

vancouver foundation

Community Inspired Giving
2025 | Volume 18

A HERO'S QUEST

Never Stop Dreaming

Lorie Lee is powering
change for animals with
her show dog Hero **P.20**

CARRYING THE FLAME

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Garden **P.23**





Sts'ailes First Nation members pull up mature carrots from the Éyameth Health Centre's wellness garden, where food and medicine grow side by side. The centre fuses traditional wellness practices with modern healthcare and serves the communities between Agassiz and Mission. Thank you to supporters of the Indigenous Priorities Focus Area, which funds projects like Éyameth.

Scan to watch a short video about Éyameth or visit <https://vanfdn.com/eyameth>

Photo by BELEN COLOMBO

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CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATORS
Inma Hortas, Joel Kimmel, Natasia Martin, Stephanie Singleton

Produced by Vancouver Foundation, Alice Cho and Esther Tung

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604.688.2204
donate@vancouverfoundation.ca
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ON THE COVER:

Hero, the star show dog, with his loyal (and generous) human, Lorie Lee.
Photo by Jimmy Jeong

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Passing the torch

THIS YEAR MARKED an important milestone for Vancouver Foundation — we hit the \$2 billion mark for charitable giving. The timing made a nice bookend for President and CEO Kevin McCort, who stepped down this year after 12 years in that role, and helped the foundation give away its one-billionth dollar early in his tenure. Throughout his time at Vancouver Foundation, Kevin has challenged the foundation to lean into what it means to be an expression of community. He has championed bold approaches to grantmaking and been a tireless and influential advocate for the charitable sector. We will continue to build on the successes that Kevin has led and support the charitable sector to face growing challenges. A recent CanadaHelps poll found that one in five Canadians now rely on charities for basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter — many for the first time. Yet the very organizations supporting them are under immense pressure, facing shrinking funding, staff burnout, and rising demand. Even as the sector is stretched, people like you are helping to meet this moment. Community organizations continue to adapt with urgency and care. Donors from all walks of life are stepping up, whether through one-time gifts, targeted support, or grants from endowment funds. In the pages ahead, you'll find stories of extraordinary and everyday people making a difference. Their work reflects what's possible when we care deeply, act boldly, and think long-term. As we look forward, I want to thank Kevin for 12 years of incredible service. We're grateful for his dedication and vision over the years, and we wish him every success, and much joy, in the chapters ahead.



Susan Grossman
Chair, Board of Directors

Illustrations by JOEL KIMMEL

Vancouver Foundation works on the lands of Indigenous nations throughout colonial British Columbia. Our office is located on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwx-wú7mesh (Squamish) and Selílwitlh (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We are constantly learning and growing to support the advancement of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and formalized our commitment to this by signing the Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action.



Kevin McCort
Former President and CEO

AS MY TIME AS President and CEO comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on why I was drawn to Vancouver Foundation in the first place 12 years ago. I believed — and this has been proven time and time again — that the foundation had the reputation, resources, and community-based networks to be a positive influence in addressing the social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues that communities were grappling with, in Vancouver and across British Columbia. And, that I would be able to position the organization as a trusted partner in this work — not as a top-down funder, but as a by-your-side community member, equally committed to finding ways to build healthy, vibrant, equitable, and inclusive communities as the donors we work with and the charities and nonprofits we fund. I also believe that (like campsites) one should leave the place better than you found it. And while I found an excellent institution in 2013, I believe I have met that challenge. Over the last few years, Vancouver Foundation has become the largest non-governmental funder of charities and nonprofits in B.C. and is well placed to sustain that role for the foreseeable future. With an asset base of over \$1.7 billion and continued strong support from donors, Vancouver Foundation anticipates annual grantmaking to be in the \$100 million to \$150 million range, at a time when many frontline charities and nonprofits are facing unprecedented demand, difficult fundraising markets, and significant operational stress. The path forward is not easy for communities in B.C., but as I step aside, I do so with great satisfaction that our donors, and the charities and nonprofits we support, have an even stronger partner in their work than they did in 2013.



Nonprofits BRACING FOR IMPACT, again

By ESTHER TUNG

Illustration by INMA HORTAS

AS DEMAND FOR NONPROFIT services reaches record highs, government grants are drying up. Nonprofits are left scrambling, being forced to shutter programs, lay off staff, or close their doors, just at the very moment they're needed most. A report from Carleton University found that in 2024, only 12% of Canadian charities said they felt financially stable, a steep drop from 21% the year before.

"We're in an austerity moment," said Mebrat Beyene, the vice president of grants and community initiatives at Vancouver Foundation. "And it's just the latest crisis layering on top of all the others." From the climate emergency to growing inequality, nonprofits are holding the line on every major challenge facing our communities.

Nonprofits on the frontline are deeply feeling the compound pressures. Vancouver Foundation received more than 1,200 applications for its new Transforming Systems Grants program, triple the usual number and a red flag for escalating need.

"We need to keep centering those made most vulnerable by systemic inequity," Beyene said. After all, it's those most marginalized, such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities who are hit the hardest, she observed.

Staff burnout, talent loss

Nonprofits are seeing a sharp rise in staff burnout, as they're pressured to continue doing their job with diminishing resources. In the same Carleton study, 41% of nonprofit workers named burnout as the top reason for leaving, a sign that the sector's future is increasingly precarious.

More specifically, Beyene warned, there's an alarming leadership crisis brewing in the sector. She's noticed unprecedented numbers of executive directors in her network — none of whom are near retirement — stepping down with no intention to return. And though new leaders from diverse backgrounds emerge to fill the vacuum, they're often set up to fail in these under-resourced environments.

41% of nonprofit workers named burnout as the top reason for leaving — a sign that the sector's future is increasingly precarious.

Stabilizing forces in uncertainty

As nonprofits hang on, funders have a critical role to play as the sector's stabilizing force. "We've been saving for a rainy day, and that day is today," said Beyene.

Vancouver Foundation is releasing more funding to meet the moment, including the Sustaining Resilience Grants which gave a boost to charities facing acute hardship. Vancouver Foundation's team of grantmakers and expert community advisors does the legwork to identify those eligible and in need within its vast network of nonprofits and charities.

The focus is on restoring basic functions that often go overlooked, like staffing, legal supports, and financial governance. "We can't do our job well unless these backbone functions are solid," Beyene emphasized.

It's an all-hands-on-deck moment. In addition to its new grant programs, Vancouver Foundation has implemented a new policy that enables half of estate gifts to go out into the community right away. This applies only to new estate gifts that come free from donor instructions.

"There's more to do, and we want to move quickly, but thoughtfully. That's the tension," Beyene said. Vancouver Foundation is also exploring how it can collaborate with like-minded funders to ease the burden on grant-seekers.

Private funding can't fill the gap

Beyene warned that the private sector won't be able to fully bridge the gap left by government grants. Many nonprofits primarily, or even entirely, rely on public funding to operate, such as those offering immigrant and refugee settlement services.

In 2022 and 2023, the Province earmarked \$90 million in



Mebrat Beyene is an award-winning nonprofit leader, bringing a social justice lens to grantmaking at Vancouver Foundation.

Photo by Jamie Poh

To learn how giving flexibly and steadily supports nonprofits like Archway, scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/archway>

funding for nonprofits, which Vancouver Foundation distributed to community in full through province-wide grant programs. These years ended up being record highs for Vancouver Foundation's grant programs. Unfortunately, there's no sign that this funding will be renewed for the foreseeable future.

"We're doing what we can. We don't have all the answers yet. But the urgency is real, and the stakes are high," said Beyene.

Nonprofits need steady supporters

Economic hardship has hit nonprofits hard. It's hit everyday people hard too, causing giving to decline. But *how* you give matters just as much as *how much* you give. Charities need stability and flexibility. Steady gifts, no matter how small, that come with no restrictions on how they're spent, allow nonprofits to plan more effectively.

"It keeps the doors open. It makes sure that our level of excellence is where it should be," said Rod Santiago, the CEO of Archway Community Services, a nonprofit offering a wide range of community programming for residents in Abbotsford and throughout the Fraser Valley. Archway received a multi-year grant without restrictions from Vancouver Foundation's Lighthouse Organizations Fund to help sustain its operations. With that funding, Archway is able to implement tested ideas, strengthen its governance, and plan for the long-term, all while still delivering critical services at a high standard. "You can't have great services without great operations," said Santiago.

Funders like Vancouver Foundation are stepping up where they can. By working alongside the community and steadily funding the operations of nonprofits, we might just help them get through this difficult moment.



DTES's thinning safety net

By **CHERISE SEUCHARAN**

Illustration by **STEPHANIE SINGLETON**

IN VANCOUVER'S Downtown Eastside (DTES), nonprofits serving the city's most marginalized are getting the rug pulled out from under them. Governments at all levels have cut funding to vital services that offer stability and support to those living with addiction, homelessness, and poverty. And according to Shaurie Bidot at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective (VWHC), women and gender-diverse people are taking the biggest hits.

The VWHC has faced funding shortfalls of its own at a time when it's seeing record demand for its trauma-informed, culturally safer health and wellness services. Less than a decade ago, the VWHC offered a community clinic staffed by Nurse Practitioners, counselling, and a naturopathic clinic where naturopathy students could build skills while giving back — all free of charge to clients. Today, only its naturopath clinic remains, along with its drop-in centre, Indigenous wellness programming, and weekly yoga classes. It's just enough to give clients some structure and a place to turn to for community.

From cracks to chasms

In the DTES, long-established nonprofits are rolling back offerings as they face funding shortfalls across the board. VWHC had to temporarily reduce opening hours earlier this year. EMBERS was forced to close its Eastside Works program, which created low-barrier employment opportunities. Devastatingly, PACE Society had to close entirely, after supporting street-based sex workers for more than three decades. Its counterpart, WISH, was recently forced to temporarily suspend its drop-in centre.

With fewer programs and organizations left, demand for VWHC's services is higher than ever. Even before these funding cuts, "we've been seeing an increase in folks who are falling through the cracks, being left behind when it comes to the healthcare system," said Bidot, the nonprofit's interim executive director*. But in the face of mounting challenges, VWHC remains committed to helping meet the needs of those it serves.

Finding support in community

From its roots to present day, VWHC has always been about community and grassroots support. Back in the '70s, women had few reproductive rights and often underwent treatments

and procedures without informed consent. The VWHC taught women how to take charge of their own bodies and health and was influential in bringing the feminist self-help movement to Vancouver.

As it's grown, the VWHC has built in an intersectional feminist lens to its work. Intersectionality is a term coined by civil rights scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. It's the idea that different parts of a person's identity can overlap and compound experiences of discrimination. And so in these times of particularly dire economic hardship, Bidot is keenly aware of the factors that make things worse for many of the collective's clients, like anti-Indigenous racism and lack of support for unhoused people with disabilities, trauma, and chronic illness.

Understanding how these factors interact helps VWHC strategize on partnerships that benefit their clients. Building such a network to rely on can be the difference between surviving and thriving. "We feel like through this current climate, it's taught us to be extremely resourceful," said Bidot.

Glimmers of stability

During times of scarcity, having flexibility to use the resources you have can go a long way too. Fortunately, the VWHC has an endowment fund with Vancouver Foundation that offers just that. Unlike donations and grants, which can be conditional to a specific project, an endowment fund earns income in the capital markets and can be put towards whatever needs are most pressing, and provides a reliable and flexible source of revenue. And in times like now, the specific type of fund VWHC has allows them to withdraw not just income, but capital.

"This type of fund offers a way to grow capital while staying grounded in our values. And it feels very important to have more agency. So, we feel that having this fund helps us with long-term sustainable growth and a sense of security as well," Bidot said.

Stability is critical for realizing VWHC's vision of community-led healthcare that is free, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of underserved communities. "When we don't support our neighbours, then we're also not supporting ourselves in the long run," she said. "If we don't support our folks in the Downtown Eastside, then none of us are truly free in this city."

If you're a charity, set up a fund with us to ensure a reliable source of income.
Scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/charity-fund>

*Shaurie Bidot has stepped down from her role since this story was written.

When COMMUNITY shows up

Community care leads the way after tragedy following Lapu Lapu Day

By AMY ROMER

Photos by JAMIE POH

ON APRIL 26, a deadly incident took place at the end of the Lapu Lapu Day festival in Vancouver where a car drove into a crowd, killing 11 people and injuring dozens more. The emotional toll has been heavy. Grief, helplessness, and guilt haunt the community, even those who walked away physically unscathed.

Festival organizer Filipino BC soon launched the Kapwa Strong Fund to support those affected, with help from United Way BC. Vancouver Foundation moved quickly too: not to lead, but to listen. “We needed to understand if Filipino BC even wanted us to participate,” said Craig Hikida, the vice president of donor services at Vancouver Foundation.

The answer came quickly. Vancouver Foundation rallied around the Kapwa Strong Fund, raising more than \$82,000 in just weeks from more than 50 donor advised funds. The funding supports grassroots groups offering trauma-informed mental health and healing initiatives. “It was a time for unity, not competition,” Hikida explained.

Beyond funding, Vancouver Foundation also helped Filipino BC navigate systems and scale its work. “We had to put into action in five weeks what we had planned to do in five years. Having this amazing mentor helped us to scale quickly,” said RJ Aquino, Filipino BC’s co-founder. “Working with Vancouver Foundation has been one of the greatest blessings of all time.”

Holding space for grief and guilt

Many still carry unspoken pain. “Many folks haven’t processed the trauma or talked about it at all,” said Michelle Wing, a Filipinx* and Chinese trauma therapist offering counselling to those affected by the tragedy. “Survivor’s guilt is weighing heavily on many. ‘I was going to go and didn’t. Why this four-year-old and not me?’”

“It’s a role we’ve been socialized in, being helpers,” said Wing. Because of the helper identity, many of Wing’s clients feel they’re undeserving of support, especially women. That’s why she offers inclusive group healing circles for women and gender-diverse people affected by the events at Lapu Lapu Day, which she said is to give them “permission to prioritize [their] own emotional, spiritual, and mental health.”

Her sessions are subsidized by a Kapwa Strong grant, through Kathara Society Pilipino Indigenous Arts Collective where she serves as a board member. Wing’s sessions reflect Filipino values, language, and lived experience. Though the counselling is short-term, the impact is visible. Even knowing there is a place to go is a relief for people, she said. Despite the pain, these healing spaces have forged powerful connections. “It’s been really extraordinary to witness how people have been showing up for each other,” said Wing.

Art as collective therapy

Art can reach what words can’t. This belief drives the work of art therapy collective PANCIT and its founder, muralist and educator Bert Monterona. He and his wife started hosting free weekly community art therapy workshops right after the tragedy, before any funding arrived. Twenty participants showed up to the first session.

“It was immediate. We needed to do it for our community,” said Diane Zapata, board vice chair of Migrante BC and workshop participant. Migrante BC, which runs PANCIT, was among the first to receive a Kapwa Strong grant.

Zapata was volunteering at the festival and witnessed the aftermath firsthand. Monterona’s workshops have offered her solace. “It’s something very new for me, and it’s unlocking something in me that’s very healing,” she said.

Developed in consultation with psychologists, Monterona’s

*Filipinx is a gender-neutral term used to refer to people of Filipino descent.

ABOVE: PANCIT art therapy participants collaborated on this public mural at the Pinoy Festival which features the mythical Sarimanok bird atop a salmon, weaving both Filipino and Canadian identity. This mural launched at the Pinoy Festival in June.

NEXT PAGE: PANCIT founder Bert Monterona (top) and volunteer Raya Tolentino (centre) put their finishing touches on the mural, live at the Pinoy Festival.





THANK YOU, TRANSOFT

Through its donor advised fund at Vancouver Foundation, tech company Transoft donated \$8,300 towards the Kapwa Strong Fund and has continued to match employee donations towards the cause. “[The] Kapwa Strong Fund was our best option since it would help the multiple victims affected by the tragedy and distribute the funds where they are needed, filling any gaps not covered by the various GoFundMes out there,” said CEO Daniel Shihundu.

approach emphasizes curiosity over skill. He’s worked with trauma survivors in the Philippines, including sexual assault survivors. “Trauma healing should be long-term,” he said.

About a dozen people returned for more art therapy each week. Workshops started with a short technical lesson: still life drawing, shading, use of paint, followed by time to create. Sharing was encouraged but not required. “It’s not a classroom,” Zapata explained. “It’s more of being present with your community, being together.”

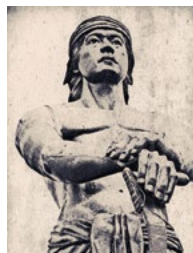
Reclaiming space, moving forward

As the community finds a way forward, Aquino hopes Lapu Lapu Day will ultimately be remembered not just for its tragedy, but as a celebration of Filipino history and heritage of resistance.

Aquino said Filipino BC has rooted its community response in strong cultural values. At the centre of it is the Kapwa Centre for Community Resilience, a space established for community members to gather, rest, and heal. It’s a fitting name, as “kapwa” means interconnectedness. At first, it was more about connecting people with resources. These days, it’s begun to shift more focus to joy, movement, and community celebrations, he said.

The Kapwa Centre has found temporary homes around the city, but Aquino and Filipino BC are advocating for a more permanent version of it — a cultural centre that can be consistent and welcoming for anyone affected to visit.

Aquino said that while there’s traditionally been stigma around openly discussing mental health issues in Filipino communities, that’s beginning to change with the current generation and the Kapwa Centre is one way for them to deal with the trauma. “They may not recognize what they’re experiencing is trauma. But it’s therapeutic to be present with each other,” he said. ∞



WHO WAS LAPU LAPU?

Lapu Lapu was a 16th-century Filipino leader who resisted Spanish colonization and is celebrated as an Indigenous hero. He led his men to victory against Spanish forces in the Battle of Mactan in 1521, a defining moment of Indigenous resistance that still echoes in Filipino calls for sovereignty today.

Support the Kapwa Strong Fund, now held at Vancouver Foundation. Scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/kapwastrong>

thank you DONORS

AT VANCOUVER FOUNDATION, we are dedicated to supporting you. Not only the organizations and causes that matter to you, but also in building stronger, more vibrant communities together by meeting this moment together with courage and care.

I want to thank you on behalf of the charities receiving your support. Your donations, time, and energy make a real difference to organizations doing vital work across the province. At a moment when countless people are pushed to their limits, your support is a powerful reminder that possibility still lives.

Also, on behalf of Vancouver Foundation, I want to thank charities for their tireless work. These are difficult times to navigate. Even organizations with endowments feel the pressure of ongoing instability and shrinking resources. Frontline charities in the Downtown Eastside are being forced to pause vital services or shut down altogether. Even beloved arts and culture festivals are fighting to keep their head above water.

That’s why your generosity matters more than ever. Your commitment is bridging the widening gap between what communities urgently need and what current funding systems can provide. It creates space for resilience, creativity, and possibility when those things are needed most.

Thank you for investing in the community so meaningfully.

With deep gratitude,

MANDY PUI
Manager, Donor Services
Vancouver Foundation

Illustration by NATASIA MARTIN

PHOTO OF LAPU LAPU COURTESY OF WAYNE S. GRAZIO

From worlds apart, A SHARED LEGACY

By TIM FORD

JOYCE AND DEDAR SIHOTA came from vastly different worlds, but both believed in the power of education. This prompted them to start a fund at Vancouver Foundation for students with financial need. Their life and marriage were marked by purpose and service to community as Dedar, an Indian immigrant, became the first Indo-Canadian teacher in B.C.

“Notwithstanding their distant origins and different backgrounds, they met at the University of British Columbia (UBC), forming a lifelong bond,” said Don Sihota, K.C., one of their seven children.

Two paths of resilience led to each other

The road to their meeting had its challenges. In 1935, 12-year-old Dedar left his mother in India to work with his father in lumber camps on Vancouver Island. At 13, he started first grade all while learning a new language. As he scrimped and saved to pay his own way through school, he and his father faced discrimination. Dedar graduated from high school at the age of 20 and when he started his freshman year at UBC, he was one of four students of Indian descent.

Joyce was born in a log cabin in northern Alberta as an only child to English and Canadian parents. As a teenager, she lost her father to cancer and moved into supportive housing with her mother. Despite these challenges, she was an excellent student that got an early start into UBC at 16, later graduating from its social work program. While in school, she

worked at Camp Alexandra, which at the time ran summer programs for disadvantaged single mothers and children.

In 1946, Joyce spotted a handsome Dedar at the UBC library and decided to strike up a conversation, which started their seven-decade love story. They were only a year apart in age, although Joyce was already in her final year while Dedar was in his first. “The timing of their meeting was serendipitous,” said Don.

Two years later, they married. So-called “mixed marriages” were not common then, and they faced disapproval from both families. But this initial objection eventually turned to wholehearted acceptance.

When Dedar graduated in 1949, he applied for

many jobs in business, but nobody would hire an Indian man. With Joyce’s encouragement, he returned to school for teacher training. Upon graduating from the program, he taught at Renfrew Elementary School in Vancouver where he became the first Indo-Canadian teacher in B.C.

Planning for their legacy

Don’s family valued education, which inspired him and his brother Darshan to ask their father to create an endowment fund with his estate. As a “forever fund,” it would be a one-time gift that generated income for charities indefinitely. Dedar loved the idea.

The fund’s income is divided among two bursaries at UBC, one named for each spouse. Joyce’s bursary supports students entering the field of social work, while Dedar’s bursary is for those studying education.

Don carries on his parents’ legacy of giving through a separate fund managed by him and his partner, which supports educational charities, among others. “As a lawyer, I know that changing a will involves time and expense,” said Don. “Establishing this fund under Vancouver Foundation allows me much more flexibility to make later changes without added cost.”

A lasting impact for generations

Both Joyce and Dedar have now passed away, but their legacy is already helping students achieve their educational dreams. One such student is UBC education major Madison Lacoursiere, one of the first recipients of the fund’s education bursary.

“Receiving the bursary lifted a significant mental and financial burden,” said Lacoursiere. “As I pursue my own path in education, I am proud to carry Dedar’s legacy with me. Learning about Dedar’s



ABOVE:
A young Joyce and Dedar, who fell in love in 1946.

NEXT PAGE:
Joyce and Dedar throughout their 70-year marriage, with their sons Don (top photo, centre) and Darshan (middle photo, right).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DON SIHOTA, K.C.

experiences, from his early schooling in rural India to overcoming systemic barriers in Canada, was moving. His perseverance in the face of discrimination is inspiring.”

Don said his parents have taught him the importance of kindness and education. “Through this gift, my parents will touch people 10, 50, or even 100 years from now, and those people will go forward and touch other people. To me and my parents, that’s a true legacy,” he said.

Make giving part of your family’s story.
To leave a legacy gift with Vancouver Foundation, scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/legacygiving>



BELOW: Clabburn's pieces are akin to stained glass. Two-sided and designed to hang in windows, they can brighten up a gloomy day.

Clabburn's donor advised funds allow her to recommend grants to charities. She directs them to support the Community Impact Fund at Vancouver Foundation, which ensures money flows to the most pressing needs in the province, from economic recovery to climate resilience and mental health outreach. "I stay at arm's length," she said. "I trust Vancouver Foundation's best judgment. I appreciate their professionalism and expertise."

A former grant recipient
Clabburn's passion for giving is deeply intertwined with her journey as an artist. After 25 years as a finance professional, she started over — this time, as a full-time artist living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). It was there, on the noticeboard at the Carnegie Library, that she discovered the DTES Small Arts Grants program, coincidentally also funded by Vancouver Foundation.

She received four grants in a row, each one nudging her further along the path of creative pursuit. Along the way, she was introduced to opportunities available to artists at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels, eventually receiving funding through Canada Council for the Arts. She knew this was the start of her artistic career. "It felt like being on the red carpet," she said. "I felt like I was somebody."

Clabburn creates what she lovingly calls "antidepressant art": kaleidoscopic mosaics made from gems and acrylics that shimmer with colour and light. It's especially powerful during Vancouver's long, grey winters. Her pieces offer a boost of colour to those who, like her, live with seasonal affective disorder. "I want people to see beauty in whatever mental health challenge they're dealing with," she said. "Not to be ashamed of it."

Making mental health visible, and beautiful
Each piece is hand-framed and features a vibrant mosaic, accompanied by a small engraved metal label identifying the mental health disorder it's named after. "I want someone to see their disorder and say, 'Hey, my disorder sure is pretty!'" She laughed, offering a playful, powerful way of helping to destigmatize what others are told to hide. "Having a mental health disorder can feel lonely," she added. "But if someone sees a disorder name in my work and says, 'Hey, that's my condition' — and smiles — then for a moment, they don't hate it as much."

Through her art and charitable giving, Clabburn keeps finding ways to stay connected, whether it's to her loved ones, the DTES, or to the idea that beauty can come from difficult places. The funds she's set up aren't just about making donations. They're about turning grief into something lasting. Something bright. Something wonderful.



Mosaics for MENTAL HEALTH

Story and photos by AMY ROMER

WHEN EILEEN CLABBURN established donor advised funds with Vancouver Foundation, it wasn't just about giving back, but about honouring the memory and lives of her loved ones.
A huge advocate for the public library, Clabburn's mother was big on community and giving wherever she could. "Mom was a great philanthropist," said Clabburn. When she and Clabburn's sister passed away two years apart, she wanted their spirit of generosity to live on. "Whenever someone asks for support, I discuss it in my mind with my mom and sister as my philanthropic partners. It keeps them alive."

Gifts to the Community Impact Fund at Vancouver Foundation support the most pressing needs in B.C.
To explore ways to give to the Community Impact Fund, scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/cif>

Focusing on what MATTERS MOST

By TIM FORD

Photos by JAMIE POH

TAKING ON A PARENT'S legacy after their passing is a weighty responsibility.

For Geoff, who inherited the donor advised fund his mother had set up through Vancouver Foundation, that legacy meant deciding how best to be there for the next generation of organizations and people needing support.

Before joining Vancouver Foundation, his family was inundated with requests for donations. Geoff recalled stacks of letters piling up at home. Their address would somehow end up on the mailing lists of various nonprofits, some of which they'd never even heard of.

"Vancouver Foundation, I think, was a way to be more anonymous and with better tax planning," said Geoff. "She had some shares, some equities, that she felt compelled to donate, and that's what she used to start the fund."

Over the years, Geoff's mother gave to many charities, always choosing causes that spoke to her heart, which changed every year.

Taking up the torch

When she passed on, it was up to Geoff to decide how to proceed.

There was no single moment that pushed him to pick his direction. Geoff



"I could see that there's a whole team of like-minded, big-hearted people that are networked in the community, and I don't necessarily need to get so involved."

first derived inspiration for causes he wanted to support from a variety of sources, especially from the news.

"Sometimes I'm inspired by a TV show," Geoff said. "I'll be watching something, for example, on the Knowledge Network, that was about mammal rehabilitation. Or maybe it's just a friend saying, 'we're raising money for such and such.' That just seems kind of obvious to do it that way. But the focus areas are something that I noticed more recently."

Focused giving with expert help

Geoff keenly feels the privilege he was afforded in his adult life, and so seeks to give back. At the same time, he feels it best to support those already working in the fields he was interested in, rather than building something from the ground up.

In that sense, Vancouver Foundation's focus areas offer an approach that perfectly suits the type of charitable giving Geoff is eager to engage in. Gifts to focus areas go on to support charities through Vancouver Foundation's grant programs, which staff choose alongside community advisors who volunteer their time and expertise to review applications.

"I could see that there's a whole team of like-minded, big-hearted people that are networked in the community, and I don't necessarily need to get so involved. And so these focus areas seemed a good way to let them run with the ball."

Reflecting each generation's values

"What's really neat about this is that what was important in my parents' generation could possibly be different than future generations," said Geoff.

"For example, my mom spent a lot of time without food, and so scarcity of food was a challenge. I see homelessness

as a bigger issue, and the environment. Focus areas are wonderful because we can do what's important to my mom, and then what's important to me."

Where his mother was generous with a gift to start the fund, Geoff is generous with his trust. By donating to Vancouver Foundation's focus areas, he's putting his trust not only in Vancouver Foundation, but community.

"I don't have children, so I don't have anyone to take over like I've been able to here," said Geoff. "My cog in the wheel is, I should grant some money and then let other people do what they do."

PREVIOUS PAGE: Geoff beneath a 120-year-old English ash tree in the garden his mother tended to. "Mom often said she would stand on the raised roots to feel the energy of nature."

BELOW: Geoff keeps his mother's spirit alive through gardening, though he admits she had a much greener thumb than he does.



FOCUS AREAS OFFER FOCUSED SUPPORT

Focus areas are a diverse range of causes that Vancouver Foundation identifies as needing support, including addressing homelessness, the environment, and Indigenous priorities.

When you give to a focus area, you can be assured your gift supports projects in that theme through Vancouver Foundation's grant programs, even long after you're gone.

To explore all our focus areas, scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/focusareas>



Everlasting DREAMS

One woman and her show dog are building an animal welfare legacy that will outlast them both

By STACEY MCLACHLAN
Photos by JIMMY JEONG

AT 71, LORIE LEE had a problem most people would envy: she'd accomplished every dream on her childhood list. The girl who grew up with little money had become the first in her family to attend university — paying her own way through the University of British Columbia (UBC). She bought her dream house in Point Grey on a single salary, and built one of Vancouver's first private language schools, which she sold after 20 years as the industry exploded.

The only challenge left for Lee? Figuring out what to do next.

When dreams come true, dream bigger

"Fourteen years ago, I sat down and said, 'Oh my God, what am I going to do? I fulfilled all my dreams,'" recalled Lee, an educational consultant and co-owner of Pet Pantry, a local chain of pet stores. "Then I said to myself, well, that means you need to get new dreams."

Her new dream wasn't for herself, but the animals she'd always loved, including her giant schnauzer show dog, Hero. Creating the Hero Dream Foundation, a donor advised fund with Vancouver Foundation, would allow her to build a legacy that would support animals in need far into the future. "To me, dreams are not fantasies, but goals," said Lee. "They may be difficult, but not impossible. Having dreams has helped me stay focused and prioritize what I do and why."

On the surface, donor advised funds act a lot like a private foundation. With a one-time investment, the fund earns income on its investment. The donor can request that income to be granted to any charity they want, and change their minds any time. Lee loves supporting smaller animal welfare charities



doing crucial work without major resources, like the Northern Lights Wildlife Society in Smithers, which rescues and rehabilitates bears and moose.

Just as importantly, she's dreaming of building a community that is just as passionate about these causes as she is. "Animals are my passion," said Lee. "Believe in dreams. I do."

Building community, one dog walk at a time

Lee walks Hero seven kilometres through Point Grey every day, where she meets potential supporters. When she told one woman about her fund, the stranger shared her own rescue story and immediately wanted to contribute. "I suddenly realized that because of Hero, I have an opportunity not only to give some of my own money, but to get other people to contribute," said Lee.

Her plan: create a Facebook page where supporters suggest small animal charities, then vote on which projects to fund each year. She's even designing business cards for Hero with his own official title: "Ambassador."

From dream to legacy

Creating a donor advised fund through Vancouver Foundation allows her to avoid the costly process

of setting up and managing a private foundation. Instead, she's able to focus more time and resources on finding projects she wants to support. "This is much easier and less expensive, and gives me more money to spend on the projects that I would like to support," said Lee.

She's designated another \$1 million from her estate to boost the Hero Dream Foundation after her death. "Many people rely on their children and grandchildren to do something for the future," Lee said. Without a person to become the successor to her fund, Lee is entrusting Vancouver Foundation to carry out her legacy.

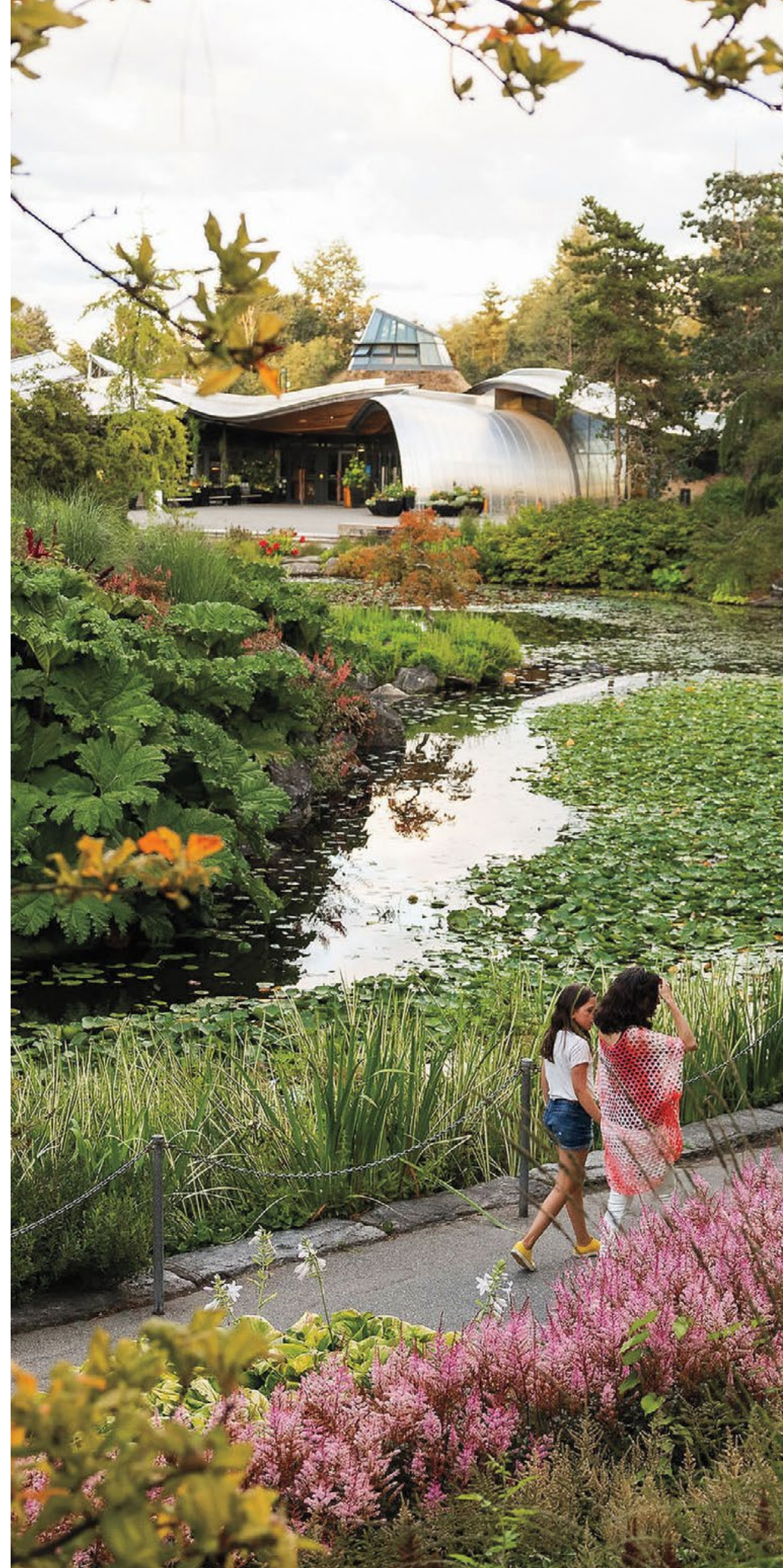
"It's a profound responsibility and honour to ensure a donor's intentions are respected and their giving continues to make a meaningful difference long after they're gone. We take Lorie's trust very seriously," said Craig Hikida, the vice president of donor services at Vancouver Foundation. <https://vanfdn.com/startafund>

A donor advised fund lets your values and care for causes live on. To set up a donor advised fund with Vancouver Foundation today, scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/startafund>

PREVIOUS PAGE:

Lee grew up poor, but her mother encouraged her to go to university and change her life. "She taught me to dream, and all my dreams came true."

ABOVE: At 95 pounds, four-year-old Hero is a gentle giant and an ambassador for giant schnauzers everywhere, having won the Canadian Kennel Club Grand Champion at a young age.



Win a chance to EXPERIENCE NATURE and CULTURE

As a heartfelt thank you to readers of *Vancouver Foundation Magazine*, we're giving away a premium membership to **VanDusen Botanical Garden**, plus a gift box with curated treasures from **Indigenous Box**, a \$250 value.

All you need to do is take a short survey to be entered to win. Scan below or visit: <https://vanfdn.com/survey5>

The VanDusen premium membership offers unlimited entry for you and one guest to the VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory for one year.

Indigenous Box is a Cree-owned company dedicated to creating opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Contest closes January 15, 2026, 11:59pm PST

The winner will be notified by January 22, 2026.

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Small dreams, MIGHTY CONNECTIONS

By STACEY MCLACHLAN

A TINY NEWSPAPER AD changed everything.

Yunuen Perez Vertti had been in Canada just three months when she spotted it — something called Neighbourhood Small Grants offering up to \$500 to bring neighbours together. She applied on a whim to the Vancouver Foundation-backed program, thinking an art event might help her meet people. That single decision sparked a seven-year tradition that eventually became StrideFest, a Burnaby arts festival, connecting the local arts community in ways she never imagined.

“It’s a small amount of money, but it’s powerful. Understanding is only going to come if we actually talk to each other and learn each other’s stories,” said Perez Vertti, who now helps even more neighbours come together as a coordinator of the program through the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia.

Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) turned 25 last year, and it started with a simple premise: people want to connect with their neighbours but are afraid to break the ice. That \$500 could be the spark they need to build stronger and healthier communities.

Creativity and connection

What began as a two-year pilot project to bring East Vancouver residents together has evolved into something beautifully unexpected across 60 communities in B.C. Today, NSG reaches remote places like Haida Gwaii, where it enabled the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to host the region’s first Pride celebration. In the same area, Latin and Filipino communities now run cultural gatherings with an NSG grant.

Even during the height of the pandemic, NSG kept connecting people. Instead of shutting down, the program expanded provincially. Neighbours



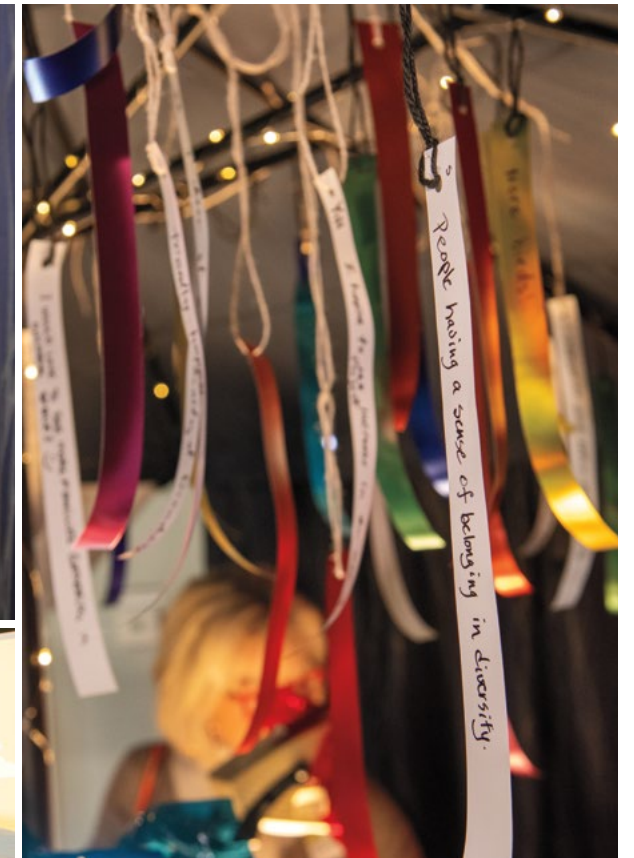
To learn more about how Neighbourhood Small Grants are weaving communities together across B.C., scan or visit <https://vanfdn.com/nsg>

ABOVE: Yunuen Perez Vertti is the architect behind the Neighbourhood Small Grants roving dream tent.

Photo by Isabella Falsetti

NEXT PAGE: The dream tent has brought its wish-filled paper strips far and wide, including New Westminster (top) and White Rock (all other photos).

Photos by Marlon Martinez



organized art hunts, delivered wellness packages, and created online workshops connecting strangers.

“There is no other grant in B.C. that is for individuals the way this one is,” explained Perez Vertti. “As accessible, as inclusive, as low-barrier.”

Lasting impact through donor support

Eric Godot Andersen discovered NSG through Blueridge Good Neighbour Day, a community event running since 1998. After seeing how small grants helped grow the celebration, he established his own donor advised fund at Vancouver Foundation in 2014, naturally including NSG support.

“I have always been very impressed by the innovative ideas that grant recipients have displayed,” said Andersen. “This is truly community building.”

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, NSG toured a “roving dream tent” in Metro Vancouver, an installation where community members write neighbourhood hopes on shimmering paper strips. The tent, overflowing with dreams from eight communities, represents everything NSG stands for: a space where everyone belongs and voices are heard.

Vancouver Foundation’s Community Impact Fund, supported by donors like Andersen and organizations like BC Unclaimed, ensures NSG continues this work. When neighbours know each other’s stories, they build resilience to solve problems together, one small grant at a time.

Ways to GIVE

Inspired by all these stories, but not sure where to start with your giving journey? Use this flowchart to help you decide if a donor advised fund with Vancouver Foundation is right for you, or give in another way.

Why give to Vancouver Foundation?

Create a philanthropic legacy

Give back to my community

Reflect my personal connection to a cause

Fund a trusted organization

Honour a loved one or a special occasion

Receive a tax benefit

Do you want to give now, in the future, or both?

I want to give in the **FUTURE**

I want to give **NOW** and in the **FUTURE**

I want to give **NOW**

LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

Leave a gift in your will or estate that'll last beyond your lifetime

DONOR ADVISED FUND

Give now, over time, and/or leave a gift in your will to support the evolving needs of communities that can last beyond your lifetime

ONE-TIME DONATION

Would you like help deciding what causes to support?

YES

I would like help from community experts to decide

NO

I know what I'd like to support

Give to a **FOCUS AREA** that reflects what you're passionate about:

- Addressing Homelessness
- Animal Welfare
- Arts & Culture
- Children & Families
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Indigenous Priorities
- Social Services
- Youth

Give to our **COMMUNITY IMPACT FUND** to ensure your gift can respond to the most pressing needs now and into the future

Give directly to any endowment fund held at Vancouver Foundation

Support a specific charity you love in Canada

Email donate@vancouverfoundation.ca to start your giving journey

Every unclaimed dollar has a story, and a purpose.

When money moves to the right place, it creates **meaningful impact**.

When claimed, reported, or redirected, unclaimed funds lead to restored ownership and stronger communities.

BC Unclaimed helps individuals reconnect with money in their name. For organizations, reporting funds eases admin, reduces risk, and reflects social responsibility.

Through our partnership with the Vancouver Foundation, unused funds support meaningful, long-term projects that make a real difference across BC.

Add to the impact.
Search or report today.

bcunclaimed.ca

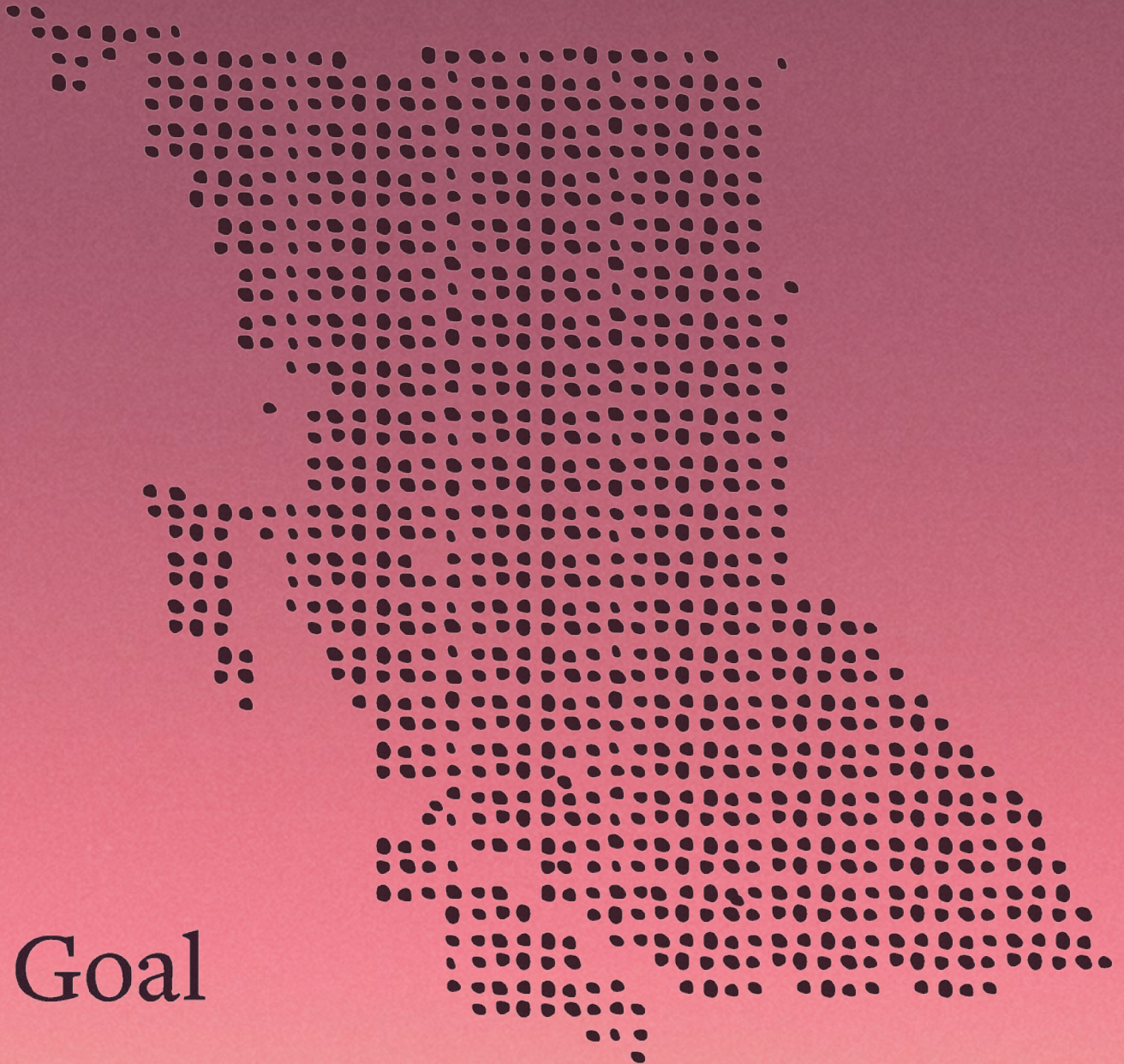


BC Unclaimed



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Community Foundations



1 Goal

BC Community Foundations play an essential role as the catalyst for change by connecting resources that make local programs and partnerships possible. Support yours and make where you live, better for all.

Find your local community foundation here:
vancouverfoundation.ca/bccf