

vancouver foundation

Community Inspired Giving

2021 | Volume 14

Land First

SkeenaWild
is inspiring a
community of
water protectors
through
storytelling P.8

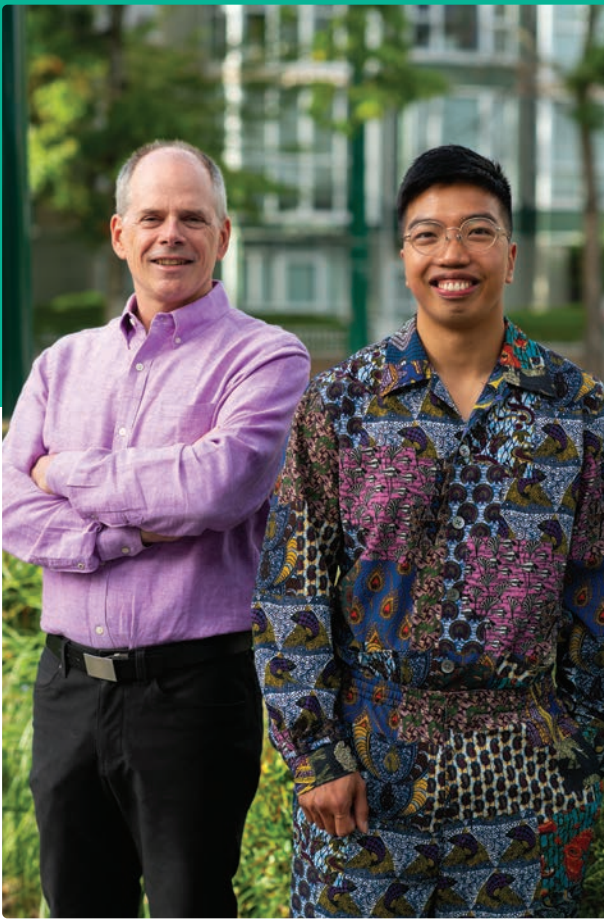


Advocating
for Your
Community
P.6

The
Future of
Philanthropy
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Inclusion in
Pandemic
Recovery
P.10





Photograph by TAEHOON KIM

Vancouver Foundation President and CEO Kevin McCort (left) met Grant Advisor Crecien Bencio (right) in Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood in East Vancouver where Bencio resides.

WELCOME
LETTERS

A Time of OPPORTUNITY

Despite all that the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown at us, Vancouver Foundation has emerged with new resolve. Now, more than ever, it's a time of opportunity to rebuild with community voices at the front and centre of it all — especially the voices of people who hadn't been included in the past.

We have the important opportunity to centre Indigenous knowledge (p.8), which has largely been made invisible to many people. Another important opportunity is to focus on the inclusion of people with disabilities when it comes to rebuilding community (p.12).

This magazine contains a diversity of viewpoints that are meant to inform, challenge, and pull back the curtain on the complexity of the work we do. We hope you enjoy and welcome your thoughts.

Thank you for sharing your gifts of energy, time, ideas, and money with each other.

Sincerely,

KEVIN M^cCORT

President and CEO

A Time of TRANSFORMATION

Before colonization, the area of Renfrew-Collingwood had an abundance of wildlife, rivers, and beaver-made lakes. Today, my neighbourhood is a home for newcomers who shape the city. In its shopping districts, seniors line up in the early morning to purchase chayote and daikon. When day turns to night, the atmosphere becomes filled with laughter; families sip congee and youth occupy the streets with bubble tea.

These flavours are evidence of the power of community in these streets. This place is built by youth activists who advocate for culturally relevant food assets, and against gentrification. I count myself as one of these youth activists, and we deeply know how systemic injustice shows up in our everyday lives. So, we organize with full hearts and speak to the city council with hope. We go home to our parents who then feed us unlimited quantities of rice, and we are replenished.

To do non-profit work in a way that is just is now resonating across communities. As a result, charities and non-profits are transforming, and young people are at the fore. By supporting youth-led organizations on the front-line, Vancouver Foundation is shifting and sharing power. Such organizations are constantly looking out for ways to make substantial change, particularly for the underrepresented neighbours who need it the most.

I write this as an expression of love for my youth peers who are my educators, my comforters, my dreamers. They teach me how to shape a world of possibility. I write this with gratitude for the privilege of connecting with donors like you, who are supporting organizations on a journey of change. For you, I will always be grateful.

Warmly,

CRECIEN BENCIO

Systems Change Grant Advisor

vancouver foundation

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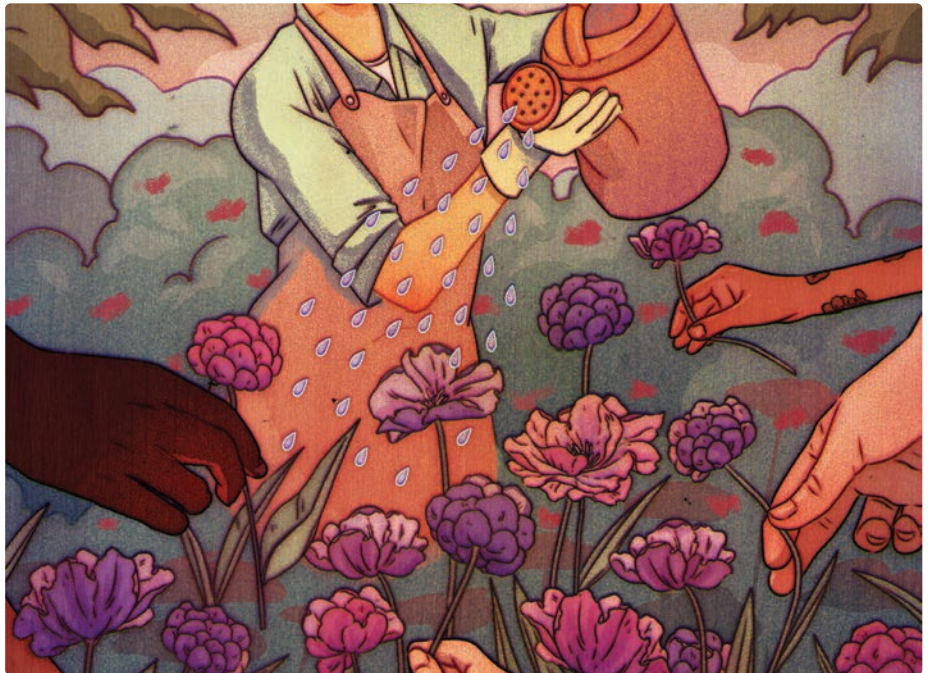
Kirby Muldoe is the Indigenous Engagement Specialist at SkeenaWild Conservation Trust. *Photograph by Carla Lewis.*



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Future of Philanthropy

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we do philanthropy and how non-profits serve their communities. We now have the opportunity to re-invent the way we work. So, what’s next as we head into post-pandemic recovery? We talked to five leaders about their vision for our future.

Illustrations by **MARIA NGUYEN**

“Building back better must be about community agencies collaborating with foundations and demonstrating what we can do together. Our (foundation and front-line agency) collective heart-centred humanity, our compassion, our willingness to work together in crisis, was the big shining light of the pandemic. Let us continue this.”

LESLIE VARLEY *Executive Director, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres*



“One thing I hope we see more of is direct reparations...this would require organizations to take a good look at how their endowments were built, [on] whose back and whose land was that wealth created, and how to start giving directly to the Nations that were impacted by that harm.”

KRIS ARCHIE *CEO, The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*



“[Charities] will have enough difficulty in dealing with revenue constraints, more pressure on their volunteers, and increased demand. They don’t need pressure from their donors. By using a trust-based approach, we’re saying, ‘We know where you’re coming from, we know what you’re doing, and we trust that you’ve got the interests of your community at heart.’”

KEVIN McCORT *President and CEO, Vancouver Foundation*



“COVID-19 has made social isolation even worse, and negatively impacted mental health for so many. It will take non-profit organizations time and extra resources to be able to rebuild social connect- edness in communities through hybrid programs — in person and virtually — in the days, months, and years ahead.”

ZAHRA ESMAIL *Executive Director, South Vancouver & Marpole Neighbourhood Houses*

“Community-based non-profits will have a challenge in continuing to deliver services without systemic change. The level of funding for front-line staff today will fast-track [non-profit workers] into poverty. We are seeing this trend among older adults who have worked all their life.”

ALISON SILGARDO *CEO, Seniors Services Society of BC*





IDEAS for REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Rebuilding community means bringing us all to a place where we are not just surviving, but thriving. For groups that face daily marginalization, this involves ensuring that basic needs are more than met. Here are five initiatives Vancouver Foundation – with the help of our donors – has funded this year to support and empower communities to rebuild together.

New Commons Development

Affordable Housing by and for Small Communities

Real estate prices are on the rise everywhere in BC, even in the most remote parts of the province. New Commons is expanding its reach to build affordable housing in small and rural communities, with a focus on developments that can be stewarded by community organizations, so that what they build can remain affordable for generations to come.

newcommons.ca



Rise Women's Legal Centre *Safety Through Access to Legal Services for Women*

In addition to family law services, Rise operates an equality law clinic for self-identified women in the Downtown Eastside that assists clients with replacing identification, drafting human rights and police complaints, and notarizing documents. By providing these services, Rise helps marginalized women and gender-diverse people pursue equal and fair treatment.

womenslegalcentre.ca

KUU-US Crisis Line *Culturally Appropriate Support Systems*

Demand for crisis lines like KUU-US surged as more Indigenous children's bodies were recovered from the sites of former residential "schools" through this year. With the official toll now at 5,049 and more school grounds still left to search, there is a continued need for supports by and for Indigenous people.

kuu-uscrisisline.com

Call KUU-US toll-free: 1-800-588-8717

Disability Alliance BC (DABC) *Separating Disability from Poverty*

People with disabilities in BC face poverty at twice the rate of the general population and have fewer means of overcoming it. DABC and the Disability Without Poverty movement are advocating that the federal government design and implement a Canada Disability Benefit in a way that will raise the income of Canadians with disabilities above the poverty line.

disabilityalliance.org



Anarchist Mountain *Timely Fire-Safety Training for the Neighbourhood*

In July 2021, the community of Anarchist Mountain came together to learn about how to protect their homes in case of evacuation due to wildfires. This event was funded by a Neighbourhood Small Grant (NSG) and happened just in time to escape additional wildfires that started in their community days later.

Start a community event with NSG: neighbourhoodsmallgrants.ca

Funded together with the Community Foundation of South Okanagan-Similkameen.

How Everyday People Can Make Change



By **STACEY McLACHLAN**

Photographs by **TAEHOON KIM** | Illustration by **ERICK RAMOS**

Njoki Mbürü (right) is passionate about better food systems and food security.

As a public policy expert, Andrea Reimer (below) says the emphasis needs to be on the word "public" rather than "policy."

BEFORE SHE EVEN knew the word “advocate,” Njoki Mbürü was one.

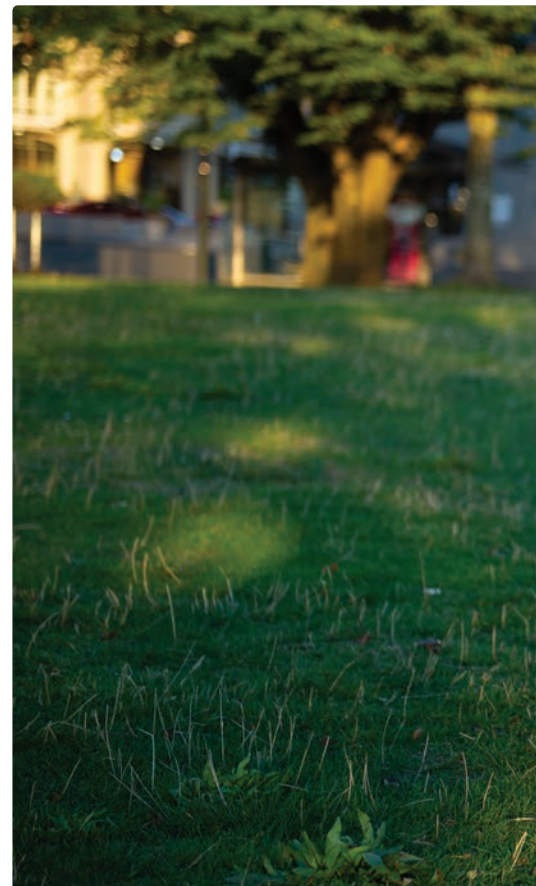
As a kid growing up in Kenya, her mother would involve the entire family in donating clothing and homewares to those in need. During her teenage years, she contributed to her community through volunteering and fundraising. “Even during high-stress exam seasons in high school, the spirit of community give-back remained strong and steady as my schoolmates and I ideated on ways to engage with our neighbouring communities,” Mbürü recalls.

Today, Mbürü lives in Vancouver, and her activist roots still hold strong. Yes, she may have sharpened her policy skills through the LEVEL Youth Policy Program, and currently holds change-making roles in her community, but it’s those early lessons about speaking up, giving back, and cultivating community that forms the backbone of her activism. Even with her busy schedule, you’ll find her advocating for the rights of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and food security for seniors.

Fighting for change doesn’t have to be the domain of policymakers or lobbyists. The power to speak up is something every citizen can and should do, Andrea Reimer reminds us. Reimer is a former Vancouver city councillor and Vancouver Foundation volunteer.

“Forget about the ‘policy’ in ‘public policy’ and look at the word ‘public,’” says Reimer, now the founder of Tawâw Strategies and an adjunct professor at UBC teaching public policy, public engagement, and power. “Democracy was designed with the presumption that we’re all active citizens. When we’re not active, it creates a hole in democracy.”

Over the past few decades, Reimer’s experienced both sides of the advocacy coin. In her political roles, she’s listened to constituents argue for change; as a passionate community member, she’s been an advocate for her own causes and civic issues.





WHEN ADVOCATING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY...

- 1** *Know your issue inside and out.*
Reasoned debate is fuelled by information. Understand your issue from every angle, and know how to communicate the need-to-knows to the right people.
- 2** *Treat “opponents” with humanity.*
Reimer stresses this particular point. “Maybe you have different views, but coming in with the assumption the decision-maker is [less intelligent] and lazy isn’t going to be a great case.”
- 3** *Write to someone in power... anyone!*
If you’re fired up, write a letter to one or more city councillors, and they’ll point you in the right direction. “If you don’t hear back from them at all...maybe vote for someone else next election,” says Reimer.

... but skip the form letter.

Short and personal letters are 100x more impactful than a form letter or online petition. Your own story can be *powerful*.

- 4** *Find your people.*
“Google the issue and find out who else is pissed off,” says Reimer. “Then go to the next meeting with a group, and bring a friend for support if you need to!” Mbürü agrees that forming a community is crucial, “You want to be in alignment with the community, and be clear on the impact for everyone.”
- 5** *Repeat yourself.*
“What I witness from people who require change is that they’re relentless and repetitive,” says Mbürü. “Even if people have heard your story 300 times, keep on telling it.”

- 6** *Seek out resources to help hone your voice.*
As powerful as your authentic story is, there are ways of speaking and making arguments that are more emotionally or rationally appealing. Level up your speaking skills by reading the appropriate materials, viewing or attending TED talks, applying to public policy school, finding mentors, and through personal reflection.







The INDIGENOUS RIGHT to PROTECT WATER

By ROOHI SAHAJPAL

Photograph by CARLA LEWIS

To address climate change, we must recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples to manage the land and water.

AFTER EXPERIENCING A historic “heat dome” during the summer of 2021 in BC, it’s nearly impossible to ignore the impact of climate change. While governments and industries continue to work on these issues, Indigenous communities have been taking the lead by using their knowledge of the land to create change.

“A lot of my Elders call the waters and the land ‘our garden’ or ‘our food basket.’ In many stories that I’ve heard, when people disrespected the land or the water or the animals, there was always a negative consequence,” says Hup-Wil-Lax-A (Kirby Muldoe). Muldoe, who is of Tsimsian and Gitksan descent, is the Indigenous Engagement Specialist for SkeenaWild Conservation Trust based in Terrace, BC.

Storytelling Inspires Salmon and Water Protectors

Muldoe states that while government and industry often hold open houses in Indigenous communities to talk about the benefits of resource extraction on the local economy and the resulting job(s) creation, they seldom discuss the risks. This is where SkeenaWild has such an important role to play in educating people about the risks to wild salmon, and nature in general, through storytelling.



For Muldoe, returning sovereignty to Indigenous peoples is part of addressing climate change by giving a voice to the water and land.

“In our role as salmon speakers, our goal is to speak for the salmon and to protect the salmon...because if you protect the salmon, you protect the water, and food and water security for future generations,” Muldoe explains.

Muldoe is not against resource extraction, but Indigenous sovereignty needs to be at the helm of such activities. “We have the right to



Provincial water management groups gathered on Nlaka'pamux First Nations territories in 2019 to build relationships.

decide what happens within our territories,” he says. “I think giving back the [Indigenous] sovereignty would allow us to become one with the land again because many of us have lost that connection.”

“Through storytelling and the work that I’ve done, I’ve seen a lot more awareness from many walks of life, young and old, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Hundreds of people are now standing in front of industrial actors like logging, mining, or oil and gas, to protect their right to food and water security.”

But implementing solutions is difficult, Muldoe adds.

“The system is hard to change. First of all, because there is no willingness to change from industry and government and because people are very busy, it’s hard to get their attention.” Muldoe says that success to him looks like bringing people together, building and maintaining those relationships, and providing space for people to exchange information, whether it’s cultural or social.

More Recognition of First Nations Rights Needed

SkeenaWild isn’t the only organization leading the way for Indigenous sovereignty when it comes to climate change.

The First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) works with, and supports, BC’s 204 First Nations in order to protect, reconcile, and advance First Nations title and rights as they relate to fisheries and the health and protection of aquatic resources, including access for food, cultural, and economic purposes.

With 204 nations across BC, all from different major watersheds, the FNFC convenes to support these nations to identify their concerns and share strategies and solutions for change as they lead the charge to find solutions in their respective areas.

“The biggest topic of all our conversations is really recognition of authority and jurisdiction...and concern for First Nations who have had laws and authorities related to natural resources in their territories for thousands of years that they follow,” says Susi Porter-Bopp, Project Manager for FNFC’s Water for Fish initiative.

The FNFC sees the positive impact of Indigenous sovereignty in addressing climate change in the work they do every day. This spans from articulating Indigenous water laws, developing water quality standards for territories, to land use planning based on what communities want within their laws. ∞

LEARN MORE:



When *the Salmon Spoke* is a documentary featuring storytellers from coastal Tlingit, Haida, and inland Tahltan communities of Alaska and BC. Watch it on SkeenaWild’s website: skeenawild.org/when-the-salmon-spoke

GROWING HEARTS AND MINDS

*Vancouver Foundation donor Mary McGivern
nurtures youth empowerment through giving*

By **STACEY McLACHLAN**

Illustration by **MARIA NGUYEN**

She may have retired from her work in the non-profit sector, but Mary McGivern can't help but help. And with her Bright Futures Education Fund, which finances post-secondary education for young women in need, she's doing just that.

"In my last year before retirement, I started to think about what I could do in retirement aside from helping other

non-profits," she recalls. A conversation with Nicole Jeschelnik (a Manager of Donor Services at Vancouver Foundation) got her wheels turning, and soon, the mother of three found herself with a rare opportunity to make an indelible and direct impact on others' lives — not just through charity, but through empowerment.

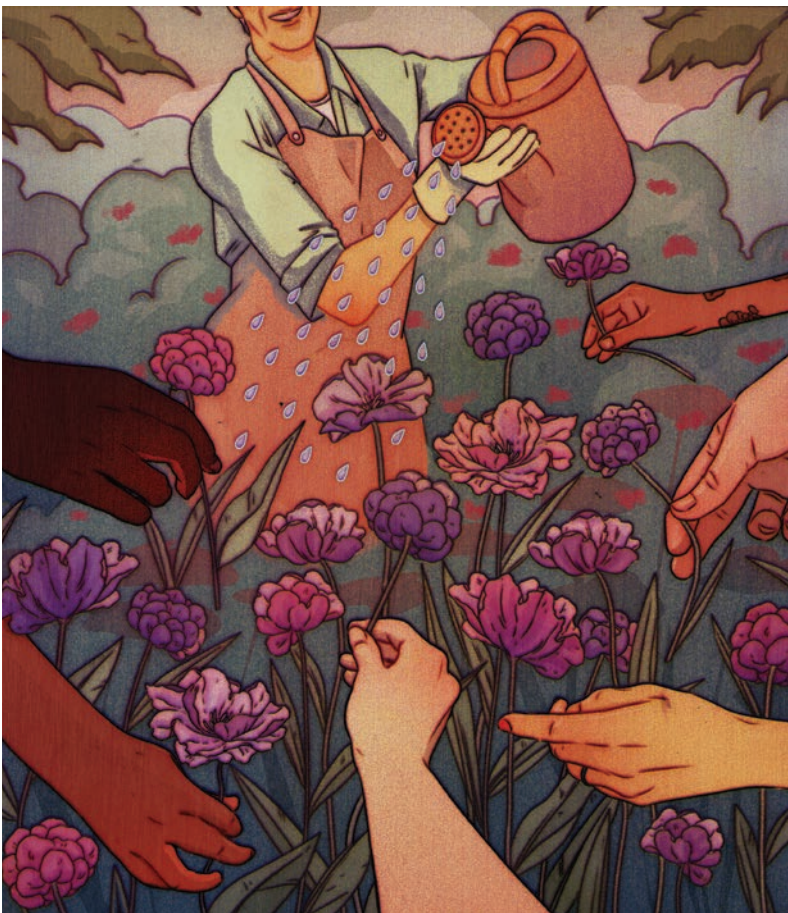
With the help of Bright Futures, current mentees of Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland who might otherwise be unable to finance a post-secondary education, have the chance to pursue their schooling goals and, McGivern hopes, carve a new path for themselves.

"Education is the most important thing," she says. "It's an opportunity to break out of the rut and set themselves in careers where they make a good living and have choice."

For McGivern, providing funding to young women with financial need is a way to redistribute wealth and change the cycle of poverty. Vancouver Foundation helps with guidance and administration, but with a donor-advised fund, McGivern and her husband can advise on how the money is used. "So many [girls] want to tackle big programs, so many are impressive young women," she says. "But they don't always have family support — and we have a soft spot for those ones, too."

Though McGivern's fund may be modest, she's still making an unforgettable impact, one student at a time (that's seven per year, to be exact).

Using her retirement time and her resources to make a difference has been everything McGivern hoped it would be. "We added a little bit to the fund this year, and we're considering extending it so we can sponsor a few young, single moms, who might otherwise not have a chance to gain an education," she says. "We're so blown away by these girls."



Putting People with Disabilities at the Centre of Pandemic Recovery

By STACEY McLACHLAN | *Illustration by* ASHLEY MACKENZIE



Neil Belanger is not surprised at all that people with disabilities were impacted more severely by the pandemic. **“Persons with disabilities have always faced systemic poverty,”** says Belanger, the executive director of the BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society. **“They’ve been marginalized and largely ignored.”**

Now, as BC slowly moves into reopening, critics say the disabled community continues to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and the ripple effect of lockdown, even as the rest of the province looks hopefully to the future.

Disability income should be at least \$2,400 a month

“During [COVID-19], persons with disabilities experienced increased isolation. There was more limited access to transportation, or to places where they’d access the internet or meet socially,” says Belanger. For those with disabilities, the shutting down of services and massive job losses meant less support, higher expenses, and magnified mental-health issues.

Beyond widespread financial support like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), the province did take broader measures to help people with disabilities, including a temporary \$300.00 bump that is now permanently capped at \$175.00. For someone with medical or service expenses beyond the typical able-bodied person, it’s simply not enough. “We believe anyone on disability income should be getting \$2,400 a month at a minimum,” says Belanger.

The pandemic’s effects on the Accessible BC Act

Disability activists aren’t quietly accepting this lack of consideration and support. Many community members are still reeling from the devastating effects of the pandemic, and now there’s a new layer of vigour in the fight for inclusion.

Sam Turcott, Executive Lead for the Accessibility Directorate for BC’s Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, has gotten a great deal of feedback from the disability community and has used that insight to help inform new BC accessibility legislation. “We heard loud and clear about the concern for available support,” says Turcott. For many, it wasn’t just about losing work: It was about the disproportionate impact of things

like social distancing and essential hospital visitor policies, which particularly affect those who might have multiple caretakers in their lives.

While Turcott and team had begun working on the legislation in 2019, COVID-19 provided an important case study and impacted the final Accessible BC Act, which received royal assent in June 2021. The new legislation “establishes a framework for people to work with people in the community to identify and remove barriers,” Turcott explains. It’s a move to take accessibility from a law in the books to something that has an impact on people’s real lives — whatever that might look like.

“It’s such a diverse community,” acknowledges Turcott. “There’s no monolithic solution, which is part of the challenge. But ultimately what we want is to move, not just back to the way things were, but to a world that’s more inclusive and equitable.”

A four-in-five chance of a disability in your lifetime

Considering how widespread disability is, it remains shocking how low-priority issues of accessibility and social support are. Twenty-four percent of the Canadian population between ages 45 and 64 identify as having a disability.

But as we age, we’re likely to eventually join this cohort — that number jumps to almost 50 percent by the time we hit retirement age. All in all, 80 percent of Canadians will live with a disability in their lifetime.

Even those most able-bodied people can likely think of a family member, friend, or colleague who currently experiences disability. “Whether you live with it or not, you have a stake in this game,” says Belanger. “We have to change as a country. Let’s put persons with a disability as our first priority for once.” ∞



The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction established the **Disability Supports for Employment Fund** at Vancouver Foundation in 2003 to increase the economic and social independence of people with disabilities.



Coming Together Like Never Before

2020 was a year no one saw coming. It was a time of profound loss but also great resilience and perseverance—and when community needed it most, Vancouver Foundation’s donors, volunteers, and partners stepped up to respond to the call and together, we granted a record \$115 million across BC.

Trust-Based Grantmaking Led to More Equitable Ways of Funding

We launched a Community Response Fund with Vancity, United Way Lower Mainland, and the City of Vancouver to support groups during the pandemic with nimble grants. Through a simplified application process, we prioritized getting money out the door quickly and granted almost \$20 million to help stabilize community services.

Our LEVEL Granting was the result of community consultations with Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) who called for more flexible core funding. We drew on different ways of knowing and implemented oral applications. In total, \$1.5 million supported 42 BIPOC-led organizations to pursue racial justice work.

Partnerships Helped to Support Community Resiliency

The Fund for Gender Equality, through a partnership with Community Foundations of Canada (CFC), responded to the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women, girls, two-spirit people, and gender diverse communities. Through an intersectional lens, more than

\$755,000 went to 21 organizations addressing issues from gender-based violence to inclusive health supports.

The Emergency Community Support Fund, also in partnership with CFC, added an additional \$2.8 million in rapid relief for organizations in Vancouver serving vulnerable populations so they could keep their doors open.

The second cycle of the Investment Readiness Program in partnership with Canvas Foundation, Vancity Community Foundation, and CFC funded 29 social purpose organizations with more than \$980,000.

Every Contribution Made This Work Possible

All of this was possible because of the generosity of donors, partners, and volunteers who gave their time, energy, and support when it was needed most, making it possible for us to grant more than ever before.

As we now turn our attention to recovery and long-term resiliency, we know we can’t go back to the way things were. We’re embarking on a journey of learning to explore what this means for Vancouver Foundation and our work. We hope you’ll join us.

HOLIDAY RECOMMENDATIONS

Whether you've got a full holiday break or a couple of quiet hours to yourself during the seasonal rush, find inspiration or insight from these powerful books, games, and films.

Illustration by ERICK RAMOS



Braiding Sweetgrass
By Robin Wall Kimmerer (Milkweed Publishing, 2013)
In 2013, Kimmerer — a trained botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation — brought her story of reciprocity and giving to the world, interweaving reflections from her life as an Indigenous scientist and woman. In a new, beautifully illustrated, reissued, hard-cover edition, her argument for awakening our ecological consciousness is more powerful than ever.



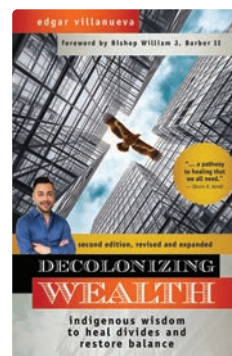
Crip Camp
On Netflix
The award-winning 2020 film documentary (executive producers Michelle and Barack Obama) celebrates the origins of the disability revolution, tracing the movement from its humble origins at a Woodstock-era summer camp for disabled teens to the captivating, chaotic fight for change in Washington, DC.



The Marrow Thieves
By Cherie Dimaline (Cormorant Books, Inc., 2017)
Though Métis writer Dimaline's latest novel is technically young-adult fare, the dystopian fantasy story offers a timely, captivating read for adult fiction fans, too. *The Marrow Thieves* tackles heavy subject matter — colonialism, residential schools, global warming — to weave a cautionary tale that readers of all ages ought to experience.



Spirit Island
(Greater Than Games, 2017)
While many other board games put the player in the role of the colonizer, game designer Eric Reuss offers a clever twist: In his cooperative strategy game, players take on the role of a spirit to drive Invaders off of their island.



Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance
By Edgar Villanueva (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018)

A fascinating guide to unpacking and grieving our relationship with wealth, giving, and charity. In its second edition, the book digs deeper into the colonial and racist dynamics in the one-trillion dollar philanthropic industry — and how altruism can have a dark side.



There's Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities

By Ingrid Waldron (Fernwood Publishing, 2018), Netflix documentary directed by Elliot Page and Ian Daniel
For a raw, revealing look at the true impact of environmental racism in Nova Scotia's Indigenous and Black communities, pick up Waldron's eye-opening cry for action — or turn on the Netflix documentary adaptation of the same title.

What's New in Community

With the help of our donors, Vancouver Foundation is proud to support hundreds of organizations every year and share their stories.



Ethos Lab
Empowering Black youth through digital experiences
📷 @Ethos.Lab



Missing
Acclaimed opera on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people
📷 @PacificOperaVictoria



Chinese Library
Helping communities stay resilient
📘 @CLibrary



Cowichan Social Planning Society
Leading COVID-19 response with Indigenous values and ways of knowing
📘 @SocialPlanningCowichan



Lantern Films
Trans representation behind the scenes of biopic *Empress of Vancouver*
📘 @LanternFilms



Neighbourhood Small Grants
Where small is beautiful and everyone has something to offer
📘 @NSGNetwork



Vancouver Foundation
Thirty-three ways we're shifting and sharing power
📘 @VancouverFdn

vancouver
foundation

Even more ideas for rebuilding community:
vancouverfoundation.ca/whats-new

