

vancouverfoundation

Spring 2011

stories of modern philanthropy



GENERATION GREEN

Youth generate ideas
for a green city

FULL STEAM AHEAD

Celebrating Canada's
rail heritage

INDEPENDENT EDUCATION

Alternative school,
youth-run centre

BREAKING BARRIERS

High-tech solutions
for people with disabilities

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The First Word . . .

Going beyond the grant

Bob Dylan once wrote “the times they are a-changing” and that’s what is happening at Vancouver Foundation.

We’ve had some significant changes to our board: on May 1 we said goodbye to chair Jake Kerr and directors Ursula Botz and John Dustan. At the same time, we welcomed new chair, Gord MacDougall, and new directors Tom Bradley, Tung Chan, Anna Fung, Paul Lacerte and Malik Talib. You can find out more about these changes on pages 10 and 27 of this issue.

In March we lost a very good friend: past director and Honorary Governors’ Council member, former B.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Donald Brenner. His grace, style and intelligence, along with an incredibly strong commitment to the public good, will be deeply missed.

Meanwhile, there has been one other major change: a new strategic plan for 2011-2014. The underlying themes of this new plan are “focus to have greater impact” and “partnerships for greater impact.”

While Vancouver Foundation will remain a broad funder, supporting a wide variety of community projects, we also recognize that to have a significant impact on any of the bigger challenges facing our community, we need to focus our efforts on specific priorities. Within our fields of interest, we are investigating how to improve the impact of our funding by honing in on key needs within each field.

At the same time, we are undertaking an extensive consultation/research project to determine one or two community issues we can support in greater depth with our unrestricted funds.

It will mean not only choosing one or two issues – these could be current or emerging challenges – it also means going beyond simply giving grants, to harnessing additional resources, engaging in more public education, and developing partnerships to address the issues.

We are also happy to report on the stability and strength of our 2010 investment returns. Despite lingering market uncertainties and a slower-than-expected recovery in the U.S., we had good returns last year with our portfolio. In 2010, our Consolidated Trust Fund yielded a return of nine per cent, which allowed us to increase our distribution rate in 2011.

We’re not breaking out the bubbly yet, but these are significant positive returns, and they bode well for the future. And the future is where we are focused.

Exciting times. We are always looking ahead. Our long-term goal remains unchanged: healthy, vibrant and livable communities in B.C. We are just refining how we get there.



Gord MacDougall
Chair, Board of Directors
Vancouver Foundation

Faye Wightman
President and CEO
Vancouver Foundation

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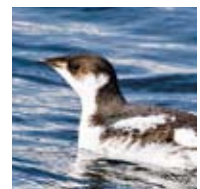
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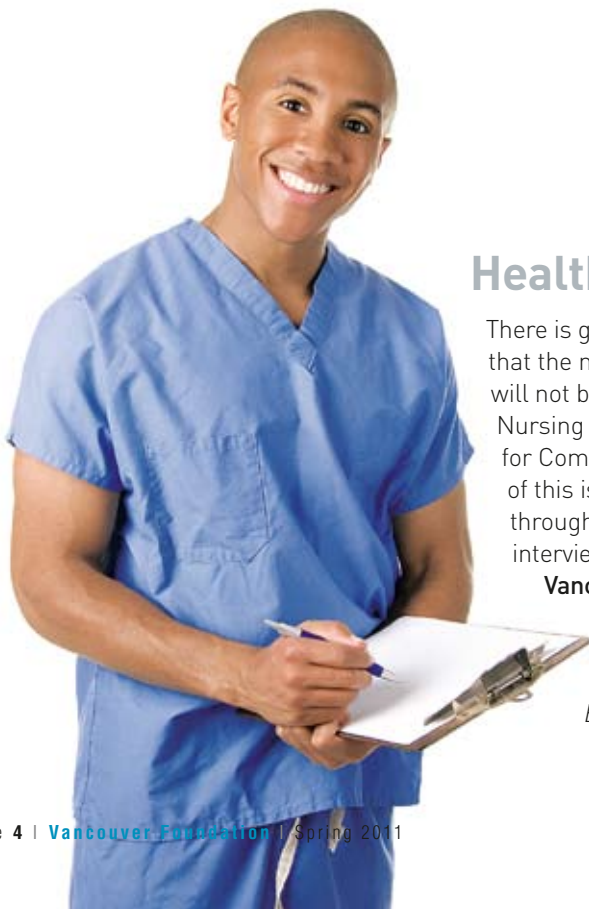
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Here are a few of the projects Vancouver Foundation and our donors recently supported

Can I Play Too?

Autism spectrum disorder occurs in about one in 110 children in B.C. The ability for social play, interaction and communication is a major issue for children with ASD, who are often alienated and bullied. In partnership with local professionals and parents, this project is running a new, innovative program called Can I Play Too? to help these children be more included. The project, run by the Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society, will support and improve the quality of life, province-wide, for children with ASD from ages three to 12.

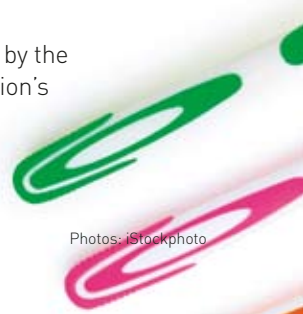
Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$25,000 to this project (this included a contribution by the Windsor Plywood Foundation through Vancouver Foundation's *Book of Opportunities*).

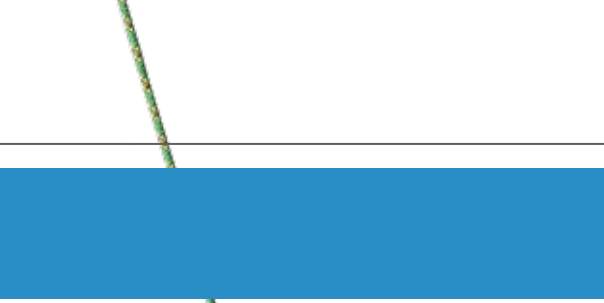


Health Care for Aging Adults

There is growing recognition among health-care professionals that the needs of aging adults with intellectual disabilities will not be met by our current system. The UBC School of Nursing partnered with the British Columbia Association for Community Living on a study to increase understanding of this issue, and to identify potential policy-practice gaps, through policy analysis, focus groups, and key informant interviews.

Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$13,696 to this project that could have implications province-wide (this included a contribution by the Tula Community Fund through the Foundation's *Book of Opportunities*).





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MCFD Gives \$1 Million to VF

B.C.'s Ministry of Children and Family Development has donated \$1 million to Vancouver Foundation. This gift is to support children with special needs, through the Giving in Action Society. The gift was generously matched by a **Vancouver Foundation** donor and will enable us to support families throughout B.C., as they seek greater access for their children to their homes and to the communities in which they live.

Giving in Action originated with a grant from the provincial government, and is administered by Vancouver Foundation. Since it began in 2006, GIA, through its Children & Youth with Special Needs Fund, has granted more than \$10 million to improve the lives of young people in B.C. who are living with a disability, and their families.



Dental Access in the Okanagan

This centre, run through the auspices of the First Nations Friendship Centre Society, will provide a full spectrum of dental services to low-income, marginalized populations. Located in downtown Vernon and servicing many North Okanagan communities, this innovative clinic model will be sustained through diverse funding sources including: client fees based on income; government dental plans; grants and fundraising; volunteer services; and the strong community support of over 30 local community agencies and government bodies.

Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$30,000 to this project (this included a contribution by the Tula Community Fund through Vancouver Foundation's *Book of Opportunities*).



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



Programs to Prevent Falls

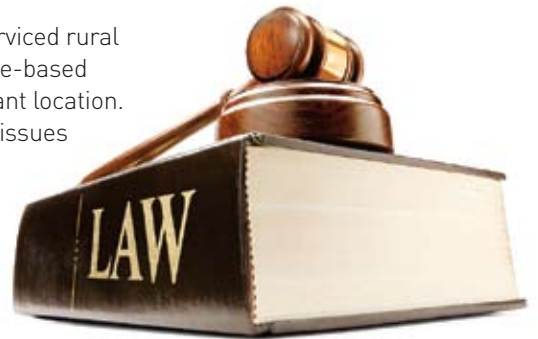
In B.C., Aboriginal peoples, compared to the general population, are three times more likely to die of a fall. Yet there is little research on fall prevention in Aboriginal communities in Canada. This project, conducted by the Fraser Health Authority, will develop a program of fall and injury prevention with Aboriginal communities located in the Fraser Health region using a participatory research approach.

Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$83,855 to this project.

Access to Free Legal Services

This project will extend pro bono legal advice services to people in un-served rural and remote communities, and to people with mobility issues. Using Skype-based tele-video clinics, local clients will connect to a pro bono lawyer in a distant location. For individuals who cannot attend a clinic, and/or whose qualifying legal issues are urgent, the project will offer a hotline for limited civil legal matters. The project, run by Access Pro Bono Society of British Columbia, will fund the design and modification of systems for the hotline, intake staffing, and the purchase of tele-video and hotline equipment.

Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$40,000 to this project.



Back to the Basics

The Back to the Basics project is based in Creston, and is run by the Creston and District Community Resource Centre Society. This project will see seniors and young families work together to grow and harvest food, prepare meals and host communal food events. Seniors will share gardening and cooking skills, and parenting stories. Young people will provide the energy and labour to get the more physical jobs done. Expected benefits of the project: participants will see improved nutrition; social activity will reduce isolation; communication and parenting skills will improve; and connections with supportive community partners and services will grow.

Vancouver Foundation donors contributed \$30,000 to this project.

To find out more about any of these projects, or to make a donation, call 604-688-2204.

rare birds

Volunteers work to protect the mysterious marbled murrelet that makes its home in B.C.'s old-growth forests

BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI | PHOTO PETER HALASZ AND U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fuzzy marbled murrelet chick

“They are just remarkable birds,” says Daniel Bouman, shaking his head in awe.

“They can dive over 150 feet down into the water to catch fish. Then they fly incredible distances – 70 to 80 km – inland back to their nest to feed their chicks or to sleep. And these are not big birds,” he says, indicating a distance of less than a foot with his hands.

“For the longest time, they were quite a mystery: no one could figure out where they nested. Finally, volunteer researchers found a nest in 1995 in an old-growth tree on the Sunshine Coast. It turns out they need a nice wide mossy tree branch to nest on,” Bouman continues with enthusiasm.

“They are so adapted for diving they’re not very good flyers, so they also need to nest a good distance from the ground, because otherwise they can’t get themselves launched,” Bouman chuckles. “That’s one of the reasons they are so dependent on old-growth forest habitat.”

The bird in question is the fabled marbled murrelet. Bouman is executive director of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, and he has become very familiar with the ways of the marbled murrelet. A hearty older man with a wry grin, Bouman is trying to protect the bird’s habitat on B.C.’s Sunshine Coast. The marbled murrelet is listed as threatened under Canada’s Species at Risk Act, and British Columbia is home to over one quarter of the global population of marbled murrelets.

“In the South Coast region, marbled murrelets have been in rapid decline, related to the logging of old-growth forests and more recently the decline of forage fish species,” Bouman explains.

With funding from Vancouver Foundation, the SCCA is identifying the 50 most important marbled murrelet habitat sites on the Sunshine Coast and submitting them for “nomination” to the Province. Bouman sees this as the first step to getting this critical marbled murrelet habitat protected.

The SCCA is also assembling scientific and historical data to nominate the 12 largest salmon spawning watersheds in the area as

Fisheries Sensitive Watersheds, as designated by the B.C. Ministry of Environment. “This is work the government really ought to be doing. But no marbled murrelet habitat or Fisheries Sensitive Watersheds have been nominated in the five years since the legislation came out. So we’re trying to help them out,” Bouman says dryly.

While many think of the Sunshine Coast as a rural area with lots of wilderness, Bouman notes that only three per cent of the land in the area is protected in parks, compared to an average of 14 per cent in the rest of B.C. “The Sunshine Coast has really been neglected,” says Bouman.

That’s why SCCA’s project also includes a vigorous public education component. “The public really wants to know what’s going on, and we want to inform them. We want to bring people to a scientific understanding of the issues so they can be more effective in making decisions about what’s right outside their back door,” Bouman explains. To that end, the SCCA is creating presentations for the public and local government, as well as a web-based multi-layered map of the murrelets’ habitat.

“This project has several different aspects leading to one greater purpose. By protecting marbled murrelet and salmon habitat, we also protect other vulnerable species that live in the same ecosystem,” says Bouman. “By educating the public, we aim to create a real understanding of biodiversity issues among the general population that will help protect the marbled murrelet, the salmon, the plants, and all the other inhabitants of the Sunshine Coast’s old-growth forest ecosystems long into the future.”

Bouman smiles a craggy smile. “And this project wouldn’t be happening without Vancouver Foundation. So on behalf of the marbled murrelets, the salmon, and the people of the Sunshine Coast, thanks.” **VF**

For more information about the work of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, visit its website: www.thesc.ca

vancouver foundation

GENERATION GREEN

AWARDS

CELEBRATING YOUNG IDEAS FOR GREEN NEIGHBOURHOODS



eco ideas

Youth-driven projects are greening Vancouver neighbourhoods

| BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI

Delivering packages in downtown using trikes equipped with cargo bins.

Planting public vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Students on bikes picking up organic waste from local businesses and transporting it to community compost bins at their school, projects to help us think differently about when we eat at restaurants ...

These are just a few of the fabulous youth-driven green projects now underway as a result of Vancouver Foundation's new Generation Green Awards.

This special, one-time-only project evolved after Vancouver set the ambitious goal of becoming the world's greenest city by 2020.

"Vancouver Foundation does a lot of work with youth, and we knew that engaging young people aged six to 24 would be key to getting the city to its greenest city target," says Catherine Clement, a VP at Vancouver Foundation. "So as part of Vancouver's 125th-anniversary celebrations this year, the Foundation offered these special, one-time awards to show youth that they can make a tangible green difference – and to inspire people of every age to take action."

Clement's face lights up with enthusiasm as she describes the public response to the project. "People loved the idea, and we got a flood of applications – lots of very thoughtful, heartfelt, creative ideas. For that great response we must thank Yosef Wosk, who helped to fund the outreach to schools."

A youth jury (with some adult green allies) then selected 19 of the best projects, awarding \$12,500 for the best big projects and \$1,250 for the best small projects in each of three age categories. Award winners are now busy getting their projects up and running. Since the ultimate aim of Generation Green is to inspire environmental action throughout Vancouver, Clement says she's equally enthusiastic about the public engagement components of the project.

"We really want to know from Vancouverites which of these projects they want to see more of in their own neighbourhoods. So we'll be having a public vote on the projects in the fall, sponsored by Energy Czar Inc. In the meantime, we have weekly quizzes, where you can test your Green Vancouver IQ (we're proud to say some questions even stumped the city's green-minded chief engineer) and a green photo contest with some excellent prizes. So stay tuned!" **VF**



Keep in sync with Generation Green!

TEST your Green Vancouver IQ on our weekly quiz. Youth can win prizes from iTunes, Starbucks and Cineplex: www.vancouverfoundationawards.ca/#question-of-the-week

SUBMIT your best "green photos" to our gallery: www.vancouverfoundationawards.ca/#photo-contest

The best shots by youth will win one of three high-end cameras donated by London Drugs, Olympus and Panasonic.

WATCH each Generation Green project unfold at its own webpage at www.vancouverfoundation.ca/awards

LOOK for the results of the Generation Green projects in the November issue of *Vancouver Foundation* magazine.

STAY IN TOUCH :



Sign-up for our Twitter feed @VanFndGreen



Link to us on Facebook. Search for "Vancouver Foundation Generation Green Awards."

Sign-up for updates at the Generation Green website: www.vancouverfoundationawards.ca/signup

giving back

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTO JAIME KOWAL

Gord MacDougall is the new chair of the Vancouver Foundation board. But he's a veteran when it comes to giving back to the community

Gord MacDougall doesn't know exactly when he started to volunteer and give back to the community. He's just always done it.

"I've always been involved in what some people call charity work," he says. "As I reflect on it, my parents were very involved in non-profits – my father with Montreal Children's Hospital and my mother as a volunteer at the Royal Victoria Hospital. That didn't drive me into it, but it made me aware.

"I realized it's not that hard to give. A lot of people think that to contribute you have to give money. But you don't. You can give time; you can give guidance. I enjoy that a lot."

MacDougall was born in Montreal in 1946. As a young MBA graduate, he and his wife Barbara first came to the West Coast on a summer holiday in 1972. They liked Vancouver and the outdoor lifestyle so much that they decided to stay.

"In Vancouver, my first chance to give back to the community was with Junior Achievement. I really enjoyed that because it was young people. And I was young myself then," he says, laughing.

MacDougall looks much younger than his 65 years. Must be all that fresh air.

"Barb and I love the outdoors," he says. "We do a lot of golf, hiking, biking ... used to run a lot ... and we ski, both downhill and cross-country." MacDougall also spends time on the water. A self-proclaimed fair-weather kayaker, on weekends he will often head down the stairs from his house to the beach, pull out a kayak that's stored there, and paddle to Lighthouse Park and back before anyone else is even up.

Volunteering seems to be a natural outgrowth of MacDougall's numerous business and personal interests. As Vice-Chair of Connor, Clark & Lunn – one of the largest independent investment management firms in Canada – he has the financial acumen and experience that many non-profits desperately need. And he brings an unbridled enthusiasm for giving back.

So it was perfectly natural that, after Junior Achievement, MacDougall got involved with the Heart and Stroke Foundation

of BC & Yukon. Also, for almost 20 years, he was a director on the board of Intrawest, the company that made Whistler a world-renowned ski resort.

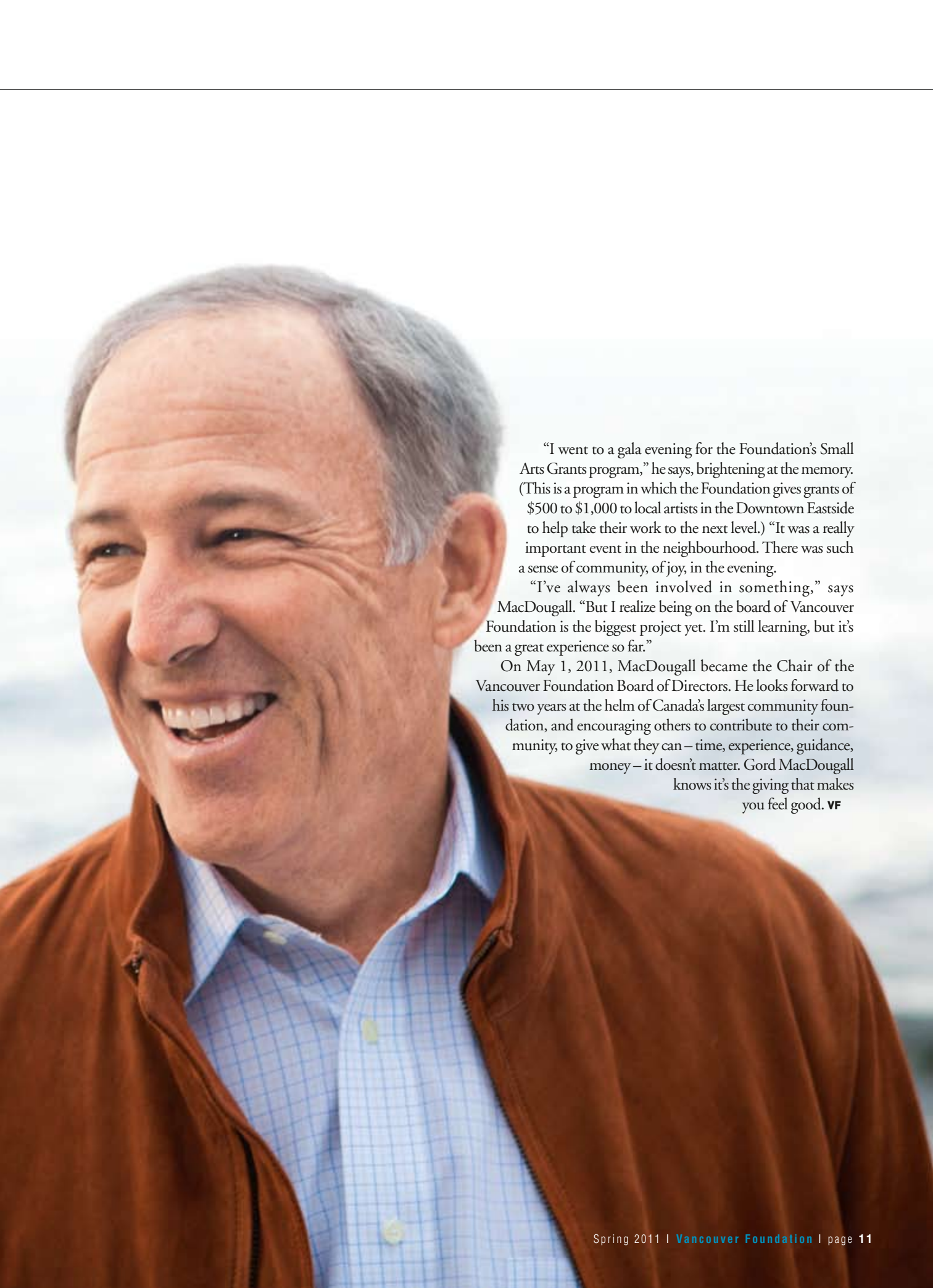
When his three kids were going to school, MacDougall started fundraising for education. And with a growing brood of grandchildren (three at last count, with two more expected this year), he may yet return to it.

Years ago, when he was just starting out in the investment field, MacDougall and his wife began collecting Canadian art – small pieces, whatever they could afford. They had a dream of eventually getting something by the Group of Seven. That early goal seems to have been forgotten. Because instead of A.Y. Jackson's windswept Ontario landscapes, their house is filled with work by Gordon Smith and Gathie Falk, along with a growing collection of West Coast art.

"It wasn't by design," says MacDougall. "That's just the way it ended up." And that's how MacDougall ended up being a director of the Vancouver Art Gallery for five years. "At the time, the Art Gallery didn't have a foundation, so we started one."

MacDougall's involvement with Vancouver Foundation began just three years ago. "I'd been aware of the Foundation for a long time, through friends and colleagues. And as I found out what the Foundation did, I became more interested because it's so far-reaching. It's in touch with a huge number of communities throughout the province."

MacDougall started by joining the Foundation's Investment Committee, which he chaired. It was his interest in art that gave MacDougall a glimpse of what Vancouver Foundation does at the grassroots level, and the impact that even a small amount of money can have.



“I went to a gala evening for the Foundation’s Small Arts Grants program,” he says, brightening at the memory. (This is a program in which the Foundation gives grants of \$500 to \$1,000 to local artists in the Downtown Eastside to help take their work to the next level.) “It was a really important event in the neighbourhood. There was such a sense of community, of joy, in the evening.

“I’ve always been involved in something,” says MacDougall. “But I realize being on the board of Vancouver Foundation is the biggest project yet. I’m still learning, but it’s been a great experience so far.”

On May 1, 2011, MacDougall became the Chair of the Vancouver Foundation Board of Directors. He looks forward to his two years at the helm of Canada’s largest community foundation, and encouraging others to contribute to their community, to give what they can – time, experience, guidance, money – it doesn’t matter. Gord MacDougall knows it’s the giving that makes you feel good. **VF**



School of Independence

Leni Giggins (top right) at the Purple Thistle, a youth-run centre in East Vancouver that provides an alternative to the traditional school system. Here, youth can take part in a diverse range of programs from film-making to gardening.





The youth-run Purple Thistle Centre empowers kids to direct their own learning

BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI | PHOTOS VINCENT L. CHAN

“The instant I heard about the Thistle, I knew it was for me,” says the mischievous-looking woman with the dark curls.

In fact, Leni Goggins wanted to be involved so badly that she moved from Vermont to Vancouver. “I tried out New York, but I thought, no, I really want to be part of the Thistle,” Goggins laughs.

Started in 2001, the Purple Thistle is a youth-run arts and activism centre that facilitates self-directed learning, providing an alternative for youth who weren’t thriving in the traditional school system. Goggins, as she puts it, “just showed up” on the Thistle doorstep one day in 2002. In short order, Goggins was part of the centre’s writing group. Then she started running the writing group, and later, she started producing ‘zines.

“Then someone said, ‘Why don’t you apply for funding to start your own magazine?’” Goggins says. “So I did.” Today she’s the editor of *Lester’s Army*, a magazine that explores the relationships between youth and seniors in Vancouver and attempts to help the two groups discover common ground.

“I have a career that I love, that I created for myself. That’s what the Thistle does: it gives people the skills to be self-directed,” says Goggins, who’s not only self-directed, she’s also remarkably capable and self-possessed. Now busy with her magazine and other projects, Goggins spends most of her time in her office in the Woodward’s building, but the Purple Thistle continues to provide a space for people (primarily youth from 15 to 30, although everyone is welcome) to pursue learning their own way.

Located in a building full of artist studios a few blocks from Vancouver’s Commercial Drive, the space brims with creativity. Frank Zappa music is playing, while a teenager improvises on a guitar. The guerrilla gardening group is arriving, hauling bikes upstairs and stripping off wet clothing.

Above their heads, bright yellow tissue flowers dangle from branches and bold origami cranes hang from the high ceilings. A dressmaker’s dummy sits idle

near sewing machines. There are computers for Internet access and filmmaking projects. Delicate gypsy pepper seedlings sprout in trays in a makeshift mini-greenhouse. Monstrous screen-printing and ancient animation machinery hulk in corners, while a door leads to a fully equipped darkroom.

High up on one wall, a massive whiteboard outlines the free classes (from silk-screening and yoga to animation and guerrilla gardening). The whiteboard also lists drop-in hours, when people are welcome to use the free art supplies or just hang out. Prominent on the whiteboard is the Thistle’s weekly collective meeting, which is open to everyone. Coordinators say a few hundred people use the Purple Thistle every week.

Vancouver Foundation has helped to support the Purple Thistle almost since its inception. As a “graduate” of the Thistle’s innovative avenue for independent learning, Goggins has no doubt about the value of her experience there.

“I’ve met a lot of people who have graduated from university, and who seem kind of lost. They seem to be looking to be directed from outside themselves to figure out what to do next,” says Goggins. “I’m not in that position. If I had gone to school to study for four years, I’d have a lot of training, but no magazine. I would now be climbing the corporate ladder, trying to become an editor. But by doing my own thing, I have ended up with very little formal education, but I’ve been able to put myself at the top of my own ladder. And I have four issues of quite a unique magazine under my belt,” says Goggins. “I’ve been able to do something that no one has done before.”

Goggins credits much of her success to her time at the Thistle. “I’ve seen a lot of similar situations—people who spent time at the Thistle who have moved on to working on their particular art form. The skills the Thistle helps people develop—being able to direct your own life and your own learning—I think those are just invaluable. They’ve totally been invaluable for me,” Goggins says, flashing her confident (and irresistibly impish) grin. **VF**



For more information on the Purple Thistle, visit www.purplethistle.ca For more information on *Lester’s Army*, visit <http://lestersarmy.com>

full steam

ahead



The *Royal Hudson* (above) steams past Porteau Cove. Don Evans (left) poses in front of the iconic steam locomotive, which has a new home in Squamish.



road

The *Royal Hudson* finds a new home in Squamish, where it serves as a regal reminder of Canada's railway heritage

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTOS TIFFANY BROWN COOPER AND KEN STOREY

Trains and love have at least one thing in common: everyone remembers their first experience.

For some, that first taste of rail might have been labouring over a scale model – Tyco HO or Lionel O Gauge – and many hours of careful assembly in the basement. Others will never forget seeing the real thing for the first time. For many on the West Coast, those memories are often linked to one iconic train – the *Royal Hudson*.

Some remember seeing the belching steam or hearing the almost-mournful whistle. Some lined the tracks, with thousands of others, just to catch a glimpse of the train. They remember the low rumble in their stomach, and the chatter of earth and rail as the train approached. Some may have even slipped a penny onto the track, just to see what happens. Or stood rooted, fingers stuffed in ears, looking up in childlike wonder as 365 tons of steel, steam and brass thundered out of the past, impossibly huge, obscuring everything else, then chugged magnificently around a corner, on its way up Howe Sound.

From 1974 to 1999, the *Royal Hudson* thrilled hundreds of thousands of people as it snaked its way from North Vancouver to Whistler, pulling a train of railcars filled with tourists and curious locals, showing many, first hand, a bit of Canadian history, and for others, kindling a lifelong affair with trains.

Don Evans is one of those people who never really got over his first train experience. He's been a rail enthusiast for more than 30 years. What was once a hobby is now a full-time preoccupation – some would say an obsession.

Evans is the president and CEO of the West Coast Railway Association. He and a dozen full-time staff and more than 100 volunteers are building Canada's second-largest train set, on 12 acres of bush in Squamish. And just like any serious builder, they're creating a town to go with their train set. But this is no model: these are full-size trains and a full-size turn-of-the-century town, complete with railway station, Main Street and houses filled with period furniture.

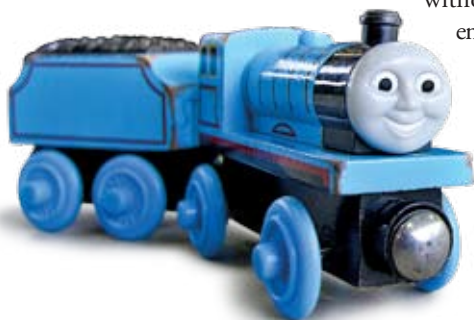
Since 1961, the WCRA has amassed a collection of 95 pieces of heritage railway rolling stock and countless railway-related artifacts. Evans and the volunteers are painstakingly restoring the railcars and accurately creating the town, right down to the china and napkins that adorn the cottage kitchen tables. In the process, they are re-creating an important era in Canada's past.

One of the prize pieces of the WCRA collection is the *Royal Hudson*. After a long and varied career, a close brush with the scrap yard, and a number of restorations, "2860" is now on permanent loan from the B.C. government to WCRA.

Evans and the rest of his crew speak with great affection (and great detail) about the black behemoth that rests delicately on two rails in a new facility on Government Road in Squamish. "She was built in 1940 in Montreal," says Evans. "She is 92 feet long (including the tender, which carries 12,000 gallons of water and 4,000 gallons of fuel oil) and she weighs 365 tons."

The interesting story behind this steam engine is especially timely for a couple of reasons. First, this Hudson has a new 22,000-square-foot home: the CN Roundhouse and Conference Centre was officially opened in Squamish on June 30, 2010. Earlier this year, a gala event marked the 50th anniversary of the WCRA.

Second, there is a connection to the recent movie *The King's Speech*. In this Oscar-winning film, Colin Firth plays the reluctant monarch George VI. In 1939, George VI became the first King to visit Canada. He and the Queen travelled across the country by rail. A bit of a rail buff himself, George apparently spent as much time as he could in the cab. The *Royal Train* was pulled the entire journey without incident by two sister engines of 2860. The King was so impressed that he agreed to have the Hudson class of steam engine designated as "Royal." Thus, we have the *Royal Hudson 2860*—one of only four such engines in the world, and the only one still running.



But 2860 is only one of many jewels in the collection, and it's far from the oldest. The oldest pieces are a luxurious business car from 1890, and a rare Canadian Pacific Colonist sleeping car from 1905. They represent both extremes of rail travel at the turn of the century: first class and no class. Over the last decade, both have been lovingly restored, literally from the wheels up, by volunteers.

The detailed inlays and exotic woods used in the cabinetry of the business car speak volumes about the craftsmanship and the attention to detail of the era. They are also a testament to the skill of those who have restored this time capsule on wheels. The bare necessities of the Colonist car contrast with the richness of the arti-

facts, the posters, and the information it contains.

The restoration work (virtually all of it is done by volunteers) goes on day after day, and two cars are typically restored each year. Vancouver Foundation is helping with that process.

"We've received three grants from Vancouver Foundation over the years," says Evans. "VF gave us a grant of \$20,000 in 1997 that enabled us to hire our archivist. The second grant was to build the big train doors on our 1914 car renovation shop. They're about 20 feet tall and 12 feet wide. And they finish off the preservation of the shop. The most recent VF grant was in 2004. We put about \$800,000 into the restoration of the *Royal Hudson* to get it back into operating condition. VF gave us \$25,000 toward that.

"Probably the most important part of our relationship with Vancouver Foundation is the establishment of our endowment fund, which is about \$1.4 million," says Evans. "The West Coast Railway Endowment Fund is part of our long-term sustainability plan to make sure the society is funded in the long haul.

"We are delighted that the fund is held and managed at the Foundation. The advice, the professionalism ... they have been wonderful to work with. And the income from the fund helps us continue our restoration work."

So, the next time you are driving on Highway 97 near Squamish, and you want to see history being made literally before your eyes, or if you're a student of Canadiana and want to spend a little time learning about the importance of rail in the development of this country, or you just want to see a really big train set, visit West Coast Railway Heritage Park, where Don Evans and his crew are lending new meaning to the term "full steam ahead." **VF**

For more information on the *Royal Hudson*, the West Coast Railway Association or to donate to the West Coast Railway Endowment Fund, visit www.wcra.org

Cathedrals OF SCIENCE

A choral group and a spinal cord research centre strike a common note as art and science come together under one roof

BY PAUL HERATY | PHOTOS J. EVAN KREIDER



The Vancouver Cantata Singers and orchestra rehearse in the Blusson Spinal Cord Centre at VGH.



What do Google, a security guard, Vancouver Cantata Singers, the Blusson Spinal Cord Centre, and Vancouver Foundation all have in common?

An unlikely combination, they are changing the face – and sound – of choral music in Vancouver and contributing to spinal cord research at the same time.

Many performing arts organizations in Vancouver are having a difficult time finding the right space. For Dave Carlin, general manager of Vancouver Cantata Singers, there are a limited number of appropriate venues in the city in which his 26-member ensemble can perform: the Orpheum, the Chan Centre, and churches.

Each of these venues presents problems. The Orpheum and Chan are heavily booked. And if you perform only in churches, people think you're a religious entity, which, despite their fondness for sacred choral music, VCS is not.

That's where Google comes in.

Almost three years ago, Carlin was looking online for unique spaces in Vancouver.

"I was looking for a number of things," he says. "We wanted to find a new space that was acoustically appropriate for what we do, and ease our reliance on churches. We also wanted to experience a different venue to stretch ourselves. And we wanted to reach a different audience and allow people to experience us in a different way.

"I was doing a Google search, and the Blusson Spinal Cord

Centre came up under 'interesting architectural spaces.' The building at 10th and Willow wasn't yet open to the public. It wasn't even finished. But the photographs were intriguing. It wasn't far from our offices, so Eric Hannan (artistic director of VCS) and I just walked over to have a look.

"It was still under construction; one of the workers let us in. Of course, as a musician, you're interested in the acoustics, so Eric walks into the space and starts to clap and sing. I'm sure the construction workers were wondering, 'What kind of nuts are these?'

"A security guard came up to us, and we explained who we were and what we were doing. He said you should really meet with Cheryl Niamath from ICORD (International Collaboration on Repair Discoveries). He said she's upstairs right now. 'If you'd like, I'll bring her down and you can meet with her.'"

Carlin and Hannan met with Niamath, administrative manager of ICORD. That was the start of a unique collaboration between two seemingly disparate organizations: Vancouver Cantata Singers, an award-winning choral ensemble; and ICORD, an interdisciplinary UBC Research Centre focused on spinal cord injury. At the centre of that collaboration is the Blusson building.

"The Blusson" is an amazing circle of coloured glass and concrete pinched in the middle, forming two lobes: it looks like an infinity symbol. The most dominant feature is a 200-metre-



(Left) It was standing-room-only when 400 people packed the atrium for a performance of new and traditional choral music. Vancouver Cantata Singers rehearse (above and below) songs from the program, *Cathedrals of Science*.



long ramp that winds sinuously around the inside perimeter of the building.

Designed by Vancouver's Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership in consultation with ICORD's researchers, the Blusson is one of the world's most accessible buildings. It's home to the Rick Hansen Institute, VGH's Brenda and David McLean Integrated Spine Clinic, and ICORD. The ramp is a vital part: it's used for exercise and access for people who use wheelchairs.

Besides being a beautiful building, the Blusson also happens to have amazing acoustics. The sound and the amount of reverberation varies depending on where you are in the building. It was a challenge learning how to use those qualities effectively. For Carlin and the Cantata singers, it was like learning to play a huge, six-storey, \$45-million instrument.

The partnership between VCS and ICORD deepened after successful fundraisers in 2009 and 2010. Carlin felt they were finally ready to present a full evening concert to a wider audience. He approached Vancouver Foundation for funding and got a grant of \$20,000 to proceed.

On February 26, 2011, with snow gently falling outside, the atrium of the Blusson was packed with more than 400 people. It was standing-room-only, and you could hear a pin drop as the program, *Cathedrals of Science*, began.

It began with *Processional*, a piece by local composer Jordan Nobles. Written specifically for this evening and for this space, it set parts of the Hippocratic Oath to music. The singers moved about the space in groups of three, looking for all the world like monks pacing the stones of some ancient cathedral, chanting as they walked along the ramp, their music lit by LED lights instead of candles.

It was a magical evening of modern choral works and Renaissance masses more than 500 years old. Art and science came together under one roof in a grand experiment: liturgical music performed in a non-sacred space – a space designed first and foremost for people in wheelchairs.

You can hear the results yourself. When CBC found out about the project, it became a media sponsor and broadcast the concert nationally on CBC Radio Two. It also made the concert available on the CBC website (look in the "Concerts on Demand" section).

This collaboration between VCS and ICORD, between musicians and scientists continues. Later this year, Cantata singers may participate in a study that will look at breathing techniques that singers use and how these could be valuable in a therapeutic way for people who have spinal cord injuries.

Interdisciplinary is a word we use too frequently. But in this case, it really does apply, as Google, an un-named security guard, Vancouver Cantata Singers, the Blusson Spinal Cord Centre, and Vancouver Foundation all worked together to create a celebration of sound. **VF**

For more information about the *Vancouver Cantata Singers*, visit the website at www.vancouvercantatasingers.com

BREAKING

ba



(Left) CanAssist engineers modified Victoria sculptor Alistair Green's electric chisel so he can do the detailed work his carving requires. They also make adaptations for students like Meagan Dean (above).

riers



Sunny Mahajan slips on a black Lululemon headband. He wiggles his forehead up and down and the headband rises. The rest of his face remains impassive and he keeps his body perfectly still. His forehead movement activates an iPod. It begins to speak in a female voice: “Play,” “Skip Forward,” “Scroll Down.” Another forehead wiggle and *You’re My Best Friend* by Queen plays. He hasn’t touched the iPod once.

Mahajan adapted this iPod for a teenaged boy who could only move his forehead. Sensors in the headband detect electrical signals from the slightest muscle movement. It’s just one of the weird and wonderful gadgets CanAssist creates for people with disabilities.

Director Dr. Nigel Livingston is like a proud father as he gives a

University of Victoria’s CanAssist program creates high-tech solutions for people with disabilities

BY DENISE RUDNICKI | PHOTOS MICHELLE CHO AND TANYA SWITUCKA

tour of the CanAssist workrooms at the University of Victoria, which are filled with mechanical gadgets. Graduating engineers like Mahajan tinker on all sorts of devices, including a Skype program that a user can operate with one tap on the screen.

A wide range of disabilities affects some 638,000 British Columbians. If Livingston has his way, every person will have the chance to be more independent and live an easier life.

CanAssist and its core staff of 30 take on projects at the request of a person with special needs, their family or their caregiver. “Some people we work with for years,” says Livingston. “They have incredibly challenging disabilities or maybe a progressive disorder. Others are simple, like the device that allowed a young man with limited dexterity to attach a leash to his dog. That might have taken a week.”

CanAssist makes cameras with all the functionality of a digital camera but that can be operated with a single switch. It makes bicycles for people with cerebral palsy or muscular dystrophy, and it devises customized wheelchairs and communications systems. CanAssist invented a device that enables a man with a disability to play billiards, and a sensor that lets a blind rider know when her horse is nearing a fence.

Foundations, philanthropists, government and the university fund the work, and no fee is charged for services or devices. Livingston estimates that CanAssist has helped many hundreds of people with special needs, mostly in B.C., but also throughout Canada and worldwide.

CanAssist started two work-related pilot projects in 2009, funded by Vancouver Foundation with a grant of \$104,000 in the first year and \$132,000 in the second. One of the pilot projects, TechWork, involves building customized aids to help people with disabilities in the workplace – people like Alistair Green. Green is a Victoria sculptor whose quadriplegia made it hard to use the electric chisel he needs. He doesn’t have the strength and dexterity to control the tool; it just spun in his hands. The solution was a modified handle that makes sure Green’s hand does not slip. His grip is better, and he can now do the detailed work his carving requires. “I used to have to duct tape tools to my hand,” says Green. “This is so



Gen Chandler (above, left) has Asperger syndrome. With help from CanAssist's TeenWork program, she and her boss, Subway manager Shireen Shah (above, right), are debunking the stereotypes about people with disabilities.

much quicker and very efficient. It's like night and day." Green is one of four carvers working with the modified tools. One of their sculptures, *Marmots*, was exhibited at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

TechWork also created a file cabinet, which opens and closes automatically, for a woman who cannot use a keyed cabinet. It also helped a McGill university professor with multiple sclerosis keep using his computer. TechWork's aim is to erase the technical barriers to work – a significant challenge considering the employment rate for people with disabilities is 25-per-cent lower than that of the general population.

The second work-related program funded by Vancouver Foundation and partnered with CanAssist is TeenWork. In Victoria-area schools, about 1,500 students between the ages of 15 and 19 live with a wide range of disabilities. About 35 per cent are able to work. That's over 500 youth in Victoria alone, who want to work and can work, but need help finding and learning a job.

Like most high-school kids, Gen Chandler wanted a part-time job. Unlike most high-school kids, though, Gen has Asperger syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder. She's easily distracted. She loses track of time and doesn't always understand spoken directions.

TeenWork offered Gen on-the-job coaching and she's been working two days a week at a Victoria Subway sandwich shop since summer 2009, when she was 19.

"There's nothing else like this in Victoria or anywhere in Canada," says Xela Rysstad, the youth employment coordinator for TeenWork.

What makes the program unique is the ongoing, individualized support. It starts with a 20- to 30-hour Discovery Process to determine the young person's strengths, skills and any particular challenges and barriers. "Then we do something called Community Cruising," says Rysstad. "We take them out and visit businesses to see what interests them. They're encouraged to ask questions of other employees. It's very personalized."

The teens get help writing their resumés and cover letters, they develop interview skills, and there's one-on-one, on-site job coaching. Seven teens are in the program, but the goal is to support up to 300 students with special needs in the Victoria area. "We really want to focus on helping these kids make a smooth transition out of adolescence and into adulthood, and a job is part of that," says Rysstad.

Gen's mom, Gera Chandler, is proud her daughter is out in the world, feeling independent and learning skills. "It's fabulous," she says. "Having this [program] to help her jump out of the nest is fantastic for us."

Still, there are hurdles. Subway manager Shireen Shah says she was ready to hire Gen but had to get permission from the owner. "In the beginning, he didn't understand her disability. He said 'I don't want her using knives or the slicer.' But that was because he didn't know."

Persuading employers to take a chance is the biggest problem, says Rysstad. "We get rejection all the time. You know, these youth are fantastic and have so much going for them but there's such a stigma."

People like Gen are breaking down the stereotypes. She and her job coach made a series of cue cards that Gen illustrated to help her remember how to prepare the food. The cards are so easy to understand, the rest of the staff members use them instead of the official manual provided by the company.

Back in the CanAssist workrooms, Livingston talks about how hard it can be to persuade employers to hire people with special needs. That's why he engages as many UVic students as he can – over 4,000 so far. If there's a design class in mechanical engineering, he'll offer them a project, for example, to create a device that attaches to any wheelchair and lets the user swing a golf club with the push of a button.

"Every student is one more person who understands disability issues," he says. "And when they're a manager or open a shop, they'll think about including people with special needs." **VF**

For more information on the CanAssist program, or to donate to the program's endowment fund, visit www.canassist.ca, email info@canassist.ca, or call 250-721-7300

stages of *life*

African youth share
their experiences in
Canada through
storytelling

BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI | PHOTOS ALAN BEATON

She was an easy target.

Gentle and wide-eyed, Cheryl Bosola Olamijulo was the new girl in class – and the only black kid in her entire Surrey, B.C., high school.

Her family had emigrated from Nigeria in 2009 looking for a better life, but it wasn't working out better for Olamijulo. "I was always very shy, and I came here and I was looked down upon for my voice, my race, my culture," says Olamijulo, a soft-spoken young woman with shoulder-length braids.

"In school, there were a lot of Indians and white kids, and they had their own cliques, and I felt like I was a nobody. I just took all the insults, and I looked down on myself too. As I was bullied more and more, I became very sad," she explains.

Luckily, Olamijulo found out about the African Stages Association storytelling group, funded by Vancouver Foundation.

Led by a coordinator, the group of youth, 12 to 19, with African backgrounds, met Fridays after school. The process started with the youth telling one another about their experiences in Canada. Some of the kids had been followed around a store and wrongly

"Dancing always makes
me feel better."
–Cheryl Olamijulo





accused of shoplifting. Some had been taunted about the food they ate, their hair and their accents. Some had teachers who couldn't be bothered to learn how to pronounce their names properly, and one teacher had told an aspiring young doctor that he should consider a career in football instead of medicine.

"I found out that other people were going through what I was going through," says Olamijulo. "And that made it easier for me to open up. I could be myself around the group. And as I started to tell my story, I could see for myself how to solve my problems. I realized I had been wasting all this time feeling sorry for myself. It was great therapy for me."

Once the kids had shared their stories and developed a sense of trust and camaraderie, the youth started shaping some of their stories into theatre and dance presentations.

"Sometimes we would act it out, and sometimes we would end up laughing at some of the situations. Or we would dance it out. Dancing always makes me feel better," says Olamijulo.

Ultimately, the stories were performed in a forum setting, where the audience could intervene in the drama. Being onstage built the performers' confidence, while the interactive setting facilitated collective problem solving and built an even greater sense of a larger community for the kids.

"It really boosted my belief in myself. When I went back to school, I joined the theatre group. I wasn't shy about being myself anymore. I was so much more confident. People couldn't believe how much I had changed!" says Olamijulo, with a proud smile.

"Now, when kids try to insult me, I don't take it seriously anymore. If I'm feeling bad, I can just go to the bathroom and dance it out."

The African Stages Association storytelling group is the brainchild of Comfort Ero, a teacher and storyteller originally from Nigeria.

"In Africa, storytelling is a part of life. Everyone tells stories," says Ero. But even in her storytelling culture, Ero stood out. She had a special storytelling knack, combining a natural theatrical flair with an aura of relaxed warmth that puts people at ease (as befits her first name).

After she moved to Canada, Ero found people were always asking her questions about her culture, so she began using storytelling as a way to educate Canadians about Africa. That gradually evolved into using storytelling to address issues such as HIV/AIDS, bullying and racism, and now the storytelling group for immigrant kids.

"It empowers them a lot," says Ero. "We know they find it valuable because they come every week and they tell other kids about it. We were originally supposed to work with 10 kids, but at one point we had 40 in the group, and about 30 made it all the way through the program. It would be really good to run the program again. There are so many kids who need it."

Olamijulo agrees wholeheartedly. "All the kids that went through the program are happier, more confident. Now I know I can face my problems, and I'm a stronger person for it. The storytelling group really did change my life." **VF**

For more information on the African Stages Association, visit www.africanstages.org

Pesticide
Education Goes

Bollywood

The *Wash with Care* laundry video
gets inspiration from India

BY DOROTHY BARTOSZEWSKI | PHOTOS CLAUDETTE CARRACEDO

UBC researchers and N.S.M.
Bhangra dancers produced *Wash
with Care*, a laundry “epic” (and
Bollywood send-up) that presents
a serious message in a fun way.

A bhangra drummer pops out from behind an outdoor laundry machine like a manic jack-in-the box.

Then, women in searingly bright saris – and purple rubber gloves – pour out from behind the house and launch into a Bollywood-style dance routine. But they aren't in India: they're whirling around in a Fraser Valley farmer's field.

That's the eye-catching intro to the *Wash with Care* video, which aims to teach people how to safely wash clothing worn during farm work or pesticide application. The Wash with Care project is the inspiration of Dr. Anne-Marie Nicol of UBC's School of Environmental Health. Nicol is a precise blonde woman with a firm handshake and a passion for research that makes a difference to people's lives.

Nicol found that clothing worn where pesticides are used is a major source of indoor pesticide contamination in B.C. However, many people handling these garments – mostly women of Punjabi origin – weren't aware of the serious health risk it posed to them and to their families.

Clearly, traditional forms of pesticide education weren't reaching these people. "But when I was conducting interviews with these families, there was always a Bollywood musical running on the TV," Nicol explains, with a gleam in her eye.

So, with the help of a grant from Vancouver Foundation, a research team and the N.S.M. Bhangra dance troupe, Nicol made the *Wash with Care* video. It features a Punjabi-speaking mother and daughter team learning how to launder contaminated clothing as they're being entertained by the bhangra dancers.

"The bhangra choreography actually reflects the washing instruc-

tions," Nicol laughs. "The dancers were so creative!"

Nicol showed the video as a public service announcement on B.C.'s multicultural channels, Omni and Joy. She also showed the video in temples throughout the Lower Mainland, where she and her colleagues handed out thousands of rubber gloves and laundry machine magnets with laundering instructions in Punjabi.

"We deliberately made the video and all the materials very friendly. It's not presented in a scary way. We want to begin a dialogue with the community about the potential impact of pesticides," Nicol explains.

Her strategy certainly got her target audience's attention. India's *Hindustan Times* promptly put the story on its front page, and *CBC National* ran the story. Suddenly, Nicol and her translator were sought-after guests on local Punjabi call-in stations. Now Nicol feels she's achieved "saturation levels" of public awareness.

"Every time I take a taxi with a Punjabi driver, I ask the driver if he's heard of *Wash with Care*, and he always says yes," she says with satisfaction.

Next, after a formal evaluation of the project, Nicol is looking to remake the video in other languages. She is also looking for funding to take the project to the Punjab, where she says poor handling of pesticides is linked to "an enormous burden of cancer."

It's a sombre topic. But as Nicol has shown, it might be best addressed creatively, set to a lively bhangra beat. **VF**

To see the *Wash with Care* video or for more information, visit www.washwithcare.ca



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