But now her dilemma: how do you can? She had tried in the past but had never gotten it quite right.

Findlay knew some of the women in her neighbourhood had been canning all their lives, and hoped they'd share their knowledge. While talking about her desire to can, she learned others were also interested. With \$500 from Vancouver Foundation, she

arranged three summer canning workshops – all perfectly timed to use the freshest produce available.

In mid-July, Findlay arrived at the South Hill Church kitchen with crates of fresh peaches, dozens of mason jars and a large bag of sugar. More than 20 women joined her. The youngest was seven-year-old Brianna, who came with her mother and grandmother. A woman from Columbia who spoke no English came with her daughter. Joining the group were seniors Martha Bayer and Agnes Neufeld, who had been canning most of their lives.

Bayer learned to can out of necessity. Fleeing the chaos of Germany during the Second World War, she arrived in Canada with three children. Not understanding English severely limited her job prospects, so she took a job as a dishwasher at a nearby restaurant.

"It was a struggle to provide food for my children," she recalls in a thick accent. "I needed to preserve whatever I was given from the restaurant or friends, so I learned to can. And I canned everything and never wasted anything."

Language, age and lack of canning know-how didn't stop anyone from jumping right in at the first seminar. Soon, hundreds

of peaches were washed, boiled, peeled, sliced and jarred. Conversations were just what you'd expect – noisy, intricate and full of enthusiasm. Many spoke of their concerns about tainted foods, preservatives and chemicals that affect your health. Stories were shared, recipes exchanged and friendships nurtured. And at the end of the evening, everyone left with their own jar of treasures to be shared with friends and family.

Findlay had gone from a wannabe to a skilled canner. She was already promoting workshops for tomatoes and pickles, with dates to be announced after the crops were harvested.

"Yes, I can can!" says Findlay. "I look forward to sharing the best of B.C. summer with my family in December. And I'll take pride that I created something from scratch, and that I know exactly what's inside." VF

To find out more about Neighbourhood Small Grants, or to donate to similar projects, visit www.vancouverfoundation.ca or call Meriko Kubota at 604-688-2204. For the recipe used at the South Vancouver peach canning seminar, visit: www.vancouverfoundation.ca/peaches.

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