

IFR

IN-FLIGHT REVIEW

HILLS, CHILLS & THRILLS

Public Bobsleigh & Skeleton
at the Whistler Sliding Centre

Private Thoughts

Myths and Misconceptions
about Independent Schools



WINTER 2013-14 ISSN 1916-5080

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Hiding in Plain Sight

What we seek is often in front of us

"Serendipity is looking in a haystack for a needle and discovering a farmer's daughter."

— Julius Comroe Jr.

WHETHER YOU BELIEVE in free will or fate, it is hard to deny that an intricate web of timing, people, circumstances and serendipity play a role in shaping a person's life.

Seven years ago I was the managing editor of an established trade magazine serving the North American helicopter industry. The work was interesting, and the pay respectable, but I couldn't shake the feeling that I was meant for something else. I didn't know what that "else" might look like, but the feeling was inescapable.

Then one day I got a call from my publisher asking me to go to Vancouver to do a feature article on Helijet. My boss wanted a story that would tell how this unique Canadian company had succeeded in operating a scheduled helicopter service when every other helicopter airline in the world that tried had failed.

A week later I flew from Victoria to Vancouver on Helijet and met with the company's president and CEO Daniel (Danny) Sitnam. We sat down in his modest corner office at Helijet's head office at YVR Airport for what I expected to be just another company profile, like so many before.



IFR's publisher, Garth Eichel, found inspiration on a fortuitous Helijet Flight.

Was I in for a surprise.

Instead of the typical rushed interview with stock questions and pat answers, Danny indulged me with a candid and fascinating two-hour conversation. He explained how the company evolved from a germ of an idea into a reality — the first flight lifting off on November 27, 1986, with only one advance booking. He proceeded to fill in the blanks about how Helijet survived its difficult fledgling years to become a sizeable company with a fleet of 15 aircraft and 140 professionals.

I was accustomed to corporate tales of success, but Helijet's story was exceptional and different from anything I had encountered before in the industry. Indeed, it was a rare story of the right people being in the

right place at the right time, under the right circumstances, and no small amount of serendipity.

Reflecting on this during the flight home to Victoria I decided to ask myself, 'what is it that I really want to do in my writing career?'

I chewed on that question while gazing out the passenger window at the scenery around me. The Olympic Mountains to the south seemed to tower larger than ever, and the sun setting behind Vancouver Island cast a blanket of golden light over the Gulf Islands.

That's when it came to me: 'I want to write about this beautiful part of the world. But how?'

The thought had barely crystallized in my mind when I noticed the seatback pocket in front of me. It was empty.

A few weeks later I phoned Danny and asked him if Helijet would be interested in having its own in-flight publication. He liked the idea of a dedicated company magazine with local stories of interest to passengers. He asked me to pitch it to Rick Hill, Vice President of Operations and Commercial Programs, and Jay Minter, Director of Marketing. Not long after the three of us shook hands and the magazine you are holding took flight — literally. ✈

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NEW & NOTABLE

BY SUE KERNAGHAN



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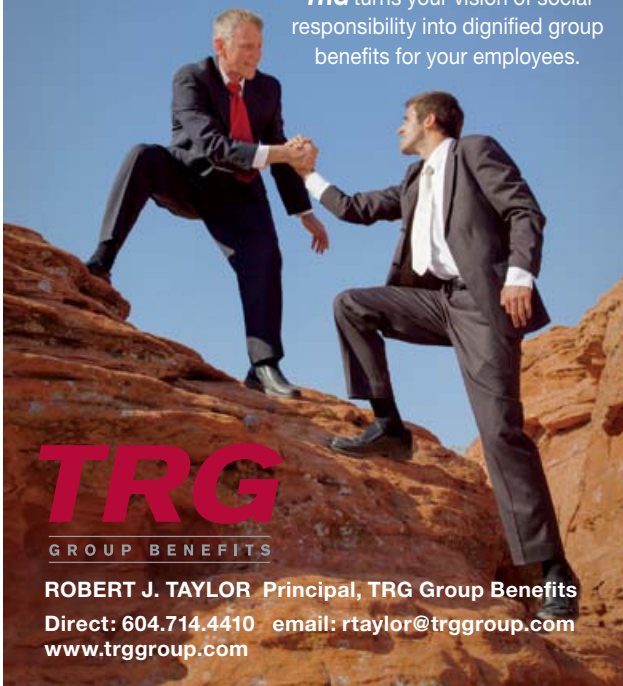
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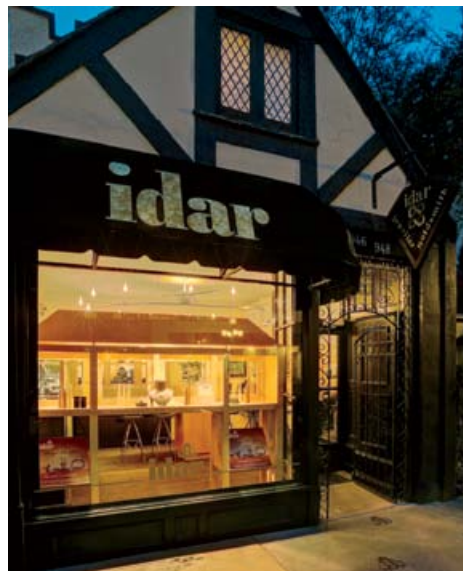
brookstone.com



ALL ABUZZ

Victoria's Idar Bergseth, an internationally renowned goldsmith and jeweller, is the recipient of this year's Carter Wosk Creative Achievement Award for Applied Art and Design. The award, given to British Columbia artists and designers whose work is both practical and innovative, is the

most recent in a string of awards for Bergseth, who has been creating hand-forged jewellery in Victoria since 1972. Besides the Wosk award, his eponymous Fort Street shop, complete with its story-book exterior and chic modern show-



room, was the first Canadian business to win an INSTORE Magazine award for "America's Coolest Store." And that cute bee logo? Bergseth is an apiarist as well as a goldsmith and even keeps beehives on the roof. idar.com

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NEW & NOTABLE



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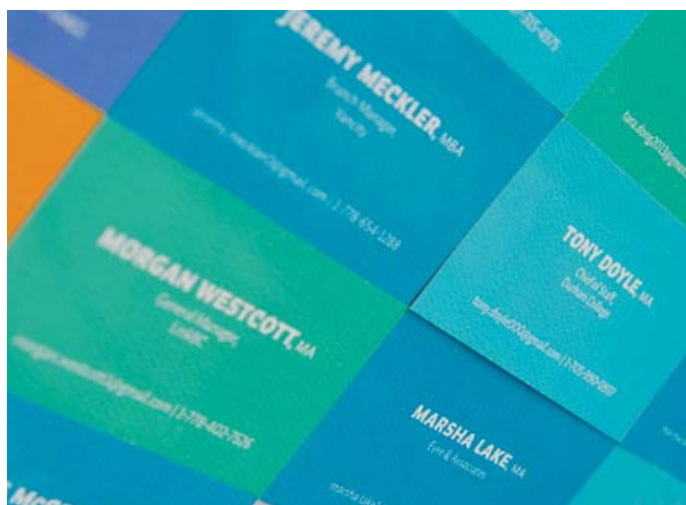
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GET CONNECTED

Building on the important role that networking plays in shaping lives and career paths, Royal Roads University (RRU) recently launched its new Inspiring Connections campaign, which takes LinkedIn-style networking to another level, creating opportunities for direct connections between former and future students. Rooted in the power of connecting people, the campaign provides business card contact information for alumni and invites prospective students to get in direct contact with them over the phone, online, or in person, to learn first-hand about the RRU experience.

"Through Inspiring Connections we hope to facilitate deeper engagement with prospective students, showcasing RRU's unique points of difference through the stories of our alumni, as opposed to telling them ourselves," says Catherine Riggins, RRU Director, Branding, Marketing and Recruitment. "Our alumni are an incredible asset and allowing them to tell their stories in a transparent way lets us prove that what RRU offers is unique. It's the ultimate compliment that so many of our alumni are willing to voluntarily connect with others on our behalf." royalroads.ca

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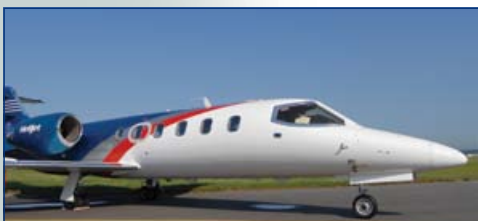
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Man of Many Hats

Bob Claridge enjoys the variety and challenge of being a go-to guy



BOB CLARIDGE COULD HAVE followed a relatively easy career path when he moved to Vancouver as an Air Canada passenger service agent in 1979. But he didn't.

"Many of the people I worked with at Air Canada are retired now with nice pensions, but I wasn't interested in doing the same thing for the next 35 years," says Claridge. "I wanted variety at work, and the opportunity to do more and be involved. I thought there was a better chance of finding that at Helijet."

He had no idea.

Just four months after being hired as a passenger service agent in November 1991 Claridge found himself running Helijet's base in Whistler. More assignments followed as he became the company's go-to guy for opening, managing, and sometimes closing, bases of operations in places such as Langley, Abbotsford, Seattle, Campbell River, Grouse Mountain, and Haida Gwaii.

"I really enjoy getting in on the ground level when we start something new. It's hard work, but very rewarding," he says. "That's why I joined Helijet. I've had so many opportunities for personal growth here."

What is more, the company provides a social network of friends and colleagues: "After 22 years in a variety of roles I've gotten to work with some really great people, and come to know just about every one of the staff. That's one of the reasons I look forward to coming to work each day."

Claridge's latest incarnation is in flight operations where he and other agents oversee and support the day-to-day comings and goings of Helijet's fleet of aircraft. This entails everything from flight following and communicating with air crew, to managing schedules and associated logistics, among other things.

"I like staying busy and that's why I enjoy being in operations," says Claridge. "But I'm always looking forward to the next challenge." With a hopeful smile he adds, "In this company that could come tomorrow." 🛩️



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BY BOB LOBLAW

HILLS, CHILLS & **THRILLS**

Public bobsleigh and skeleton at the Whistler Sliding Centre



Riders experience the thrill of four-man bobsleigh at the Whistler Sliding Centre as a professional driver (white helmet) guides the sleigh through Turn 16, a.k.a. Thunderbird Wall, at over 120 kmh. Whistler Sport Legacies photo



The orange glow of sunset fades behind the snow-capped mountains bracketing Whistler Village, taking with it warmth and sunshine. The Whistler Sliding Centre on the southeast side of Blackcomb Mountain is soon shrouded in purple darkness, save for a long winding river of brilliant white light tracing the outline of the racecourse below. I'm crouched in seat 4 of a four-man bobsleigh, waiting for the all clear. The stillness and quiet seems, well, ominous.

Suddenly, a voice crackles on the radio advising our professional driver, Pat Brown, that the track is clear and

we're good to go. An assistant lowers the visor on my helmet and wipes away a scattering of flurries before gently pushing the sleigh onto the ice track.

We slowly inch forward, the runners beneath our sleigh wiggling and bumping on the frozen track surface. Our rate of acceleration is rather underwhelming and I feel disappointed that we didn't get a running start. Obviously, this "tourist" bobsleigh ride is going to be a damp squib compared to the real thing experienced by Olympic athletes.

My arrogance was short-lived.

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Turning right into the first corner our sleigh gathers speed and a sense of purpose. Acceleration improves, but still I feel the need for speed.

The straightaway leading to Turn 2 gives us a chance to gather momentum and the sound of the sleigh's runners skating on ice increases. We slide into the second turn, climbing slightly up the side of the track. Not bad for Joe Public, I guess.

The ride gets more interesting at Turn 3 as speed increases and our sleigh inches higher up the corner. The noise of the runners on ice gets louder and the bumpy ride makes my head start to vibrate inside my helmet. It's getting interesting.

Slingshot out of Turn 3, our bobsleigh hurtles downhill gaining more speed and inertia. At Turn 4 the sleigh climbs higher through the corner, increasing centrifugal force pushing us down in our seats.

I'm impressed!

Barreling out of the turn and into the next all four heads in our bobsleigh rock from side to side. The vibration is intense and the noise deafening. Suddenly, it dawns on me that I'm on the wildest roller coaster ride of my life . . . and I can't get off.

Halfway down the track and our speed continues increasing. Turns come faster and faster, throwing us from side to side. The vibration is such that I can barely see what's ahead and I feel like my teeth are going to rattle out. Punishing g-forces (g) press us harder into our seats at each successive turn. The speed is as terrifying as it is thrilling. I am over-stimulated, scared and want it to end.

The 16th and final turn, Thunderbird Wall, is the hairiest. Our bobsleigh is nearly perpendicular to the world, flying

Colour is Our Passion.



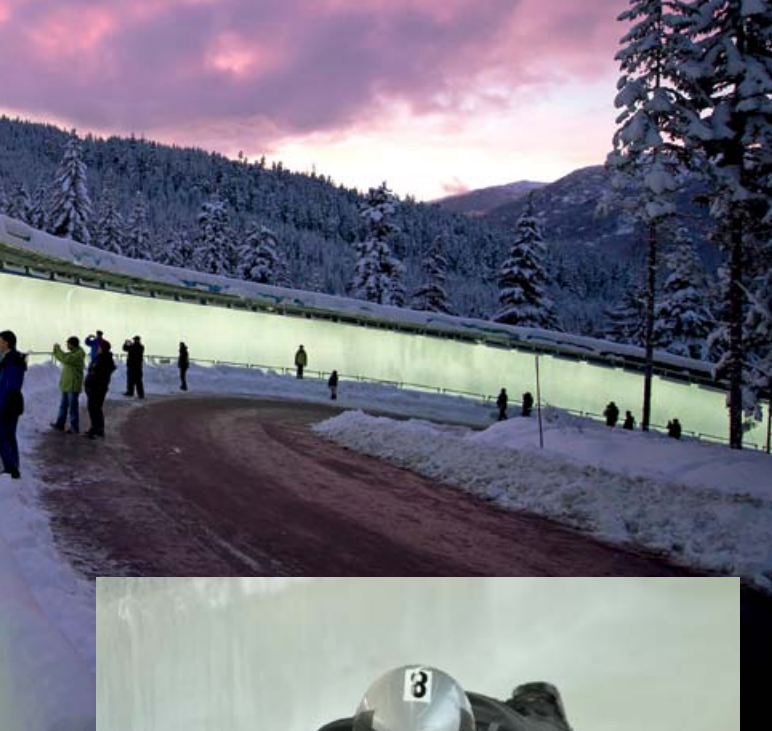
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Top: The public bobsleigh experience is a 38-second ride through 16 turns at speeds up to 125 kmh. David McColm photo. Inset: Members of the public can also ride face-first down the ice track as part of the skeleton ride experience. Coast Mountain Photography photo

through snow flurries at 125 kmh. I grit my teeth through the corner, begging for relief from the 4 g pinning me into my seat.

Eternity is over in just 38 seconds. Our sleigh rolls out of the final turn and quickly decelerates uphill in the track with the help of gravity and a brake pedal operated by our driver.

When we come to a stop there is no hooting or hollering. No high fives. Just stunned disbelief.

My fellow passengers and I slowly extricate ourselves and try to readjust to reality. Words seem inadequate. How does one describe an adrenaline rush so intense?

"How was it?" asks my waiting wife, her eyes wide in amazement.

"Uh, wild," I reply faintly. "Crazy." Slowly gathering myself I then add, "I want to try skeleton next!"

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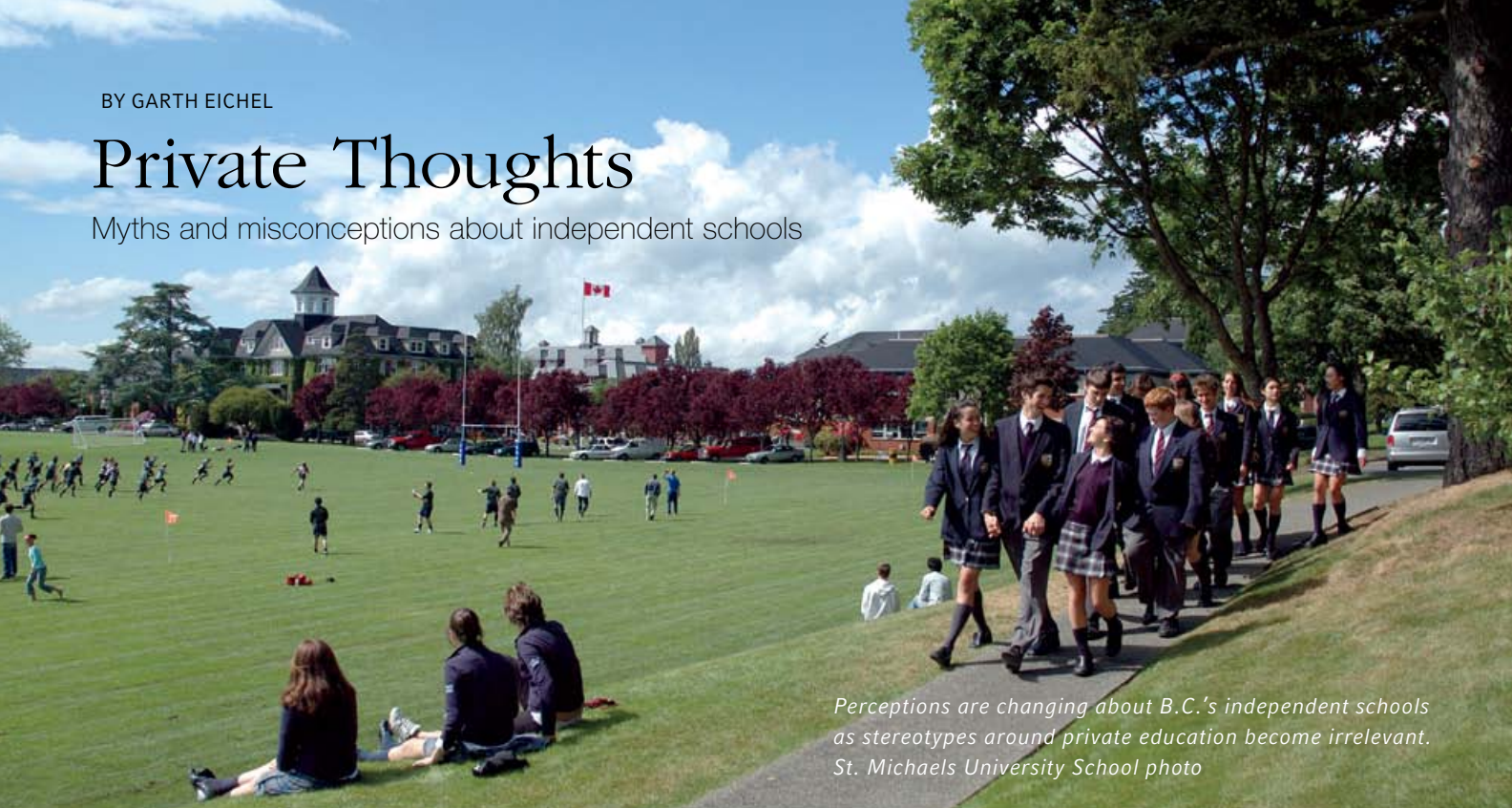
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BY GARTH EICHEL

Private Thoughts

Myths and misconceptions about independent schools



Perceptions are changing about B.C.'s independent schools as stereotypes around private education become irrelevant. St. Michaels University School photo

WE'RE ALL GUILTY of buying into stereotypes to some extent. After all, most people will admit to having reflexive notions about used car salesmen, biker gangs, environmental activists, and lawyers, among others.

Stereotypes simplify our complex social world, attributing uniform characteristics to members of entire groups. They also convey social dichotomy — a reassuring way of seeing the world in “us” and “them” terms. Remember Occupy Wall Street, and the 99 versus 1 per cent?

Perceived wealth and privilege has always been an easy target, which may explain why so many popular myths and misconceptions persist around private schooling. Thing is, independent education has undergone significant change in recent years rendering many stereotypes irrelevant, including the following:

Myth #1: Only the rich can send their kids to private school

A common assumption is that independent school tuition is out of reach for middle- and low-income families.

Not necessarily so. A growing number of schools and families are finding creative ways to make private education accessible to anyone who wants it.

“The perception that private schools cater only to the wealthy is the biggest myth out there,” says Bob Snowden, Head of School at St. Michaels University School (SMUS) in Victoria. “We have kids here whose parents are taxi drivers and postal workers . . . and two-income families where the parents scrimp and save, dip into savings, or take out loans.” He adds, “SMUS

gives out over \$2 million each year in financial aid to help these families. Twenty-one per cent of our students are on some form of financial assistance, which can range from a few thousand dollars to full tuition.”

SMUS is not alone in lending a helping hand. Many independent schools in B.C. provide entrance scholarships, bursaries, short-term financial assistance and extended payment plans to help families bridge the gap. But schools can only help so much. Ultimately, it comes down to parents making choices.

“A lot of parents think they can’t afford it, but it’s often a question of priorities,” says Janis Clark, Director of Admissions at Collingwood School in West Vancouver. “Sometimes parents rely on extended family to help out, or they make do with an older car and fewer vacations, or they take out a loan or line of credit. However they do it, most parents see it as an investment in their child’s future. Collingwood offers entrance scholarships for new students and access to financial assistance for our current families.”

Myth #2: Private schools turn kids into class-conscious snobs

Some critics claim independent schools lack diversity and isolate children from the communities in which they live. Perhaps that was the case at one time, but private schools have evolved with wider social change. Gone are the days of student bodies populated by rich white kids; most private schools nowadays are comprised of boys and girls from myriad ethnicities, religions and socio-economic backgrounds.

“We stopped trying to keep track of cultural diversity when

it became pointless,” says Hugh Burke, Headmaster of Meadowridge School in Maple Ridge. “We now fly the flags of 40 countries, representing various student nationalities.” What is more, he notes some students come from families whose combined household income is not above \$60,000 a year.

B.C.’s private schools are, in many respects, more diverse than their public counterparts. That’s largely because many immigrant parents place a premium on education and are prepared to make significant sacrifices to get their kids into good schools.

At the same time, independent schools recognize they do children a disservice educating them in a protective bubble. With an eye to developing well-rounded students, many now make community involvement an integral part of their curriculum.

“Community service is a requirement for all Collingwood School students,” says Clark. “Here we are in one of the wealthiest communities in Canada, right next to one of the poorest — Vancouver’s Downtown East Side. We expect our students to get involved in that community and do meaningful service through such long-standing activities as our tutoring and mentoring programs, backpack buddies, soup kitchens, and food hampers.”

Myth #3: Children with special needs don’t fit in

While some private schools lack the necessary resources to adequately support children with special needs, more and more child-focused schools with reputations for academic achievement are adapting their programs to meet the unique requirements of children with learning difficulties.

“Kids with special needs are often misunderstood,” says Snowden. “They are mentally capable, but their special learning requirements need to be accommodated. If a school can do that the child will thrive.” Underscoring this, he notes, “[ISMUS] serves a large number of children with learning disabilities, from dyslexia and Aspergers to ADHD and dysgraphia.”

Collingwood is another school with a reputation for helping children with diagnosed learning disabilities integrate and realize academic achievement. Specifically, they have developed a highly successful Key Program over the past 25 years that assists children with one-to-one and small group support with integration into the larger class environment.

Then there are independent schools that specialize in teaching children with special needs, notably Fraser Academy in Vancouver and Discovery School in Victoria.

Myth #4: Boarding schools are for kids who get “sent away”

One bromide that has stood the test of time is that boarding schools are a last resort for students with behaviour problems, or troubled home situations.



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"There might have been truth to that perception 20 or 30 years ago, but not anymore," says Clayton Johnston, Director of Admissions at Brentwood College School on Vancouver Island. "We won't accept students unless they want to be here. All it takes is four or five kids who don't want to be here to ruin it for all the others."

In fact, Johnston points to a growing trend where students are bigger players in deciding to go to boarding school: "Kids want to do well and learn so they're seeking out the best schools and researching them online, eventually steering their parents towards it. Kids are driving this now, not the parents."

Myth #5: Independent schools are unregulated and unaccountable

Because education is provincially mandated in Canada, standards and requirements vary from one province to the next. While it is true that some private schools in Canada are exempt from provincial regulations to some extent (Ontario private schools do not have to comply with provincial government requirements until high school) the reality here in B.C. is that all independent schools are accountable to the B.C. Ministry of Education and therefore must comply with provincial curriculum standards. Indeed, private schools come in for special scrutiny because the government provides a portion of funding for each child in the private system.

"We are under a magnifying glass because we receive public

funds," says Meadowridge's Hugh Burke. "If anything, private schools are held to a higher standard by the B.C. Government."

Myth #6: It's all about class size

Stereotypes sometimes contain a kernel of truth, so it will hardly come as news that independent schools have an edge over public schools when it comes to student-to-teacher ratios. Still, smaller class size doesn't tell the whole story. More often than not it's a question of quality over quantity.

To be sure, B.C.'s public school system has its share of excellent teachers, but perennial conflict between the BC Teachers' Federation and the provincial government has resulted in tremendous frustration for students, parents and teachers alike.

Certainly, teachers with larger classes and fewer resources are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in the private system.

"Teachers are the most important resource that a school has. It is our top priority," says SMUS's Snowden. "If it's a choice between class size and promoting teacher excellence, a school is better off allocating resources to the latter."

Collingwood's Janis Clark shares that philosophy: "We invest a huge amount of resources into professional development. Our teachers are at the top of their game, enjoying high job satisfaction and low turnover. They're invested in their jobs and in the lives of their students."



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Myth #7: Private schools weaken the public school system

Some people object to independent schools receiving government funding — approximately 35 per cent per pupil operating grant — arguing that it siphons much needed money away from the public system.

What often gets left of the equation, however, is that 12.4 per cent of children in B.C. attend independent school. That means the government pays only a portion of education funding for over 76,000 students attending some 367 schools throughout the province.

"If all those schools receive 35 per cent funding that means 65 per cent is retained by the government, with no requirement to provide service," says Burke. "In effect, the private school system is subsidizing the public system." He adds, "If all those children were fully funded what would the cost be to the public system?"

Myth #8: Private schools are better than public schools

Perhaps the most contentious stereotype ascribed to private schools is that they are universally better than public schools.

Such a platitude is akin to saying *all* apples are better than *all* oranges.

Setting aside the fact that many public schools in B.C. have developed reputations for academic excellence, it is important to recognize that public schools have a broad mandate to serve, spreading resources across a spectrum of purposes that private schools don't have the will or capacity to satisfy.

"Public schools can't be compared to private ones," says Burke, who taught in the public system for 28 years. "Public schools have a different mandate with a range of programs and purposes under one roof. They do many things well, whereas private schools do a few things extremely well.

"Private schools have a much clearer vision and sense of mission for a smaller group of students . . . and we have the latitude to make changes and adjust quicker because we can."

Still, the Fraser Institute's controversial annual ranking of B.C. schools fosters the idea that some schools are better than others.

"Not every school is going to be perfect for every child," says Burke. "I get annoyed by simplistic reports that try to quantify something as complex as a school . . . and I thought it was ridiculous when we were ranked number one by the Fraser Institute.

"Rankings and blanket claims are ludicrous. It's more important that parents find which school is the right fit for their child and their family, and then support the values of that school."

This sentiment is shared at many independent schools: "Parental involvement is an essential part of success," says Alexandra Best, Director of Admissions at Mulgrave School. "You can't just send your kid to the expensive school on the hill and expect it to work. Parents have to research and visit schools, and get involved. There is a right school for every child; you just have to find the right one." She says, adding, "you only get the chance to do it once, and you want to do it right." 🖋️



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Succulent Sustainability

Marina Restaurant emphasizes continuity of care from ocean to table

SUSTAINABILITY is one of those words everyone can agree on in general, even if the specifics are elusive. Consider seafood: most British Columbians attach importance to protecting and properly managing coastal fisheries, but few among us know what that means at the consumer level. Indeed, how does one enjoy dinner knowing for sure they are ordering responsibly *a la carte*?

That was my dilemma on a recent night out with my wife, Heather. We both love seafood in all its forms, but neither of us wants to diminish dining enjoyment wondering if our choices play an inadvertent role degrading the ocean.

Fortunate for us, Marina Restaurant in Oak Bay, Victoria, removes the guesswork. That's because every single seafood item on their lunch and dinner menus is Ocean Wise certified.

Launched in 2005 by the Vancouver Aquarium, the Ocean Wise program draws on reams of research to determine how well a given fishery is managed, which species can be sustainably harvested, where it should be extracted, and what impact harvesting methods might have on other species or the overall marine environment.

Many restaurants display the Ocean Wise logo next to individual menu items, but Marina takes it a step further, ensuring all seafood is certified.

"Marina Restaurant is owned by the Oak Bay Marine Group, a company that was built by the ocean," says Jeff Keenlside, Executive Chef. "Seafood is at the heart of this organization, so it was essential for us to reflect that in our menus with 100 per cent certification of all seafood products."

Keenlside says there is more to Ocean Wise than just good intentions, though: "It's also making a choice about quality. I know I can buy less expensive seafood, but we'd rather pay a pre-mium to be sure of how every seafood item is caught, where it was caught, and how it has been handled, delivered and prepared."

Seems altruism, married with quality and talent, can make for some wonderful combinations.

My wife and I scan the appetizer menu, struggling to settle on one thing. Heather eventually decides on the spot prawn potato ravioli, served in tomato and prawn nage, scallions and lemon oil. The resulting flavours are harmonious pockets of simplicity and complexity.



Marina Restaurant Executive Chef Jeff Keenlside talks daily with local suppliers, ensuring only fresh and sustainable seafood gets served. OBMG photo

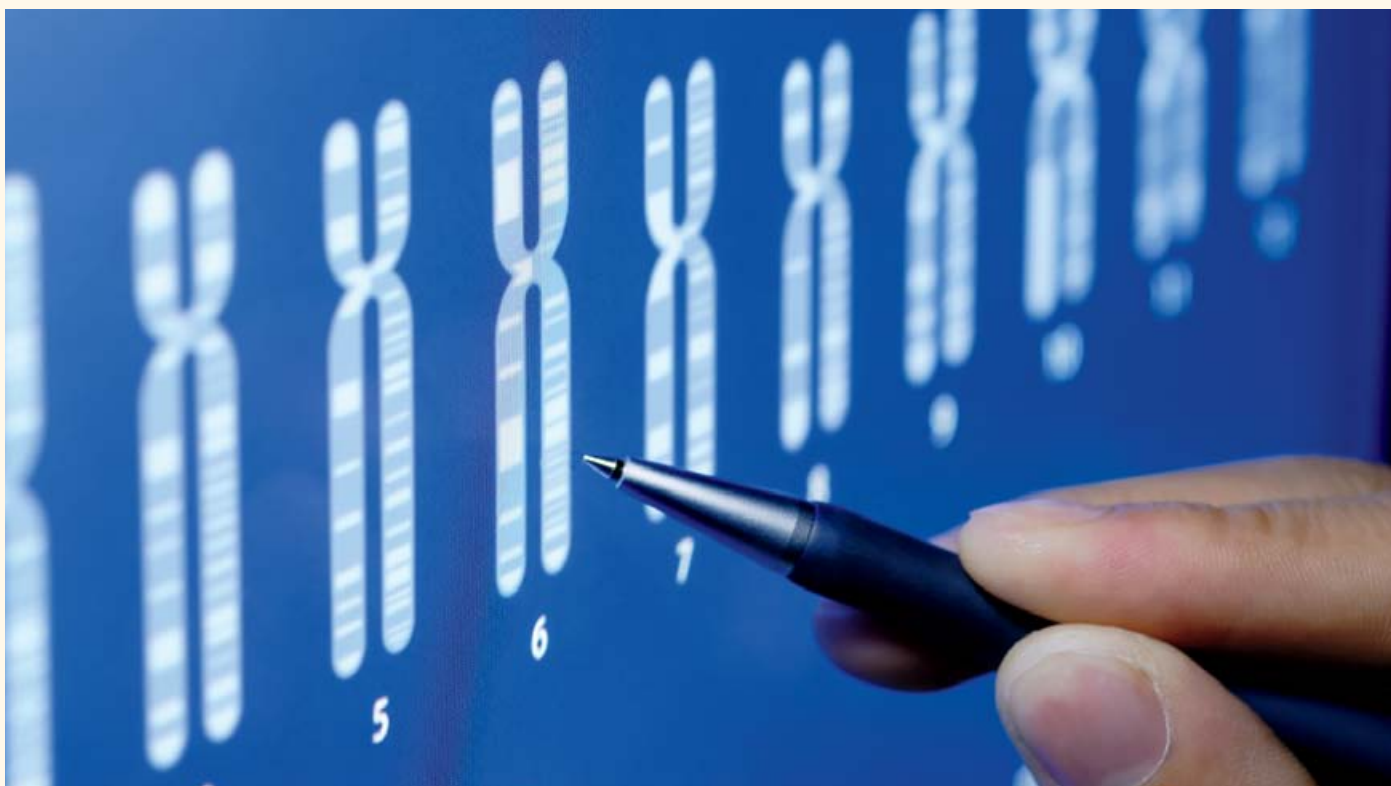
For my part, I opt for pan-seared Qualicum scallops served on a parsnip and chanterelle mushroom hash with creamed corn and crispy leeks. The dish is a study in contrast and compliment: the delicate texture of the scallops mirrors the savoury mushrooms and sweet cream corn, offset by the crunch of leeks and parsnips.

Progressing to main courses, Heather decides on the daily dinner feature — crispy celery-root wrapped halibut on shiitake duxelle, sunchoke puree, accompanied by green beans with oranges and almonds — while I try something curious in the way of miso-cured sablefish with clams, leeks, Israeli cous cous and preserved lemon cream.

Hard to say who made the better choice. The halibut and sablefish are both perfectly cooked, with remarkable delicacy and subtle flavours. If anything, the distinct umami flavours of the miso-cured sablefish are somewhat exotic, whereas the halibut might appeal to those interested in slightly less dining adventure.

Either way, a crisp, dry wine, such as a 2012 Syncromesh Riesling (Okanagan), elevates both to a stratospheric tasting experience.

Best of all, we can enjoy our meals without qualms, knowing we did our bit for sustainability . . . one succulent bite at a time. 🍴



Natural Talent

Genome BC is leading, investing and connecting in British Columbia

Arguably one of the best perks about travelling by Helijet is the ability to take in the magnificent panoramic views of British Columbia scenery. The sight of majestic mountains and ocean expanse on a clear day can take one's breath away.

Beyond this beauty of nature, there is a link that connects the trees on the mountains to the fish and marine life in the ocean and to the cells in our bodies and beyond. The link lies in DNA and that every living organism has DNA in their genome. As such, genomics (the study of genomes) is the heart of life sciences in B.C.

This exciting field of science is now beginning to offer real solutions in support of the province's key sectors, including: agri-foods, fisheries and aquaculture, energy and mining, forestry, and health. Genomics is also an integral part of the bioeconomy, which today accounts for an estimated \$2 billion in provincial GDP and 14,000 jobs. By 2030 the bioeconomy could reach over \$12 billion in

GDP, supporting 56,000 jobs, provided it succeeds in attracting, and keeping, the right investments.

In 2000, Genome British Columbia (Genome BC) was founded by the late Nobel Laureate chemist Dr. Michael Smith and others, to capitalize on the promise of genomics. At that time the project to fully sequence the human genome was three years from completion and scientists had only vague notions of the power of genomics. Today, that promise has become a reality. Genome BC, with ongoing support from the Province of British Columbia, the Government of Canada through Genome Canada, and Western Economic Diversification Canada, and more than 300 international public and private co-funding partners is now a leader in this field.

With help from these funding partners Genome BC has become a catalyst that links academia, industry and government users to

build and sustain the province's vibrant life sciences cluster. Genome BC invests in the very best people, the very best genomics research programs, and the most advanced tools of discovery because it is propelled by a single desire: to pave the way for research to have a direct impact on our lives and our future, and to deliver critical benefits to people in B.C. Here are just a few examples of genomics research that are becoming reality:

Treating cancer with a vaccine

Dr. John Webb, a scientist at the Deeley Research Centre in Victoria, has developed a novel therapeutic vaccine to treat cancers and pre-cancerous lesions caused by Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). This approach, which applies the concept of using a vaccine as treatment for cancer, could change one kind of cancer treatment as we know it.

There are two types of vaccines: therapeutic and prophylactic. Prophylactic

vaccines, used to prevent infection, and therapeutic vaccines, which treat active disease. Unlike other therapeutic HPV vaccines currently in development that target one, or at most, two strains of HPV, the Pentarix vaccine is directed against a total of five strains of HPV, which together account for more than 90 per cent of all HPV-associated cancers worldwide.

Genome BC's financial support has enabled the research to move from the laboratory into pre-clinical studies, and helped to ready the technology for further investment and commercialization.

Uncorking the secrets of Chardonnay

The quality of wine produced in B.C. has steadily increased since the very early days of fruit wines that were made primarily with fermented apples. Now the grape growing and wine-making sector is a significant contributor to the B.C. economy.

Chardonnay is the second most abundant white wine grape variety in the world, and the second most planted white variety in B.C. (behind Pinot Gris).

Vineyard owners use vegetative propagation or 'clone' grapevines by cutting a budding twig off the "mother vine" and then grafting it

BC winemakers are using genomics to understand which grapes will lead to higher quality wine.

onto a specific rootstock. These new hybrid vines can exhibit remarkable variation in fruit composition, flavour and aromas, yield and grape colour. But very little is known about the Chardonnay genome and even less about how the clones differ from the parent plant; knowledge about these differences would help determine how to produce the best wine.

Dr. Hennie van Vuuren with the Wine Research Centre at UBC has teamed up with some of B.C.'s winemakers to identify the genetic markers of desirable traits, such as berry size, vine yields and tolerances to heat, humidity and drought for Chardonnay grapes. Getting a full picture of the Chardonnay genome will enable growers and winemakers to make informed choices about which clones to plant — leading to better grapes and higher quality wine.

Cleaning up mines

In the mining industry safety precautions around mine drainage and wastewater are of particular concern: no one wants toxic compounds from mining operations flowing into fish-bearing streams and our waterways. To ensure optimal safety levels, chemicals are typically used to treat metal leaching and acid rock drainage. These treatments, while effective, are also highly expensive and produce their own waste byproducts, which must then be carefully contained for years



Genomics aims to improve bioremediation techniques to clean up mining sites and tailings ponds.

to come. Many mining companies are beginning to invest more into bioremediation techniques to decontaminate mining wastewater.

Genome BC has funded UBC researcher Dr. Susan Baldwin to help move this science towards application — making bioremediation a more economical and accessible option — by applying genomics to harness these detoxifying biological processes. Dr. Baldwin is currently working with industry leaders Teck Resources and Imperial Metals to gather data on the microorganisms that live and thrive in contaminated mine water and to find ways to apply this knowledge to help improve mining safety and quality.

Solving puzzles one genome at a time

The journey leading to scientific discovery is never direct or easy to navigate. It's filled with leaps of intuition, false starts, happy accidents and unexpected results. But, however it zigs or zags the path to discovery and innovation is driven by the desire to make a positive impact. Genomics and Genome BC are at the core of cutting-edge science and technologies that are driving growth, productivity, commercialization and global competitiveness.





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